

**The Orphaned Past:
Ache Autonomy and Relationality in Times of Change**

by

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Abstract

The concept of “ownership” has assumed some prominence in the recent anthropology of lowland South America (Fausto 2002; 2012; Bonilla 2005; Costa 2017). “Ownership,” as it is typically defined, is a hierarchical relation that gradually develops between an “owner” and a person owned (whether human or non-human) through continued acts of care and feeding. In this dissertation, I explore the notion of ownership through the history of settlement of one group of South American hunter-gatherers, the Ache of eastern Paraguay. Attending to ownership relations between kin, between the living and dead, between Ache and Paraguayans, and between humanity and the Christian God, I argue that hierarchical relations of ownership contain important moral presuppositions. I describe how relations are evaluated in these domains to show that an essential aspect of ownership is the evaluation of it, and the risks inherent in the relation are integral to the continuous feeding and care that sustains it.

Introduction

One humid summer night in 2009, the grandmother Djakugi packed her carrying basket with a few possessions – an axe, a handleless knife with a worn blade, a woven-palm mat, and a plastic jug. She had heard the calls of her long-dead parents and brothers, and, moved by their siren-like pull, went to meet them. As her husband slept, Flora slipped the finely woven strap of her carrying basket over her forehead and shuffled across the clearing, and disappeared through the dark wall of vegetation.

In the dawn hours of the next morning, Djakugi's absence caused some alarm in the community, and a group of hunters assembled to search for her as a group of women speculated about the reasons for her absence. There was only a small patch of forest outside of the community left for her to retreat to, and the hunters had no difficulty in finding her. After following her trail for a short time, they found her sitting alone in a small forest clearing less than a kilometer outside the village. She wanted to die, she told them. She would join her dead kin in the western skies. "Come back," the hunters pleaded. "You still have your half-sister," they reminded her, hoping that the care she felt for her living relative would be enough to coax her back to the community.

The excitement subsided upon her return, and satisfied at the resolution, people returned to their houses. Little more was said about her brief disappearance. As people returned to their routines, I wrestled with how to understand what had just

happened and what caused this episode. When I asked one young man why Djakugi had left the village, he lowered his eyes and laughed nervously. "She has lost her head," he said. "She is crazy."

His words were revealing. Although he spoke in Spanish (I was not yet proficient in Ache), he retained the Ache word *tollã*, which means, literally, "headless."

According to the young man, there could be no reason, no understanding, guiding her actions. It was little wonder that the young, who knew their grandparent's life in the forest only from stories, couldn't relate to the old woman's anguish. But years later I would come to learn that what the young man had attributed to senility was not an uncommon affliction for old women and men. Djakugi had been overcome by some sort of fugue state, where she, instead of forgetting the past, had completely succumbed to it. The images of dead kin that had pulled Djakugi away were more than upsetting recollections. As I was later told, sad and despondent people were said to forget their living kin and feel a pull toward their dead kin. Djakugi, aged and childless, her husband Chinigi long dead from snakebite, could no longer see herself in the world that surrounded her. Her memories had roused her dead kin and brought lured her to them.

Her attempted "escape" was one of the early glimpses into the struggle with the past that that I encountered during the course of my fieldwork. Such struggles, as I would gradually learn, were intensely ethically laden, providing both the ground and the substance for everyday evaluations. Djakugi's fugue state had put her at odds with the moral expectations of both the past and the present. She had failed to do what was expected of mourners: to forget the dead and move on, to avoid the

dangerous allure of past relatives. Djakugi's dead kin, those who "owned" her during her life, wanted to "own" her again in death. Yet an essential part of "owning kin well" was to know when to let them go, to turn back to the care of one's living relatives rather than be drawn over to the dead. Djakugi's problem was a problem of ownership. How could the young people understand this?

Ownership

The concept of "ownership" has assumed some prominence in the recent anthropology of lowland South America (see Fausto 2002; 2012; Bonilla 2005; Costa 2017). "Ownership," as it is typically defined, is a hierarchical relation that gradually develops between an "owner" and a person owned (whether human or non-human) through continued acts of care and feeding. The initial interest in ownership relations arose in response to two problems. Ownership was first theorized as a kind of relation unaccounted for by Viveiros de Castro's (1998; 2001) model of predation, in which predator-prey relations structure the cosmology of lowland societies. Noting a striking similarity in the way many lowland societies talk of relations between parents and children, pet-owners and pets, and warriors and their captives, these authors (primarily by Fausto 2002; 2012; Costa 2017) suggested that progressive acts of care and feeding create relations of authority in Amazonia more generally.

The hierarchical aspect of ownership has been subsequently invoked to dispute the often-repeated characterization of Amerindians as egalitarian and without property. Joanna Overing (1989; 2003), who has done the most to theorize the egalitarian ethos of Amerindians along ethical lines, attributed the egalitarianism of

the Piaroa to their renunciation of property: “In the Piaroa view, they have eradicated coercion as a social or political force within their society by refusing the possibility of the human ownership of material resources” (1986: 151). But, as Brightman (2016) has recently argued, the generality of such a condition may be quite limited, as asymmetry and difference are at the heart of sociality in many lowland South American societies, playing an essential role in an idiom where Amerindians claim to own material resources and human persons. In many cases across lowland South America, hierarchy and ownership appear *intertwined with*— and not opposed to— the acts of care and giving that define relations among intimates.

These are, I think, essential points, and the growing study of ownership relations in lowland South America has provided a more nuanced way of thinking about hierarchy, care, and dependency. In moving away from Overing’s work, however, I fear that an attention to the everyday matters of ethical evaluation has been overlooked. The feeding and care that constitutes ownership is an integral part of domestic life, even if its boundaries are ultimately porous and elastic. In this dissertation, I want to suggest that hierarchical relations of ownership, given as they rely on actions rather than ideas, contain important moral presuppositions. Ownership concerns the owning particular entities, and as such, cannot be a fixed condition (Allard 2019). Its modalities are subject to risk. Ache ownership provides a privileged case to examine the role of ethics in ownership. As a relation, ownership is subject to evaluation, e.g. one can “own another well” (*reko gatu*) or “own them poorly” (*reko buchã*). One can “give well” (*mẽ gatu*) or be “badly stingy” (*tã buchã*).

Persons are capable of breaking with their relations and entering into new relations. One may become a “former-owner.” It follows that an essential aspect of ownership is the evaluation of it, and not merely the continuous feeding and care thought to create it.

A host of evaluative possibilities emerge from this point. It places ethical practice in the encompassing web of the kin and co-residents, precisely those with whom one regularly interacts. In this dissertation, I ask the following questions: *In what contexts do people come to own others? How are these relations evaluated, and in what situations are the relations eclipsed or foreclosed?* I show that the concept of “owning” others has been essential to Ache relations among living kin and with a host of distant others: the dead, enemy Ache, whites, and finally, their new relations to the Christian God. As I argue in the coming chapters, it is in the evaluating of these relations that the Ache have fashioned a history.

The Ache

The Ache are a Tupi-Guarani speaking people who traditionally lived as hunter-gatherers in Paraguay’s Atlantic coastal forests. Their historical territory, in its outer limits, is roughly demarcated by the long mountainous edge of the Paraná Plateau in the west, and the curvature of the Paraná River that forms Paraguay’s border with Brazil to the east and with Argentina to the south (see LaHitte 1897; Mayntzhusen 2009 [1948]; Hill and Hurtado 1996). The cordilleras of the Paraná Plateau are part of a massive sheet of basaltic rock whose western edge winds its way down the entire length of eastern Paraguay. The cordilleras are (or were until the last decades of the

twentieth century) covered with thick forests, like most of the land to the east, though at various points along their chain, bare ridges of exposed basalt protrude from the forested cover. They aren't particularly tall – in most places they only reached around 400 meters in height – but until the mid-twentieth century, the dense forests and rolling terrain were enough to channel most of the eastward travel into a few flat-bottomed fluvial valleys and the rivers that flowed through them.

The glimpses of Ache history available to anthropologists and historians come from the few institutions that defined Paraguay's rural east. The area would become the backdrop for one of the most ambitious missionary projects in Christian history – the Jesuit missions of Rio de La Plata (1609-1767) that would inspire praise in Montesquieu and Rousseau and contempt in Voltaire. The first mention of the Ache in written sources comes from the writings of these Jesuit missionaries, which is perhaps unsurprising given that of all the frontier institutions, missions represented some of the most intense areas of interaction between Amerindians and Europeans. During the colonial period, the Province of Paraguay lay at the fault lines of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, a fact that made Paraguay, despite its lack of mineral wealth, strategically important for the rival monarchies for 300 years. Initially, at least, both empires seemed sympathetic to the order. In 1587, the first Jesuits arrived into the province of Guairá from Brazil, where they had already been proselytizing for nearly thirty years. Guairá was a fertile area on the eastern banks of the upper Paraná River that had been occupied by Spanish colonists from Asunción since the 1560s. The Jesuits established their first mission there in 1610 on the model of those they had already constructed in Brazil. The Jesuits called their mission

towns, *reducciones*, or reductions, places where the Indians were “reduced” into European civilization. The idea, as the provincial superior Manuel da Nóbrega explained, was “to concentrate the Indians from scattered villages into one large village. Whereas before many of us were needed to teach and indoctrinate them because they were so scattered about, now that they are concentrated together, fewer of us are needed. In this way it is easier to correct their errors and sins which they committed because so were so inconveniently located” (cit. Hemming 1978: 104).

The Jesuits organized expeditions called *excursiones* for the purposes of bringing uncovered Indians to the missions. These expeditions, which could last for months, initially involved pairs of Jesuit missionaries visiting larger villages to forge alliances with Guarani leaders. Once settled in the missions, the Indians would be subjected to strict disciplinary regime of liturgical devotion and collective work. Their lives habituated in the spiritual exercises of the Jesuits and disciplined through regimented labor (agriculture for subsistence and yerba mate gathering for market), the Jesuit missionaries hoped to bring the Indians to God.

The idea of concentrating the Indians of the Paraná plateau failed for several reasons. Waves of epidemics brought from Europe, the most deadly of which was smallpox, killed many tens of thousands of Indians. “Fearful of the contagion, many neophytes and catechumens fled to the jungles, postponing the salvation of their souls to that of their bodies,” as one Jesuit father described it (Techo [1673] 2005: 313). The mission Indians also became the targets of the Portuguese slavers, the infamous *bandeirantes* who captured Indians to work in the colony’s gold and diamond mines. In the 1628, *bandeirantes* completely overran the Spanish crown’s Indian towns

(*pueblos de indios*) and raided Jesuit mission settlements for indigenous slaves.

Beleaguered by epidemics and *bandeirante* raids, the Jesuit missionaries and their Guarani charges withdrew from the thirteen Guaira mission towns in 1631 and retreated southwest to reestablish their missions away from the Portuguese threat.

Most of the missions were rebuilt between the Tebicuary and Uruguay Rivers in what was then called the Province of Paraná. Jesuit missionaries immediately set out to repopulate the missions by incorporating the nearby Guarani villages, just as they had done in Guaira, and in the missions above the Paraná River, this sweep included a small number of Ache bands. The Jesuits sent Guarani neophytes into the forest to capture Ache bands and bring them to the missions. The efforts of José de Insaurralde, the superior of the Reducción de Jesus, to make contact with Ache bands along the Monday River in the final years of the seventeenth century produced this account:

...At daybreak, [Guarani neophytes from the missions] approach the camp silently and suddenly attack the [Ache] Guayaguis, who awake in the hands of those they imagine their enemies. In order that they don't escape in the commotion, or perhaps to defend themselves, or they get carried away with excessive force, [the neophytes] tie them up with the rope they had brought. They search for the children who tend to hide in the forest, especially searching the highest trees where they climb. When these matters are taken care of, [the neophytes] sit with them quite lovingly, giving them food and dressing them in order that they can appear decently in front of others. With these demonstrations of affection, they slowly lose their fear, bury their false apprehension, and return to themselves.

It is proposed to them then to become sons of God and embrace the faith of Christ, and as they have few apprehensions, they easily surrender to the truth and come happily to the missions. They are baptized and leave as Christians, corrected by their religious obligations. If these raids would not occur, the devil would achieve the designs he endeavors: that by putting such a fear of strangers in their souls, he enriches his diabolical plots and misleads the sons of Adam (Lozano 1873: 420-1).

In their brief writings on the Ache, the Jesuits in the Reducción de Jesus wrote of the parallels they saw between the qualities that the Ache attributed to their dead and damnation by fire – parallels they interpreted as likely prefigurations of Christian doctrine. One Jesuit father described them this way: “In matters of religion, they hold no error or superstition, nor do they worship objects; they only have a simple understanding of a one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, and some careless vestiges of a belief that the wicked are punished with flames and fire, which gives them some fear” (Lozano 1873: 418-19).¹

At their height of the missions in the 1730s, 30 missions would house almost 150,000 (mostly) Guarani Indians, so the Ache presence of only a few bands in the Jesuit missions could never be considered anything more than miniscule. Moreover, given the high rates of mortality on the missions from smallpox and other diseases, we cannot be sure that any Ache left the missions once they entered them. Smaller groups were regularly decimated. The fate of one unnamed band of hunter-gatherers incorporated into a mission along the Paraná River was typical: “The [Guarani] neophytes united 73 of these Indians in the mission, but accustomed to live in another climate and to eat different foods, all except 4 died that year, being baptized before” (Techo 2005 [1673]: 314). In any case, when the Jesuit project was consumed by the political machinations of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1767 and the missionaries were expelled, written information about the Ache would cease for another hundred years.

¹ The original text reads: “*En materia de religión, no tienen error, o superstición, ni adoran cosa alguna; sola si, tienen un simple conocimiento de un solo Dios verdadero, Criador del cielo y de la tierra, y algunos vestigios muy remisos de que son castigados los malos con llamas y fuego, de que conciben algún miedo.*”

After the expulsion of the Jesuits, mission towns became collection points for state-owned yerba mate production, and later, company towns for yerba mate conglomerates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From these former mission towns, groups of workers set off to harvest the yerba mate trees that grew in anthropogenic clusters throughout the eastern forests, and some of the country's largest *yerbales* grew in the known territories of Ache subgroups (e.g. the Jejui River basin, the vicinity of Villarrica, the basin between the Monday and Ñacunday Rivers, and along the banks of the Paraná River.) Most teams numbered between 20 and 35 men, but in larger *yerbales* such as those in Caazapá, the number of workers might reach as many as 50. For months at a time, isolated parts of the forest would erupt in a flurry of activity. Workers spent several weeks clearing the forest and building what would amount to a small town in the forest. Thereafter, every day for several months, each worker cut and bagged hundreds of kilograms of tea leaves from the yerba stands in the area, before carrying the heavy bundles back to the yerba camps to be weighed, dried over slow burning fires, milled, packaged, and sent downriver to be warehoused in sizable towns. Hastily erected clapboard houses sprung up to store the provisions the workers consumed, and mules and oxen were corralled to work the mill and to transport the heavy bags of tealeaves to ports along the river.

The Ache would find new enemies in these strangers who moved into their lands to harvest yerba mate and to cut timber.² Ache defended themselves by shooting

² Mbya Guarani warriors attacked a band of Ache on the Tebicuary River in June of 1908 (Mayntzhusen Nachschrift, July 27th, 1908). Fighting between Ache and Guarani continued intermittently into the latter half of the 20th century: In 1973, an Ache man and his wife were shot

them when they encountered them in their territory, and according to some authors, appear to have resorted to sabotage in an attempt to drive them out. The missionary Federico Vogt (1904) wrote that the Ache “sometimes cause great damage in local yerba camps by setting the yerba on fire. A few years ago, the Paraguayan Domingo Portillo lost about 400 arrobas [ca. 4,500 kilos]. One of his camps has thus been called ‘Campamento Guayaki’ since that time” (1904: 215).³ Other accounts from the time noted that the Ache periodically destroyed bridges to disrupt the traffic of mules between the yerba mate stands and rivers or shot the mules outright for their meat (Bove 1885). But the yerba camps were only temporary, however, and the commotion would cease as suddenly as it began. Once the yerba stand had been emptied of its tealeaves and its firewood exhausted, the camp would be abandoned, and the *yerbal* left to regrow for 2-3 years.

These intruders were more than simply a source of irritation for the Ache, however. The *yerbales* and logging camps that gradually appeared in the Ache’s hunting grounds also became an irresistible source of tools and food. Whites were, however, dangerous. Yerba companies sometimes paid bounties to its workers for killing any Ache they encountered during their work (Miraglia 1941: 343). Still, raiding was the only means for the Ache to bring their powerful objects into the band. And given the volunteeristic nature of individual pursuits, nearly anyone could initiate a raid. (The decision to raid, in other words, was not made by consensus among all those in the band who might be affected by it.) It was initiated

while digging manioc from the gardens outside an Ava Guarani village near the Jejui Guasu River (Kim Hill, personal communication).

³ The continuous smoking of yerba mate leaves led to frequent fires in the yerba camps, so the accuracy of claims that Ache bands burned yerba mate camps in acts of sabotage is difficult to determine.

as any other collective hunting venture might be: one man might utter, "*Nandje tamberā apā djiwō mondo.*" "For us to get an axe, we should shoot a Paraguayan," and quietly wait for a few other men to join his initiative.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and perhaps before), Ache raided outsiders for anything easily moveable, mostly metal tools, manioc and corn, and particularly meat taken from livestock. In advance of a raid, bands temporarily dispersed into smaller more defensible and mobile camps, as small groups of hunters were better equipped to take the long trek to a logging camp or the Paraguayans' *estancias* to shoot the horses and cows corralled in the forest paddocks; women, children, and elder men remained behind in camp for the group to return with heavy quarters of beef or horse. With these precautions taken, Ache raids were often successful. Their trails were not so carelessly obvious, like the wide *picadas* cut by Paraguayans, and unless the Paraguayans employed skilled Guarani trackers, the Ache could usually evade their attempts at reprisal.

The Ache also occasionally raided the manioc gardens of Paraguayan and indigenous Guarani farmers during rainy periods. Rain was a substantial impediment to hunting, and after several days without food, the pangs of hunger might give way to talk of raiding a nearby manioc garden. The long roots were easy to pull from the softened ground, and the Paraguayans typically stayed in their houses during the inclement weather. A raid on manioc patch could bring a considerable yield, and women brought their carrying baskets to fill with starchy roots.

Though taking manioc had less risk of retaliation than taking domestic animals, it too could lead to violent reprisals. Retaliatory raids against Ache bands were carried out by spontaneously organized groups, ominously referred to as *comisiones*, “commissions.” In some cases, *estancieros* and yerba mate bosses mobilized peons and local farmers – both Paraguayan and Guarani – into becoming the rank and file for the movements.⁴ In other cases, small farmers called on family, neighbors, and local police to avenge the loss of livestock or crops. These raids were local in both their organization and intent. The sheer brutality of their response, it was hoped, might deter the Ache from future raids on the farms and yerba mate stands in the area, or better yet, it might encourage the Ache to move out of the area altogether. One Paraguayan campesino explained, “The [Ache] Guayaki started with robbing the farms and stealing tools, and ultimately, if we didn’t take measures, they came to shoot someone with arrows. Thus, whenever we came across the footpaths of the [Ache] Guayaki, we would organize a group to find their camp and to kill a few of them. That way, they would stay in the forest and they wouldn’t bother us anymore” (cit. Renshaw & Reed 1990: 22).

One Ache man would recall a raid on a Paraguayan’s manioc garden outside of Villarrica in the early 1960s this way:

⁴ Several authors (Bertoni 1941 [1929]; Martens 1902) make reference to an incident in 1899 that occurred several kilometers inland from the mouth of the Monday River, in which local managers of the yerba mate company Industrial Paraguaya tasked Mbya Guarani to lead an attack on nearby Ache. The attack was evidently in retaliation for an Ache raid on the yerba camp for mules. Armed with rifles and bows, the Mbya killed six Ache and captured two. Contemporary reports also cite cases where Guarani sold their Ache captives to Paraguayans as slaves (Vogt 1904: 215). In other cases, such as after two Ache women were captured in the 1920s when raiding an Ava Guarani garden for manioc, the Ache apprehended by Guarani spent the rest of their lives among them (Richard Reed, personal communication).

Father went to the manioc garden. His wife went along with him. The children were left at camp beside grandfather. In the rain, the Ache pull manioc. In the rain, the Paraguayans don't see the Ache pulling manioc. Then many Ache pull up manioc together, then bring it back to the forest in their carrying baskets. They bring it to camp. They bring it to the camp, and father hides the children. They hide them with their mothers. Grandfather also hides with his grandchildren. Then if the Paraguayans don't come, our father calls to us. Then we move to a new camp.

We didn't see the Paraguayans. We didn't see the Paraguayans who wanted to kill us. The Paraguayans that came in the dark wanted to kill us. It was his manioc garden we had been in. He killed an Ache. The Ache died. We buried the Ache killed by the Paraguayans. Another Paraguayan took a child. The Paraguayans took two children. They took the two sons of the father they shot.

The ability of Ache bands to avoid the dangers of both Paraguayan colonists and their horticulturalist Guarani neighbors rested on their mobility and their knowledge and use of terrain. The hunting and foraging practices of Ache bands were focused on the dense forests of the interior, and they avoided larger rivers, where extractive industries focused their efforts and indigenous Guarani had established their villages.⁵ Moreover, the principal extractive industries in the east—yerba mate gathering and logging, whose workers made up the largest group of Paraguayans in the rural east until the turn of the century—were seasonal, and their operation was largely confined to a short distance from rivers they used for transportation. Though the harvesting of yerba mate occasionally brought the Ache and Paraguayans into close and violent contact, it does not appear that the

⁵ In most cases, natural barriers—mountains and wide rivers—prevented easy access between subgroups. It was a dangerous prospect to have no natural barriers between one's territory and the enemies. My Ache informants from the Ñacunday area spoke of an "open path" between their territory and their Ache enemies to the west, making passage between the two areas worryingly easy. Though they were never attacked, their parents and grandparents regularly monitored those westward trails for signs of intruders in their youth.

incursions of yerba workers and loggers were not enough to displace Ache bands from their core areas.

Permanent settlement of the interior of eastern Paraguay came only in the late nineteenth century when modernizing governments turned to colonization to rebuild its economy. The Ache's state of relative isolation would change rapidly in the ensuing years. Colonization would intensify with the collapse of yerba mate exports in the mid-twentieth century, when the government attempted to relocate campesinos in the area around Asunción to the vast eastern forests formerly owned by the yerba companies. The frontier towns that once served as yerba collection centers would become points of departure for the state's haphazard settlement programs. Scores of settlers moved east.

There was no single moving line of settlement from the capital Asunción into the rural east. There were several different fronts for colonization in the 20th century beginning at different places and at different times. I list here the three largest and most consequential for the Ache:

1. Beginning in the 1890s, German-Brazilian settlers established agricultural colonies along the Paraná River in the country's southeast. The effect on the Ache in the area began slowly. According to the prospector Friedrich Mayntzhusen (n.d.), in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Southern Ache still regularly foraged as close as 5 km north of the town of Encarnación. In the following decades, however, further waves of settlers would push the Ache roughly 30 km north past the Jakui River. The Ache subgroup to the immediate north, living at the confluence of the Ñacunday and Yñaro Rivers, would encounter intense pressure from this wave of

colonists in the 1940s (see Thompson [forthcoming] for a detailed history of Paraguay's southeastern colonies and the Ache living in the area).

2. As settlement of southeastern Paraguay intensified, successive national governments sought to find more efficient lines of travel to the area. The construction of the rail line from Villarrica to Encarnación spurred settlement of the east-central Caaguazú region, with homesteads following along the rail line as it pushed further east. With the permanent presence of more outsiders, the Ache bands increasingly suffered from attacks. In the 1940s and 50s in the small frontier towns of San Juan Nepomuceno, Avaí, and Tavaí, crews of forest trackers called *montaraces* began raiding Ache camps for the particular purpose of capturing Ache to sell as slaves in local markets.

3. At least for a while, the Northern Ache were spared some of the worst abuses endured by their Southern enemies. The rural northeast remained the heart of the country's yerba industry, throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, and seasonal yerba collection was less invasive for the Ache than the permanent settlement of colonists in their territory. Moreover, when incoming settlers did displace Ache bands from the foothills of the low-lying San Joaquin Mountains in the 1930s, they were able to relocate northward behind the higher sections of the cordillera around the headwaters of the Jejui River (Hill and Hurtado 1996).⁶ Yet such solutions would be short-lived. Seeking an efficient overland route from the central region with the northeast, the government began construction on a road to the city of Saltos de Guaira on the Paraná River. The road, begun in 1965 and

⁶ In 1943, Mayntzhusen reported Northern Ache living as far northeast as the Paraná River floodplain between Saltos de Guara and Delegación Pedro Juan Caballero (Mayntzhusen Nachschrift).

completed in 1968, would run directly through the middle of Northern Ache territory.

The Ache were badly out-armed and increasingly outnumbered by the settlers moving into their territories, a fact that even by those Ache who confidently proclaimed themselves “unafraid of Paraguayans” had to admit. The centuries of intermittent contact with missionaries, loggers, and yerba mate collectors – though hardly inconsequential in their effects – had not reached such an encompassing scale. The construction of roads and railways in the east brought scores of settlers into Ache territory, initiating a process that would see all Ache bands settled on government reservations or mission-owned communities by 1978.

Leaving the Past Behind

The foregoing history, compiled from a smattering of available historical sources, is meant to provide some background for the reader. It is nevertheless not among the perspectives that Ache have of their own past. This is not merely because the Ache no longer remember the distance past of Jesuit missions. The “they” of historical narrative differs fundamentally in its assumption from the “we” of an Ache view on the past. The subject of that history is not the same. “The history narrated by native people is the history of kinship,” Peter Gow writes. “It is very far from being simply the victims’ accounts of colonialism and exploitation, and is quite different from our outsiders’ vision of the history...” (Gow 1991: 286). Much of the import of Gow’s statement will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow. But for

the meantime, we can gain an appreciation for that difference through the terms the Ache talk about themselves.

Most twentieth century anthropologists and lay observers referred to the Ache with the name given to them by their Guarani enemies: "Guayaki." The meaning of the term "guayaki" has never been firmly established, though some anthropologists have fancifully translated it as "forest rats." Whatever the term might have actually meant, we know that the Guarani freely applied the stem "guay-" to the names of their adjacent enemies: "Guaykuru" for their enemies in the Chaco and *cerrado*, "Guayana" for their Ge-speaking enemies to the east, and so on. The stem "guay-," in other words, points to an otherness that the Guarani defined themselves against. The antagonistic connotations of "Guayaki" are not lost on the Ache, and they dislike the term. They are, as so many Amerindians refer to themselves, "people," *ache*. For this reason, anthropologists have gradually abandoned the term "Guayaki" as an ethnic group on the grounds that it is a slur or a colonial invention.

But trading out "Guayaki" for "Ache" is not so straightforward a solution as one might hope, as "Ache" is not a natural label lying in wait to name some discrete group of people.⁷ The term presupposes particular notions of identity and a particular sociology, for every "name" includes a set of explicit or implicit assumptions about who or what is the same and who or what is different. This is best understood by appealing to the strongly performative quality of Ache identity and relatedness. Who and what a person *is* is a consequence of that person's habits and the social relationships he or she develops. The Ache are not Ache because they

⁷ To say nothing of the cases in Amazonia where names bestowed by enemies have become self-designations, such as the adoption of "Amondawa" by the Tupi-Kawahiva.

are born that way: they are Ache because they *act* that way, they practice certain activities or typified ways of living. To be Ache you must do “Ache things,” most of which revolve around the hunting and eating of certain animals, the embodiment of certain typified emotional states, and the maintenance of particular bodily habits. Being Ache is both mutable and material (and not, as in prevalent formulations of “indigeneity,” something based on lineage, self-identification, or bureaucratic definition – forms of indigenous identity defined in terms, if not recognized *by*, then at least recognizable *to* the state.

Identity is only as strong as the habits one keeps, so the Ache say that if one stops acting like an Ache, one stops being Ache: One may cease to be Ache through the failed display of valued skills, or by living among neighboring enemies and assuming their associated behaviors.⁸ Thus, a person who leaves the band to live with Paraguayans, after a time may cease to be Ache and become Paraguayan. On several occasions, the *berupware* – those born to Ache parents who were later raised by Paraguayans after their capture, who had become accustomed to their food and adopted their speech – were described to me as “not-Ache.” While I never encountered a reciprocal case where a Guarani or Paraguayan “became Ache,” examples of this transformation do appear in lowland ethnographies. In one such case, Wari’ women told Beth Conklin that her blood would become “truly Wari’” if she married a Wari’ man and bore his children (Conklin and Morgan 1996; see also

⁸ One Ache man I knew, after living with a different subgroup for decades, ceased to refer to the original subgroup as *ache gatu*, “good Ache,” the customary self-designation for one’s kin and potential co-residents. The habits of his natal group, had become foreign to him, made them *ache gatullã*, “not good ache.”

Gow 1991).⁹ The relevant point here, it would seem, is that the essentialism of Ache identity (if it can still be called “essentialist”) adheres to individuals only insofar as they act out that essence.¹⁰

But even here a singular essence seems to simplify too much. “Ache” may refer to collectivities far larger and far smaller than an “ethnic group.” In its broadest sense, it means “people” or humans in general. In a narrower usage, it refers to the “Ache people.” In a still narrower usage, it may only to “initiated adults.” In still other cases, “ache” refers only to “initiated men.” In each sense, the constitution of a specific “we” depends on a corresponding other, which constitutes its exterior: animals, non-indigenous people, women, or children. As a result, an initiated man (for example) may refer without contradiction to the same woman as “ache” in one context and “not-ache” in another.¹¹ Even in contexts where “ache” does refer to

⁹ Conklin and Morgan stress the symmetry of this process: “...In 1986, two Wari’ women were impregnated by Brazilian rubber-tappers and gave birth at a maternity ward in town. The mothers returned to their own village and raised their children in exemplary Wari’ fashion. However, villagers—especially their own family members—commented repeatedly and pointedly that the two mothers were no longer truly Wari’: they had lost their Wari’ blood and had become *wijam*, outsiders” (Conklin & Morgan 1996: 677).

¹⁰ The construction of group identity emerges as a set of shared attributes, frequently in contrast to other groups. In this sense, Ache identity might be called essentialist, but it is virtual and anyone’s claim on it is tenuous. The sense of collective boundedness is more often permeated and expanded than maintained.

¹¹ The extension of autonyms in lowland South America can vary dramatically across multiple scales. As far as I know, the first instance of this was an observation by a mid-eighteenth century Jesuit proselytizing among the Guarani groups that surrounded the Ache. Frustrated by the lack of equivalences between Latin and Guarani and the supposed inability of the Guarani language to capture the transcendental properties of terms like “God,” “man,” “space,” and “time,” the Bohemian missionary Martin Dobrizhoffer remarked, “The Guarani use the word “*ava*”, which denotes “man” [*virum*] and “the Guarani nation,” as they lack a name for that which signifies “person” [*hominem*]. *Ava che* includes three senses, namely: “I am Guarani,” “I am a person [*homo*],” or “I am a man” [*vir*]; which of these is meant must be understood from the tenor of the conversation (Dobrizhoffer *Historia de Abiponibus* vol. 2: 184). The indexical quality of *ava*, long overlooked by Tupi-Guarani scholars, has become central to Viveiros de Castro’s (1998) notion of perspectivism, in which various entities of the cosmos—from living persons, to animals, to the dead—see themselves as humans. In such a view, terms like *ava* mark the human point of view as a condition: “*Aba* (*awa*, *avá*) means —human being. (In certain Tupi languages, the term applies

what we might call “the Ache people,” people who held in common a similar language and religious life, the group constituted does not denote a self-reflexive identity to which all people could identify, belong, or find common cause. “Ache” was not a unit for achieving common goals.

At best, and in advance of much of the ethnography that would give the term clarity, “Ache” is probably best described as a way of living. Those who called themselves “ache” lived in foraging bands led by influential men and married into other allied foraging bands led by other influential men. Few in number, they trekked and camped over a vast expanse of land that covered most of eastern Paraguay. To be Ache was to hunt and eat certain animals, to embody certain typified emotional states, to maintain particular bodily habits, and to hold certain experiences in common. Whether another Ache was kin, an ally, or an enemy, they might still be considered “ache” by the way they lived. And to the extent that they lived as one’s co-residents did, they were “good Ache” (*ache gatu*) and not “strange Ache” (*ache purã*) like the enemy bands around them.

It is only by understanding “Ache” as a way of life that we can understand the claims, made by some (whom I had assumed “were Ache”) that *there are no longer any Ache at all*. To be “not-Ache,” “no longer Ache,” or “once Ache” is to have abandoned a life in the forest and the kinds of social relationships that exemplified

also, or especially, to humans of the masculine sex (no one is perfect)). *Abaeté* indicates, therefore, the real human being, legitimate people, veridical, that is, us. —Us, that is, —them, the Tupi. I am not speaking about us, who are here, but about an us identified with—real humanity. *Abaeté* is who says —*Abaeté*” (Viveiros de Castro and Goldman 2012: 423). The ability for various entities to take up a human perspective in a variety of contexts thus accounts for the “equivocations” of the term.

it.¹² *Ore achebu ekōmbu ka-dji*, “When we were Ache, we lived in the forest.” I heard references to “when we were Ache” in my conversations with older persons with some regularity, always followed by a record of the animals they had hunted and eaten, the kind of bodies they used to have, the ferocity they possessed as warriors, and the devotion they had as kin.¹³ It was simply impossible, an utter contradiction, to be Ache while living on a reservation where such possibilities were denied.¹⁴

The Plan of This Dissertation

Roy Wagner (1986) once wrote, “Most good ethnographies are rather Calvinist,” in the sense that their intelligibility depends on ethnographers’ abilities to moderate – to “sanctify,” in Calvin’s words – the disorderly impulses of their inner dialogues. The ethnographer’s interactions in the field are numerous and the ways to interpret them unbounded for ethnographies to simply speak for themselves.

Paradoxically, for anthropologists to communicate the “messiness” of the ethnographic and the historical realities they study, they must be more – not less – attuned to some sort of organization that guides their work. I think this is true. The ways that ethnographers might present this order are fairly catholic, though, and the way I have presented this dissertation warrants some comment.

¹² A conditional/temporal use of “ache” often appeared with the suffix *-tywemi*, “what we habitually did, but no longer do.”

¹³ A body is a history, the sedimentation of a past. The effects of contact registered in bodily substance – what Vilaça calls a “contact physiology” (2007: 183). “In a certain sense, *tradition is internalized*, though not as a belief or an attribute of spirit, but rather *as food, as body liquids, and even clothes*, when we consider it as also constituting a body. To change tradition [...], for Amerindians is to change body” (Vilaça 2007: 184).

¹⁴ The criteria for remaining Ache had not changed. The horizon of the actions that members reciprocally attribute to “being Ache” had not changed. But their behavior *had* changed, and it had changed so quickly and so drastically, that they no longer recognized themselves in the habitual actions that made one “Ache.” They could no longer call themselves “Ache.”

The following dissertation is a historical ethnography, though my concerns in this dissertation are primarily ethnographic rather than historical. It is to tell the story of a relation through history rather than to narrate a history about “the Ache,” which, as we have already seen, is an illusive category. I had originally intended this dissertation to include a discussion of the period following the departure of NTM missionaries from the Cerro Moroti community to the present day, though for unplanned reasons, this proved impossible for this project. If the current work resembles “salvage ethnography” in some respects, it is because the past remains somewhat untethered from the present. But perhaps the accident fits well with an “orphaned past.”

The first part of the dissertation deals with the decades before the arrival of Protestant missionaries (a period that spans roughly 1930-1970), and the second part addresses some of the changes that have issued from that arrival. Beyond that basic division, however, my interest lies in ownership as a source for action and an object of evaluation.

The first part of the dissertation examines Ache ownership in the context of everyday life among kin. In chapter 1, I describe how Ache oriented themselves towards specific persons or beings in order to effect material transformations in their bodies. In coming to experience the relation of acting and being acted upon, those who give food and grow the others create a hierarchical relation of ownership. In the first two chapters, I show that Ache mobility was not a matter of collective decision-making. It was rather the outcome of following specific others. People have choices in residence, in whom they “follow,” but those choices were normatively limited to

those who “owned” them. “Following” (*mudja*), in other words, is a political act between a dependent to an owner, and persons were regularly instructed to follow those who give food to them when bands change. Ownership may be created through gifts of food that “grow others,” but it is not a static state. Ownership brings up the question of evaluation and moral criticism. In chapter 3, I describe that a specific verbal genre of scolding that happens within ownership relations. Yet, as I show, I risks involved in scolding show how tenuous the ownership relation can be. An owner’s scolding of a dependent could easily lead to accusations that he or she “owned badly.” Chapter 4 examines the implications of ownership for death. Kin relations – particularly ownership relations – are decomposed in funerary rites. For the dead to own the living is to make them co-residents in the land of the dead. Here I discuss a ritualized form of scolding meant to break the ownership relation between the living mourners and dead kin.

In the second part of the dissertation, I turn to the changes to Ache conceptions of relationality and autonomy resulting during the settlement period (1959-1978), with particularly emphasis on their conversion to evangelical Christianity. As I show in Chapter 5, ownership relations with enemy Ache and whites became central to the settlement process, and, as I describe, Ache converts found a new owner in a new Christian God. In chapter 6, I note some of the changes resulting from conversion. Though God had changed their bodies, he did not give them gifts of food in the literal sense, as “owners” did. Instead God became a new kind of owner, and his commandments redefined what ownership meant more broadly.

In this dissertation, I seek to capture neither timeless essence of “Ache-ness”

(whose limited value, giving the previous discussion, I hope is clear) nor do I want to describe a particular “point” in time. Instead I wish to describe but some of the patterns in relatedness and autonomy in “ownership” that would undergo a rapid but intelligible transformation in social practice over a few decades. The aim of the dissertation then is to make accessible some of the terms in which Ache have understood their actions since their settlement, a span of some sixty to seventy years, and how they have made sense of themselves over that time. It therefore describes a small section of the many changes the Ache have faced and is not a comprehensive history of that period. I have for the most part left aside consideration of the role of Catholic missionaries in the Ache communities of Chupa Pou and Ypetimi. I will leave it to the reader to judge whether this ethnography is “rightly ordered.”

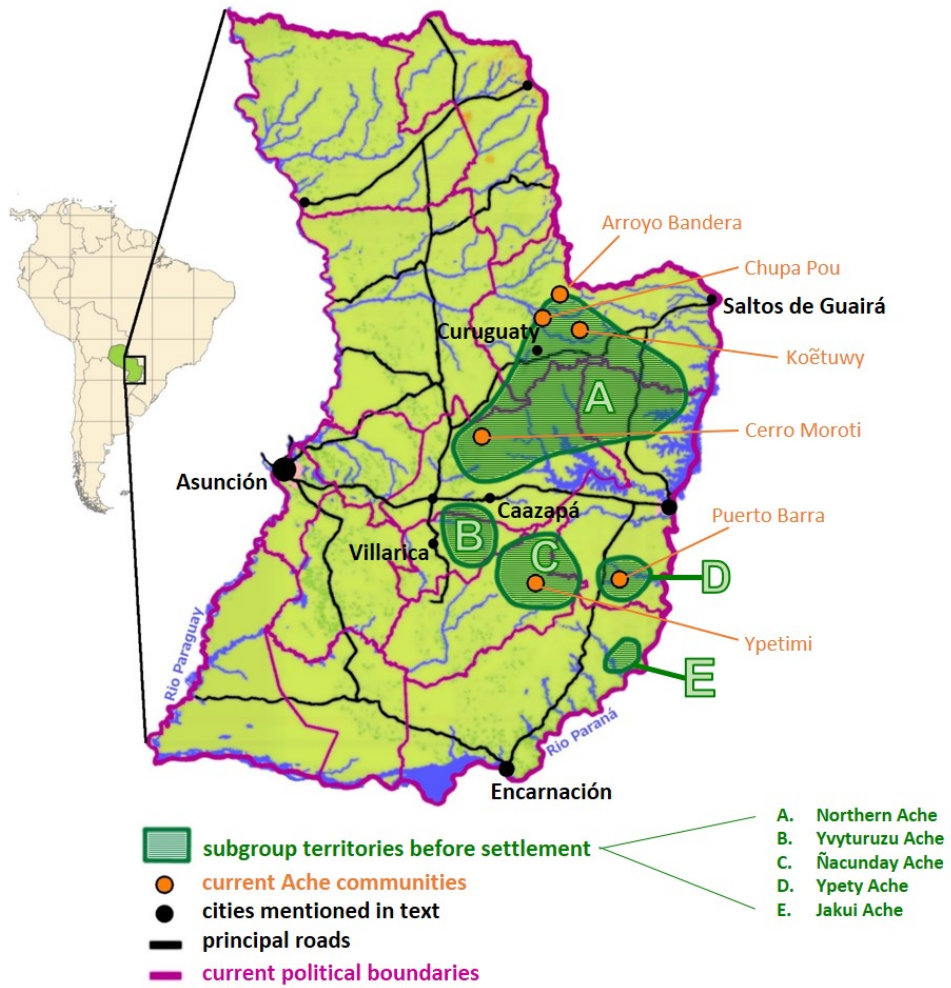


Figure 1.1. Map of Paraguay.

Chapter 1 The Give and Take of Ownership

Giving food creates an asymmetric relation between the giver who grows and the receiver who is grown. That relationship is defined by the verb *reko*, “to have or possess,” which corresponds to the widespread mode of relationship that Amazonianists have termed “ownership” or “mastery” (Fausto 2012; Bonilla 2005; Costa 2017). “Ownership,” as Luiz Costa (2017: 5) has defined it in his comprehensive study of ownership in lowland South America, is “an asymmetrical bond involving control, protection, dependency, and care,” and it is one of the principal idioms in which kinship is interpreted and conveyed, made and unmade for the Ache.

In many lowland societies, there exists a specific term to denote an “owner.” There is a term in Ache for “owner,” *dja* or *djara*, which is cognate with the same role in other Tupi-Guarani languages, but this term was rarely applied. I only ever heard it used to describe the jaguar as the “owner” or “master” of a covert class of game animals (tapir, capybara, paca, etc.) When talking about “ownership,” they referred to use the verb *reko* (“to own or possess”) or its nominalized form, *rekotygi* (“Those who habitually own/take care of others”).

The subject of the verb *reko* (i.e. the “owner”) is necessarily animate, although not necessarily human, as some non-human persons – primarily spirits – may “own” or “possess” other persons and things (see also Oakdale 2008; Kohn 2017). The things

that people can “own” may be both inanimate and animate.¹⁵ People “owned” the artifacts they make (such as bows, baskets, necklaces, and utensils); they owned the knowledge they have (particularly dreams); and they owned the parts of their body. They “owned” certain kin relations, and for those who treat animals as proper persons (Descola 2012; Viveiros de Castro 1998), it should not be surprising that notions of “ownership” should include non-humans. Women “own” the pet monkeys and coatis orphaned after hunts. The relation (or lack thereof) between the ownership of persons and the ownership of artifacts in other lowland groups has provoked some debate. McCallum (2001: 92), for example, has argued that the idiom of Cashinaiha ownership pertaining to persons is “in no way comparable” with the ownership of things, while Brightman (2016) has argued in favor of a relation between the ownership of persons and artifacts for the Trio.¹⁶ I will return to subject of non-human owners and the relation between owning people and owning objects in chapter 4 when I discuss the intentional destruction of ownership relations in Ache funerals. For now, I am essentially concerned here with animate possession resulting from transfers of food and other acts of care.

In this sense, ownership is built around the contrasts between “giver” and “one who is given.” Feeding establishes the giver’s relationship with the one fed, so that the “giver” comes to own the “one who is given” through unreciprocated transfers

¹⁵ In Guarani, possessive relations marked by pronominal possessive markers and those coded by the verb of possession (*reko*) can refer to differences in alienable and inalienable possession. The system is somewhat different in Ache, as it lacks the pronominal system (Roessler 2019), yet the Ache *reko* is similar to the Guarani possessive verb *reko* in the following respect: “The possessive relation expressed by the verb (*reko*) is more of a contingency than an inherent and durable relation. Verbal possession is more event-like than non-verbal possession, and the PSR and the PSM are closer to being encoded as participants” (Velázquez-Castillo 1996: 75).

¹⁶ This likely depends on which class of objects is considered. Indeed, the difference between persons and artifacts appears thinnest with bodily ornaments, which for many groups are considered both heritable property and components of people’s actual bodies (Miller 2009).

of food and other acts of care. There is the sense that the owner's agency directs what it possesses, supported by the fact that the verb *reko* also means, "to physically hold something." Despite such asymmetry, ownership is not a despotic partnership, as the word might suggest in English. This is for at least two reasons. First, ownership is a potentially defeasible relation. It is sustained by constant gifts of food and is susceptible to degeneration when those gifts diminish and termination when they cease. Its defeasibility is due in part to the actions of the "owned" to refuse gifts, for one party to switch residence, and so on. Secondly, ownership is not a right directly transferrable between persons but the outcome of repeatedly feeding and caring for another (Brightman 2016). While it is true that husbands "own" their wives and fathers "own" their daughters, the father's ownership does not transfer to his son-in-law after his daughter's marriage. Ownership results from the actual gifts one gives another, not abstract rights that may be traded away, so the father's ownership of his daughter and the husband's ownership of his wife result from a series of independent actions.

1.1 Kinship Preliminaries

From the earliest accounts of them by Jesuit chroniclers up until the late 20th century, the Ache trekked year-round in residentially mobile hunting bands.¹⁷ The days began and ended in forest camps, which they cleared, occupied, and then abandoned on an almost daily basis, with no semi-permanent base village to which they would return for a portion of each year. Each camp typically accommodated

¹⁷ In this, they were not only different from the Guarani but decidedly unlike the thousands of other peoples in lowland South America who lived as swidden horticulturalists.

between 20 and 40 persons (though might be twice that size at ritual gatherings of multiple bands), with the size and composition of the band varying as persons came from and went to other allied bands.

Hunting bands were contingent entities whose size and composition were influenced by a number of political and economic factors. Bands often coalesced around a group of brothers, their wives, children, unmarried sisters, and a few sons-in-law. Band residence did not differentiate one's affines from one's consanguines. Individuals often had close kin in distant bands, and their resident band was mostly composed of non-relatives (Hill et al. 2011).

If life in a band meant living in close proximity with non-relatives, it also meant that one could find kin among a number of allied bands that traveled nearby. These extra-band allies were referred to as *irōndy*, "habitual companions." As the universe of kin relations, one's *irōndy* encompassed kin, affines, and potential affines. *Irōndy* referred not to common ancestry but to the habit of living together, so that one's *irōndy* consisted of those one resided with or could reside with, but not forbearers who one had never personally encountered. Relations with *irōndy* implied some degree of friendliness and a regularity of contact, with cooperation in ritual activities and food sharing. Marriage partners might be drawn from any of the *irōndy* who hunted and camped in the peripheral reaches of their territory.

The largest grouping of consanguines was *paawe*, a "classificatory sibling" which included full siblings, half siblings, and both parallel and cross cousins, and in its broadest sense, simply meant "relative" as opposed to "stranger" (*picha*). *Picha* refers to an unrelated peer from an allied band, typically of the same generation with

whom one did or could reside, but not kin or an actual affine. The opposition between the boundaries of *pawe* (siblings, kin) and *picha*, (strangers), was one explicitly made by the Ache: *Pawellārō picha*, “Those who aren’t siblings are *picha*.” Like *pawe*, *picha* is a reciprocal term, in that someone who is *picha* to me is someone to whom I am *picha*. Yet *pawe* and *picha* are not symmetrical opposites: not everyone who is *picha* to my *pawe* is *pawe* to each other, so the distinction made between *pawe* and *picha* was not an objective designation dividing Ache society into two marriage classes or sections. Men and women were forbidden to marry anyone classified as *pawe*. The Ache did not make use of descriptive terminology or modifiers to specify marriageable collateral kin (e.g. cross cousins) that a classificatory term like *pawe* would obscure (cf. Basso 1984). One should instead seek potential marriage partners among those considered *picha*.

The notion of siblingship is an important way in which Ache created and bounded fields of relations. The bilateral range of kin had a theoretical limit of second cousins, beyond which lie *picha*, “strangers.” But in actuality, few people’s knowledge of kin extended this far. Most people might identify some second cousins though they may not be able to trace all of the intermediate links that would define them as *pawe*. It is in the more distant regions of cousinship where the boundaries between *pawe* and *picha* become more performative than classificatory, and *pawe* was often used as an idiom for solidarity and the appropriateness of mutual affection.

Ownership differs from both affinal relations and sibling relations in essential respects. While a man’s ownership of his son and a new husband’s relation to his father-in-law are both hierarchical, food was not given as an act of care. The

hierarchy among affines preceded the gift of game and occasioned it. Sibling relations, by contrast did involve acts of mutual care and affection. But they did not involve the sort of hierarchy and dependency intrinsic to ownership. I did hear of cases where older brothers “owned” their unmarried co-resident younger sisters.¹⁸ But as far as I could tell in such cases, older brothers stood in for (absent or dead) fathers, who otherwise would have nurtured their daughters until their marriage.

There is no word in the Ache language that would easily translate to “marriage.” Nor was there any formal ceremony to mark a discrete transformation between a ritual before and after. Marriage was identified with close and prolonged co-residence. Husbands and wives were those who *djapety wapy* (“sit alongside”) or *djapety djeno* (“lie alongside”) the other. Spouses were said to “own each other” as a result of close co-residence and the sharing of food, though some of my informants insisted that only men “really owned” their wives. Still, theirs was a relationship of mutual demand, in which either spouse could leave the other. And indeed, marriages were dissolved when one party left the other to reside elsewhere, something that happened quite regularly. Hill and Hurtado (1996: 219, 237) report a mean of thirteen husbands for Northern Ache women over their lifetimes.¹⁹

1.2 How Ownership is Created

The foods hunted and gathered during the day were transferred to and from persons in the late afternoon camp. If he had taken several animals, the hunter

¹⁸ Like many lowland peoples, the Ache had specific terms that point to the gender and age differences between siblings. Younger siblings call older siblings *key'y*, and older siblings call their younger siblings *tywy*. Cross-sex sibling terms do not distinguish relative age. A man calls his sister *nwy*. A woman calls her brother *kywã*.

¹⁹ This figure is slightly lower for men, because some men did not marry during their lives.

would cut a length of vine to lash to the hind legs of the animals, slinging the load over his shoulder, and with his bow and arrows in the other hand, he walked to the evening camp that has been established during the time he hunted. Those in the camp could spot a successful hunter by the blood on the points of his arrows or on his body from carrying the animal. Even before the hunters return, those in camp often knew which hunters have killed which animals from the hunters' shouts to each other during the day, which they can hear from some distance away.



Figure 1.2. Minōngi carrying a tapir head, 1982. Photo by Bjarne Fostervold (used with permission).

The hunter immediately gave up his kill upon arrival to another who would butcher, cook, and distribute it. With deliberate indifference to the camp's inquiring

excitement, he retired to the fire, lying down on a woven palm mat beside his wife. After this, he played no further role in handling the game: He was not only prohibited from eating from his kill; he was prohibited from butchering it and distributing it.²⁰ To butcher, cook, or consume one's own game – to take part in any aspect of its distribution or consumption at all – would inflict him with a debilitating impotency called *pane* that would thoroughly diminish his hunting ability in the future.

Small game animals, like armadillos and coatis, were carried inside the camp by the hunter and given directly to a woman sitting around one of the camp's hearths. Women usually butchered small animals.²¹ Animals with hair were first singed whole in the fire. As the hair burns, it was scraped off of the game with a stick or bamboo splinter until the animal is hairless. The animal was then eviscerated after the animal's hair was singed and placed separately in the coals to roast. The heart, intestines, liver, and kidneys were eaten while the men wait for the animal to finish cooking, and these too were shared.

This technique was not a practical solution for larger animals, such as the capybara, agouti, tapir, and peccary. These animals, unlike small game animals, were said to be "owned by the jaguar," who protected them and avenged their mistreatment. Women were matter-of-factly prohibited from butchering these larger game animals; the butchery and initial distribution of large game animals were instead reserved for a few senior men. Their authority to butcher and distribute the

²⁰ *Djywōndygi kai djuellā pane*, The shooter doesn't want to roast the game, it brings *pane* (Susnik 1974: 173).

²¹ Women also sometimes took part in the capture and killing of small animals, but they were prohibited from hunting larger animals.

meat of other hunters was justified in both negative and positive terms: first, as already mentioned, they must do it because the hunter who killed the animal cannot. Someone else had to do it. Yet it must be *them* – and not women or young hunters – because of the dangers that derive from butchering certain large game animals. They were “those who had repeatedly seen it done,” and because of this experience, they were obliged to perform this ritual task not just for the successful hunter’s benefit but also for all those in the camp.

Butchery could be dangerous work, and large game animals had to be disarticulated in very precise ways. It took the knowledge and practiced hands of a senior man to (for example) disarticulate a capybara’s mandible or to remove a tapir’s tongue – procedures that had no direct bearing on the portioning of food. Any errant cuts made by the butcher could have dangerous consequences, and one could never be sure the deleterious effects caused by a butcher’s mistakes would be limited to the butcher himself: the butcher might grow sick and frail; a jaguar (the “owner” of large game animals) might attack the camp; or the butcher’s hunting prowess might dry up through a debilitating condition known as *pane*.

Given that the hunter was often the inferior of the butcher in some social sense, it might appear fitting to describe the transfer of large game animals from the hunters who killed them to the seniors who butchered them as an act of “appropriation” (cf. Rivière 1984). One could see in the hunter’s giving up of his game to a butcher the loss of the benefits of giving: that the butcher, in giving away what he did not himself kill, would make the hunter’s kill his own. (After all, as Machiavelli cautioned, it was only politically wise to be generous when giving away *other*

people's property.) This may be the case. But the notion of "appropriation" depends on some preexisting relation between the hunter and the game he killed, and empirically, I have found no evidence to support that relation.

The butchery of large game animals falls to senior men because of the dangers these game animals pose, and the butcher's precautions represented only part of those play in the butchery and consumption. From the time the animal has been butchered to the time it has been eaten, the camp's residents shared a common stance toward game animal. Even though everyone in the band was typically quite hungry by the end of the day, those in the camp exhibited muted interactions among themselves and with their food. When eating, one should neither stand up nor lie down but sit with folded legs. Speech was similarly muted. One should not speak loudly or laugh, but eat calmly with requisite restraint. There was, moreover, great emphasis on disposing of the bones of some game animals properly. The bones of capybara and monkey should be broken apart, burned, or buried and not tossed carelessly outside the camp. If these precautions were not taken, a jaguar – the master of these animals – would follow and attack them. The precautions that motivate the hunter's giving up his kill therefore seem less a cynical strategy for seniors to appropriate the food of younger hunters than a general concern with the dangers of killing and eating animals with whom they share a basic subjectivity (Fausto 2007).

Furthermore, even if the hunter could eat his own kill, he was not effaced from it entirely. The hunter's affines and/or ritual kin received the jowls or some other coveted piece of meat. It is only after these relations have made claims on their

portions that the butcher distributes whatever remains, and as we will see, he has little discretion in directing specific transfers outside of his hearth. Given the relative positions of killer and butcher, the term “appropriation” seems inappropriate in the first place.

The terms that describe food transfers in the anthropological literature (e.g. sharing, distribution, exchange, etc.) do not find ready equivalents in the Ache language. The Ache terms that refer to the transfer of food derive from *mě'ě*, “to give.” Syntax may lay stress on the giver or the recipient in a variety of ways, as the following examples show:

1. *De mēwe go chope*, “You gave it to me.”
2. *Chope de mēwe go*, “You gave it to me.”
3. *De chope mēwe go*, “You gave it to me.”

Nevertheless, even in cases where the recipient was stressed, there was not (linguistically, at least) a sense of the recipient’s activity involved in the transfer, and there is no word in the Ache language that would imply the receipt of something from someone. The closest equivalent is the passive form of *mě'ě* (*mēmby*), “to be given” something. To be given something is to be the object of another’s action; because of another’s gift, (something) has entered one’s grasp or the immediate space of his/her body.²²

Of course the linguistic focus in Ache on acts of giving over receiving does not diminish the practical importance of receiving food. While the terms themselves

²² Exchange, by contrast, involves the going out of something and the coming back of something else. The first gift obliges the one who receives it to reciprocate. But sharing involves not a contract or an exchange but an expression of sentimental friendship. Sharing is one-directional, which means that it does not require a promise in return. As Bourdieu has argued, the difference between the two is largely an effect of time (and the interests behind it), which makes one-way and two-way transfers analytically difficult to separate. The difference between exchange and sharing may then be purely evaluative.

focus on the actions of the giver, the recipient of food is not practically effaced. Persons might solicit gifts of food, and people might refuse what was offered them. For example, in the aftermath of a quarrel, angry wives might refuse meat offered to them by their husbands, only accepting the same meat when it was passed through one or several intermediaries.

Division involves thinking about a whole in terms of its parts. In sharing, a whole entity is divided into *equal* parts. And this is often how anthropologists have viewed sharing. For Service (1966), the “sharing out” of food is an expression of hunter-gatherer egalitarianism and the alleged density and strength of their social relations. The person one shares with will share in turn when he gets meat, and this web of mutual obligation sustains the life of the group. Abundance and hunger are shared alike. For cultural ecologists, this qualitative equality is reckoned quantitatively: Distribution is understood to be a function of the weight of the animal and the number of the claimants, and because everyone supposedly gets a share of the game, the identity of the recipient is irrelevant.²³ In each of these perspectives, neither the identity of the recipient nor the identity of the thing given appears to matter much in distribution.

Yet the identity of the giver, recipient, and the kind of food given did seem to matter in the particulars of Ache distribution: During the first phase of division, the butcher divided the animal into a fixed number of pieces. In butchering large game animals, such as a peccary or deer, the following portions were cut: *tō* (head and neck), *pekā* (front shoulders), *pyte* (the back, in two halves, each with a rib section),

²³ The size of the share given to a hearth is proportional to the number of people sitting there (Kaplan and Hill 1985: 233).

kymaka akā (thigh), and *tayro* (a large piece of rump meat, cut into two halves). These animals were cut into nine pieces. Smaller animals, such as armadillos and coati, were typically quartered, with their fatty skin cut into a small number of strips for distribution, amounting to no more than six or seven pieces. In any case, it is the kind of animal and not the available number of persons or hearths that dictates the number of initial portions.

There is no specific term in the Ache language for “sharing” or “distribution.” There is *mēreko*, “to give repeatedly.” The postposition *reko*²⁴ here signifies the repetition or continuation of the verb it modifies, signifying in this case that multiple acts of giving take place in some span of time.²⁵ The verbs that describe the butcher’s actions – to “cut” (*mondo* or *kychi*) or “cut into strips” (*bowo*) – imply the distribution that follows them.

For heuristic purposes, we may distinguish between two forms of distribution based on their relation to residential units. Each Ache band occupied a single camp within which were found individual family clusters. A prominent feature of every family group is its fire (*tata*), which is maintained a fire burning constantly. Hearths were a sort of residential atom of Ache kinship: clustered together around each fire were parents, unmarried children, and perhaps for a short period of bride service, a newly married daughter and her husband.

The initial gift moves from the butcher (or the butcher’s spouse) to someone from a different hearth: The first distribution of the animal is made in large uncooked

²⁴ This term is a homonym to the verb *reko* signifying ownership.

²⁵ But that span is indeterminate. *Mēreko* may refer to a person’s repeated gifts to another over a year or more; or it may refer to a butcher’s distribution of portions of game gifts to multiple people in a period of minutes.

portions to each hearth in the camp. Frequently, children act as intermediaries to deliver portions of meat to others. This initial portioning by the butcher to each hearth initiates a series of further transfers. Once the meat reached another hearth, it would be completely cooked and then further divided among those sitting around the fire. Here, close kinship was the factor that sets the pattern of the giving.

Hearths are only a few meters away from each other, and the butcher's initial transfers of meat to each hearth are visible to everyone. The distributor's portioning is carefully watched, and his or her omissions may come under stinging rebuke. Those in the camp attempted to direct the portioning of game through a variety of linguistic means. Onlookers are quick to remind the distributors who has yet to receive a share.

Dja kymino ymaba rōnde kyminorō
paycha berōrā. Kyminope mellādjipa?

[A woman to her husband]: "Your grandchild might not fully grow if you never feed him. Are you the one who never feeds his grandchild?"

Rayperō mē'ē. Raype mellādjipa?

[Mother to her son]: "Give to your son. Are you one who doesn't give to your son?"

Adults might also direct food *away* from certain people by invoking restrictions on particular foods: "The white-lipped peccary was never eaten by the female initiate (*daregi*). That's what the fathers said." Others offered their confirmation. "It was like that." "Yes, that was how they said it."²⁶

²⁶ Some considerations were general: Older people with poor teeth "did not know how to eat" tougher cuts of meat, so they would be given soft parts, such as heart, lungs, etc. Brains were given to women, as men would become *pane* if they ate them. Other recipients stood in some particular relation to the hunter who killed the game animal: The hunter's mother-in-law would receive the head of the animal.

Portions were occasionally solicited. A child might call out, "I want the thigh," as a parent was portioning the meat, but my informants were equivocal about whether this was considered behavior appropriate for an adult. Only children openly complained about the portions they received or the stinginess of the one distributing meat. Adults, some of my informants told me, would not stoop to such behavior, though parents typically indulged their child's impatience on the understanding that children are ignorant of right ways of conduct. Adults regularly commented on the shares given, but in sharp contrast to children, they did so to direct food for others and not for themselves.²⁷

Food was generally given to anyone present in the camp, reflecting the importance of commensality in maintaining a sense of shared satisfaction among co-residents.²⁸ But out of this common pool of sharing, gifts were carved to satisfy the more pressing needs of providing food for more immediate dependents, and here the identity of the recipient mattered.²⁹ I heard the following rebuff as reported

Distributors might withhold shares to children they deem "lazy" – girls who do not carry water when setting up camp or teenage boys who do not hunt.

²⁷ It was (and still is) considered improper for the recipient to complain about what he or she is given in front of others. In private, however, people express their resentment with the share they received. When I asked informants to name the best hunters and the "best givers" in the village, they readily complemented their answers by pointing out the stingiest of their neighbors as well. The complaints cited particular events in the past as evidence of their neighbors' self-less generous or unpardonable greed. It was difficult for me to determine whether one person's alleged faults were actually greater than anyone else's, but accusations such as these seemed to fall along kin lines with some frequency. Most people I interviewed tended to extol the generosity of their close kin, while stressing the stinginess of non-kin. In some respects, this may be a truism: They were stingy *because* they were non-kin; what seemed like a particularly flagrant transgression was actually how everyone else would act with respect to those outside his immediate kin.

²⁸ There were exceptions of course, such as when distributors might temporarily withhold food to adolescents they considered "lazy," or when orphans, who were effectively non-persons, might be refused a share entirely.

²⁹ This may have something to do with the kind of food shared. The fruits and vegetables gathered during the day were also shared along with the meat, but as Hill and Kaplan (1983) have noted, the breadth of their distribution was more restricted than game.

speech in an account of manioc raid in the 1950s, and it resembles the (admittedly) rare cases during my fieldwork where I heard someone refuse to give food to another who asked for it:

Mēm̃ba cho achepe. Ache rapama.	I gave all [the manioc] to the Ache. The Ache took it.
Cho rekollā chipolla. Rekollāma cho nakōpe.	I don't have any manioc. I don't have any in my carrying basket.
Mēm̃ba achepe. Cho mēm̃by apo cho etakrā reko chipolla. Cho mēm̃by llellā chēngawārā.	I gave all [the manioc] to the Ache. I have only one piece of manioc for my child: it's for when my child cries from hunger.
Duwe nakōpe tārā rekoare. Gope ga puka.	There are others with a lot of manioc in their baskets. You should ask them.
Cho rekollā chipolla.	I don't have any manioc.

One could expect shares from others but could only truly count on gifts of food from close kin. Because of this, when Ache couples left the band for a day or two to forage alone, they left their children with grandparents or close consanguines who were obliged to care for them. It was considered an imposition for parents to leave their children in camp with non-kin when going off alone to gather honey or larvae, and parents would be roundly chastised for their negligence, as it was *their* fault when their children went unfed and unsupervised in the presence of others. It was the same rationale that justified the withholding of shares to “ownerless” orphans altogether.³⁰

³⁰ Lacking relations, orphans lived at the edges of human relations. In the situation described above, living apart from (living) kin relations does not reflect the person's independence, because no one can live alone in the forest. The role of orphans for Ache served very different dramatic ends in the West – from *Oliver* to *Harry Potter* – where orphanhood becomes a test of one's will or destiny. As a result of their diminished status, orphans were commonly given “dangerous” jobs.

1.3 Orphans and Other Pets

The adoption of orphans has been important to theories of ownership, as it suggests ownership is created through the feeding of others rather than the acting out of existing obligations (Costa 2017; Brightman 2014). Attitudes regarding orphans were decidedly negative. Without the regular sharing of food and ethics of commensality that define kinship's "mutuality of being," orphans risk transformation into a state of quasi-animality. There are numerous instances of this pattern across the South American lowlands, and it connects well with other explanations across Amazonia regarding why orphans are prone to refashion their kin relations with animals, killers, predators, and various others (Vilaça 2002; Fausto 2008; 2012). The violence of the contact period made orphans of many Ache, and mortality rates for orphans were considerably higher than they were for those with parents (Hill and Hurtado 1996: 434-436). Nevertheless, I did come across cases where orphans were adopted. In the few cases with which I am familiar, boys whose parents were killed by Paraguayans were "cared for" (*kuwê*) by adult women without family of their own. The adopting mothers did not appear to be related to the children. Rather, despite generally negative attitudes toward orphans and the burdens they put on others, these women felt moved by the pity they felt to raise them.

Take this example from Sammons (1978) of a mother warning her son against picking fruit that would attract arboreal snakes: "Don't touch the unripe ceriman or a snake will bite you. Let an orphan touch it. Climb the tree to find ceriman for grandfather to eat" (Sammons 1978: 7). (Unripe philodendron fruit—called ceriman—is long and green, its rind covered in hexagonal tiles that resemble the skin of a particular green arboreal snake. Moreover, the painful swelling caused by ingesting the oxalic acid found in unripe philodendron fruit was likened to that of a snakebite. This iconism between unripe ceriman and the snake is also *indexical* in that touching unripe ceriman is thought to cause bites from that snake.)

Non-human intimates might also be adopted. Pet-keeping derived from feeding orphaned animals whose parents have been killed while hunting. Thus, the same types of animals that are hunted for food were nurtured as pets: foxes, rabbits, coati, and especially monkeys. When a hunter returned with orphaned animals, a woman—often the wife of the hunter—claimed the animal by saying: “Don’t kill my future pet (*mymbarã*).” Owners and pets lived in close proximity. Women tied their pets to their carrying baskets during the daily treks, and in evening camps, pets were tied to a tree close to the owner’s hearth.

As with the adoption of other children, the new owner of the animal nurtured (*kuwê*) in order to “familiarize” it. Women feed their pets pre-masticated foods in the same way they do their children, and in the case of monkeys, they may breast-feed them. And it is because of this feeding that pets were often likened to surrogate children.

The owner’s acts of care and feeding constituted a social relation that linked particular animals with particular persons. But monkeys, unlike humans, cannot become independent children. Most do not survive into adulthood. Older monkeys begin to display destructive and aggressive behaviors. Many escape their captivity. While the Ache are relatively tolerant of the monkeys proclivities for theft and mischief, and the habit of coati of biting. If they are a nuisance, they are eventually killed by a non-owner. While an owner never eats her own pet, if the owner dies, the animal might be eaten by others.

1.4 Giving to Grow

Intrinsic to the notion of “owning” another is the idea of “growth” (*yma*). *Yma* is both a verb and a noun, and thus may refer to both “the act of growing [something]” and “something fully grown.” As a verb, *yma* most often appears in transitive constructions that emphasize the relation the growth expresses and engenders.

In a general sense, we might imagine growth as a movement across a sequence of ascriptive roles and statuses that anthropologists commonly call “age grades.”³¹ Age grades have typically been understood as the cultural classification of natural (i.e. biological) growth. That is, humans develop, and that development is classified into a series of culturally significant terms.

Table 1.1 Age Grades

Male Term	Female Term	English Gloss	Approximate Age
<i>Krumi</i>	<i>Krumi</i>	Child	0-8
<i>Kybuchu</i>	<i>Kudjabuku</i>	Pre-initiate	9-12
<i>Beta</i>	<i>Dare</i>	Post-Initiate	13-15
<i>Kybei</i>	<i>Kudja</i>	Adult, Reproductive	16-60
<i>Chue</i>	<i>Waiwi</i>	Elderly, Post-reproductive	61+

³¹ A number of finer distinctions can be made within these general categories, whether looking forward to a status just realized or looking back to a status just left behind. For example, *pou* (“new”) is affixed to signify newly achieved statuses (e.g. a *krumipou* is an “infant”), and the past tense (*-we*) may be added to some terms to emphasize the just completed status of a person (e.g. a *kybuchuwe* is an “already initiated male.”) Likewise, the modifier *-ete* (“true” or “real”) may be added to these terms to stress the final stages of the status, the time when the person is thought to most fully embody the qualities of that status. These modifiers focus on the boundaries of each status, where one gives over into another.

Yet the idea of development implied by these terms in Ache is neither a purely social condition nor is it mere biological condition, at least as anthropologists have traditionally understood the “social” or “natural.” This development was not purely a social condition because the terms applied well beyond Ache social organization. The term for male pre-initiate (*kybuchu*) and the term for female initiate (*dare*) shared their names with two kinds of larvae; these terms spoke of a more general sense of developmental immaturity than that of Ache adolescents alone. Moreover, the terms listed above could specify the age and sex of two monkey species (hooded capuchin monkey, *Sapajus cay*; black howler, *Alouatta caraya*), the lowland paca (*Cuniculus paca*), the capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), and the lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*).³² These terms went well beyond the development of humans, and were general stages of growth for a variety of life forms.³³

Yet neither is development “natural,” in the strict sense of the term. People did not grow “by themselves” according to some internal blueprint. They grew through the intentional and deliberate transmission of food given by others around them, an act reflected in the causative constriction “to cause to grow” (*ymawā*) (see Costa 2017: 129).³⁴ And the specific persons who caused others to grow were identified as such.

It was common refrain, when describing their childhoods, for my informants to say,

³² There is one exception, however. The term *beta*, which refers to the labret that boys receive in male initiation, is not applied to adolescent male animals, because as I was told, these animals do not undergo initiation as the Ache themselves did. Interestingly, however, adolescent female animals are referred to as *dare* (the term that describes the female initiate), though obviously, these animals do not menstruate.

³³ These are, incidentally, the animals considered to have once been human in a mythic past.

³⁴ The idea that gifts of food contain a part of the giver (essential to Mauss’ argument in *The Gift*) has a tendency to erode the familiar Aristotelian distinction between *natural things*, which grow themselves (by their own design), and *artifacts*, which are produced (by the design of others). As Mauss would argue in the essay, “Conceptions qui ont précédé la notion de matière” (1939), the relationship between “given” nature and “constructed” artifacts depends on historically and culturally variable conceptions of agency, technology, and gender.

Cho āpārō cho ymare, “My father grew me,” or *Cho pawerō bretete cho ymare*, “My brother, a great hunter, grew me,” and they readily identified the particular foods that grew their bodies. As one man told me,

Buchu āpā djuapa ka-dji dja ray pycherā. Pichu wywy. Āpā dja ray pycherā buchu djuapa.	Father cut down trees in the forest so his sons could suck palm weevil larvae. All the palm larvae. Father cut down trees so his sons could suck palm weevil larvae.
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Gobu tay purā buchu pycheaty kyrama. Ymama gobu.	Then his sons, by sucking palm weevil larvae, became fat. They grew then.
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Kuyra o-dji āpā yma reko dja ray. Karē pire-dji. Kua kymakadji yma dja ray āpā. Kua kymakadji yma reko āpā. Tadjy purā ymabama gobu.	With bird meat, father gradually grew his sons. With coati skin too. With monkey leg, father grew his sons. With monkey leg, father gradually grew them. He grew all of his daughters then.
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Chimbegi, interview (5/10/2016)

This example makes clear that *yma* does not refer to “raising” a child through moral instruction or socialization. *Yma* is a fundamentally material notion, and it implies the central role of food in the development of right and proper persons. Age grades are distinguished in terms of bodily properties. Marilyn Strathern has made a similar point when describing development in Hagen: “The child *grows* into social maturity rather than being trained into it” (1980: 196).³⁵ And this implies someone who grows of that child and a relationship presupposed and entailed by that growth.

³⁵ Elsewhere, Strathern (1993) has compared Melanesian transformation of social statuses to the Western ones in the following terms: “Melanesian children are ‘already’ social beings, and do not have to be made into such. Rather, their immanent sociality is made visible in the course of [initiation] rites” (1993: 46). By contrast, “What Westerners take serious is education as an essential component of the whole socialization process. Education is supposed to make a difference to the person: it instills knowledge, alters attitudes, is evidence of its own effects. [...]

One older man, Kuategi, described to me the way in which he came to possess his wife:

Go āwe-rō cho budjarō cho breko wewe go. Dare āme putēma cho yma mondo. Gogi go-djiwa cho reko. Go cho weiri matāma. Cho wei yma mondo. Gogi cho pirā upuwe. Gogi wyche koe cho wedjallā, cho budja Tatugi.

She was my wife, my first wife. I “grew her” from the time she was an initiate. That one [she] was the one I “owned.” I carried animals to her, I “grew her” her with the animals I hunted. That one stayed by my side. She didn’t leave me behind, my wife Tatugi.

Wei rupi ore yma eira, tangy. Cho rembia wei cho budja ymawā cho baku. Cho wei djiwāma, kande djiwāma. Cho baku kārē djiwāma. Darebu cho pa mellā.

We grew her with meat, honey, and palm heart. I cooked my prey to grow my wife. I shot animals, collared peccary. I cooked the coati that I shot. When she was an initiate, I didn’t give her liver.

Go wei wei ore wei rupiabu cho budja ymawā.

We killed animals in order to grow my wife.

Kuategi, interview 04/18/2017

The last sentence of Kuategi’s recollection warrants further explanation. The causative construction (*ymawā*, “in order to grow”) is joined with the roles of husband (*ime*) and wife (*budja*). Kuategi gave her meat *in order to* grow her *as* his wife. Growing another relied on the discretion and knowledge needed to give different recipients the foods they needed to grow – and withholding the foods that would stunt their growth.

1.5 Food that Grows, Food that Withers

Growing another is not a matter of giving just any food but the *right* foods to

As part of a real process, it is essential to equipping a person with the skills necessary to conduct him or herself as a member of society” (1993: 43).

others. Bodies do not grow by themselves; nor are persons spontaneously afflicted by disease. Rather, some particular person (a token of an gendered age grade type) becomes sick because he or she consumed a particular food, most commonly meat. And a poisoned gift often pointed to the person who gave it.

Specific foods are thought to have specific effects on the body. Food might cause the recipient's body "to grow or increase in size, strength, and vitality" (*chidjama*) or it might cause the recipient's body to become *praru*, that is, "weak, tender, stunted, withered, diminished in strength and health." The Ache did not have general proscriptions that would prohibit the consumption of a particular food for everyone at all times. The consumption of certain animals was encouraged or prohibited in order to achieve the desired adoption or exclusion of these properties these effects at specific times along the life course. Though nothing was outright prohibited, many foods were to be situationally avoided, and the force of that avoidance appeared as a consequence of a larger set of qualisigns, both prized and feared, that certain objects passed on those who incorporate them. Thus, for example, if the claws of coati, armadillo, and tegu lizards were not removed before a pregnant woman consumes the leg meat of one of these animals, her child would be born with long claws resembling those of that animal. Likewise, children are prohibited snake meat so that their skin would not turn scaly.

Humans and animals shared a similar subjectivity, and the dangers to which humans are exposed when eating meat were related to the fact that the subjectivity of game animals resembled that of the humans who consume them. Thus, game animals did not merely pass on their qualities as contagion; they did so out of a

desire to avenge themselves against those who killed them. “A subject conceived as feeding on its objects, as principally endowed with a corporeal existence like theirs, runs the risk of losing itself in them: they invade it and undermine its identity” (Valeri 1998: 101; see also Fausto 2007).

Eating meat involved the incorporation of an animal with an intention resembling that of the person who consumes it. Meat, particularly fatty meat, was highly valued, and game made up the bulk of the Ache diet (Hill and Hawkes 1983; Hill and Kaplan 1998; Hill and Hurtado 1996). Nevertheless, the meat of game animals was also considered to be a powerful substance and could be dangerous for those who consume it. The danger of red meat was found to be particularly acute in specific parts of the game animal: its head, its fat, and above all, its blood. Consuming blood or eating undercooked meat (or simply too much meat) risked the incorporation of the game animal’s soul (*adjawe*), allowing it to avenge itself for having been killed and eaten through dangerous diseases (called *djuwy* or *baiwā*³⁶ depending on the dialect). The outward signs of *djuwy* were an intense fever with coughing and labored breathing. Yet concealed inside the body was a frantic activity, an attack by what was consumed on the body that consumed it.³⁷

³⁶ These terms are difficult to gloss. It is possible that *baiwā* is composed of *bai* (animal, thing) and *wā* (causative), meaning “to cause one to become an animal.” This would fit with Fausto’s (2007) perspectival argument regarding food and disease, but I am not confident enough in the gloss to suggest a definitive interpretation here.

³⁷ These afflictations were caused by either, in the case of meat, a cannibal agent that claws or eats the victim’s insides, or in the case of honey, the introduction into the body of tiny arrows (modeled on the bee’s stinger). This image is repeated in a myth where honey-producing bees and wasps take revenge on a gluttonous tapir by entering the tapir’s body through the anus and killing him with arrows, i.e. stinging him to death. After stealing fire from a hapless old man, the bees and wasps later fly the tapir carcass to the sky, where it becomes the Hyades and the bees and wasps become the Pleiades.

To rid meat of the smell or the sight of blood, it must be boiled for a long time or roasted until it was thoroughly cooked through. Even when well-cooked, red meat is often thought to need further moderation. The potency of meat had to be attenuated by pairing it with a mild food, such as a bland-tasting gruel made from boiled palm-fiber or philodendron fruit (*membe*). Spears of palm heart and gruel made from boiled palm fiber are characterized by a mildness of taste and smell. Combining the meat with boiled palm fiber was considered something people *ought* to do, and was among the things said to the persons cooking the meat. “You should put the armadillo meat in with the palm porridge. It tastes good in the palm porridge. You should put it in the palm porridge.’ That’s what the Ache say” (Sammons 1978: 15-16; see also Clastres 1998: 151).³⁸

Honey, which was also considered dangerous when unmixed, was also “defused” in a similar way. Honey from aggressive bee species – particularly the *mrÿnga*, *kiwicha*, *chu’a*, and *irõ* bees – was thought to cause *djuwy/baiwã*, and it had to be diluted with water before consuming it. The tame jaty bee (*Tetragonisca angustula*) was harmless, however; its vinegary honey could be eaten freely, and the smoke from burning its wax could cure those affected by *djuwy/baiwã*.

Potent foods and mild foods like palm were complementary: Strong powerful foods were necessary for growth; but their volatile and dangerous potential had to be moderated through an operation to neutralize or reduce the actions of the animal’s soul with the addition of some inert substance (Menget 1973: 200; see

³⁸ It is interesting here that what one *ought* to eat also tastes good.

Rivière 1989).³⁹ But bland foods by themselves were insufficient for growth; to eat only “weak” foods would make one wither, dry up, and may lead to a death analogous to dying of old age. The inseparable opposites of potency and moderation were not confined to food alone. Indeed, what made striking the proper balance between the soft, slow-growing, cool qualities associated with “white” vegetables and the fast-growing, hot qualities associated with meat such a variable and capricious matter was that the bodily state of the person eating – particularly the quality of that person’s blood – affected the sort of food needed to properly grow that person. Thus, those in exceptional states (the sick, new initiates of both sexes, killers throughout the period of their ritual seclusion, and pregnant women in the last weeks of their pregnancy), whose blood was described as “hot” (*aku*), “abnormal” (*purā*), and “bad” (*buchā*) reduced their diet to the mildest of Ache foods, a fare of palm porridge, spears of palm heart, and the white kernels of philodendron fruit. The surface of their bodies was washed with a foamy white solution of *timbo* shavings in water. Following this, they would be able to gradually reintroduce the “stronger” and more dangerous foods befitting their age grade. Conversely, the elderly, whose bodies are weak, were invigorated by eating strong foods. They might eat the parts of game animals that harbor the strongest connection with the animal’s subjectivity, such as the head and fat, and if they are withheld specific parts, it is usually because their loss of teeth made eating them difficult, and less out of a need to balance the heat or coolness of foods against their own bodily condition.

³⁹ The anthropophagous Ache Ua subgroup treated enemy humans as game animals. They observed the same proprieties described above (e.g. not laughing during butchery or consumption, etc.) Moreover, the flesh itself contained the same dangers. Like the meat of the aforementioned game animals, human flesh was also thought to be too “potent” to consume without dilution (see Clastres 1998: 330).

1.6 Responsibility for Growth and the Dialectics of Ownership

The grower stimulates growth in the recipient by giving them fast-growing substances at certain crucial points in their lives and weak inert substances at other times. The food given to another contributes to the bodily growth of the recipient. Yet the effects of that food are, more often than not, taken to be indexical of the feeding relationship and are not the focus of interest in their own right (see Taylor 2000: 319, Vilaca 2002: 352).⁴⁰ To say that one grew another is not simply a statement about causality; it is a statement about responsibility. It is, in other words, an evaluative claim about whether the person who is “owned” is “owned well” (*reko gatu*) or “owned badly” (*reko buchā*). In his narrative above, Kuategi stresses the transitive effects of his actions on his wife. It was he who fed her and grew her body into that of a woman’s. In the time after her initiation, he gave her meat, honey, and palm heart. These were foods that would strengthen her body after the ordeals of initiation: the honey would heal the tattoos she received during initiation; the palm heart would restrict her menstrual flow; and the meat, which she was prohibited from eating during the initiation, would gradually give her body the strength of an adult woman. Yet he did not give her coati liver, a strong food that her body, still in a liminal state, could not yet manage without risk of disease. The pride Kuategi expresses in how he “grew” his wife stems not simply from some generalized spirit of generosity but from the knowledge required to give her what she needed when she needed it.

⁴⁰ Or in Strathern’s phrasing, “It is not the food as such that needs to be analyzed, but the feeding relationship” (Strathern 1988: 251).

The shadowy possibility implied by Kuategi's evaluation of his ownership is that someone can own another badly and be owned badly (*reko buchā*). Kuategi knew that giving his wife-to-be liver when she had just left seclusion would adversely affect her. But the fact that this was worth mentioning at all implied that others did not know this, as just as his wife's health was a sign of his care, one's bodily weakness could be taken as a sign of negligence on behalf of his or her owner. This was particularly true of sicknesses. As previously mentioned, sicknesses were often attributed to an animal spirit, which might be the immediate source of the attack that brought on the sickness – or the animal spirit might be simply the intermediary of a discontented dead person. Animals might be subjects, but some animals were subjects more than others, and here the animal served less as an agent in its own right than a bearer of messages about the relationships between the giver and the receiver of the food. Sicknesses might be blamed on the eater's eating too much and sharing too little: "Why did you eat so much of the meat that made you sick?" Or they might be attributed to the person who gave the eater the food: "Why did you give your son bloody meat?" Blame did not, however, rest on the animal, whose desire for revenge was taken as a matter of course.⁴¹

Ownership entails responsibility and evaluation. It is, in other words, a matter for people's ethical lives.

⁴¹ Here, as elsewhere in lowland South America, animal revenge is subordinated to human designs. Oakdale writes, "When one of the Masters of the Game causes death, Kayabi people tend to take revenge on other ethnic groups. After death, people blame the shamans of other peoples: they have either led the Masters of the Game to a Kayabi victim or weakened a person so he was easy prey" (2008: 237).

Chapter 2: Other Places, Other Times

The Jesuit chroniclers of the eighteenth century described Ache bands as “wandering aimlessly [*discurrir vagos*] through the jungles, looking for wild honey, fruits, and animals for sustenance” (Lozano 1875 [1789]: 415). Their movement, to the extent that the chroniclers would describe it as purposeful, concerned itself with the satisfaction of immediate vital needs, yet beyond that, it had no sense of order that Jesuits could envision from the vantage of their missions. The Ache took what they needed from nature without transforming it. “They do not work to procure food, and in this they are equal to wild beasts; they are unfamiliar with agriculture and commerce” (Techo 2005 [1673]: 483). The Jesuit’s understanding of Ache navigation as aimless movement over an expansive space was of course defined negatively with respect to the geometrically regular space inside the missions, and in that respect, the prejudices of the Jesuits tell us about the Jesuits and nearly nothing about Ache navigation. Yet the blinkered views of the chroniclers were right on one account: if Ache territory appears as a limitless expanse, it could not have a single center.

Ache bands were identified with one or more senior men who were said to “own the band.” The leader or leaders of the band became the exemplar or representative of his co-residents in the band, and his co-residents were known by his name. They might be referred to, for example, as *Djamo Chachugi rekoatygi*, “those who follow Djamo Chachugi” or *Djamo Chachugi rekotygi*, “those owned by Djamo Chachugi.”

Co-residents might also be referred to metonymically by their usual foraging grounds (*Djamo Chachugi ekoãndy*, “where Djamo Chachugi customarily lives”) or *Djamo Chachugi djoawe*, “where Djamo Chachugi passes.”) The names suggest a relationship among one or more band leaders, a band of co-residents, and the places they regularly inhabit. My aim in this chapter is to outline those relationships. I show that Ache movement and co-residence as a function of the notion of “ownership” developed in the previous chapter. Ownership, in other words, has an essential spatial component in that dependents were expected to “follow” the persons who owned them. Here, as elsewhere, evaluation that underlies the notion of “following an owner.”

2.1 The Daily Rounds

The camp began to stir before daylight. Groups of men sat together beside the fires repairing their arrows before the day's hunt. They looked down the length of the arrow like a pool cue, rotating the bamboo in their fingers to spot any bends, working and straightening the pliant bamboo, before repeating the procedure to check its straightness again. After repeating the process several times, they heated the shafts in the fire to fix their shape. Others softened the band of beeswax at the end of the arrows so they could rebind the fletching. The men spoke softly among themselves or not at all.

Shortly after sunrise, the hunters left camp in small groups, carrying with them only their bow and arrows to pursue unencumbered any game they might come across as they walked. One child calls out to his father as he leaves the camp, “Bring me back peccary meat!”

As they leave the camp, hunters moved at a quick, shuffling pace, faster than a walk but not quite a trot. They walked nearly a kilometer from camp before spreading out to search for game. Gradually, the hunters slowed their pace, one-by-one adopting a distinctive gait, a kind of walking that affords a certain kind of looking. Hunters must see the ground immediately in front of them. Even the thickly calloused soles of hunter's feet could be cut by the debris on the forest floor; cuts on the feet could be incapacitating, forcing hunters to remain in camp with the women and aged for days. And a bite from a venomous snake could be fatal.⁴² A hunter had to choose his steps carefully. The hunter waited on one foot while looking at the ground for the place to land the other.

When they walk, hunters do not step parallel to the marching line. They pick their feet high up from the ground. Each step crosses the body slightly, so that hips rotate from side to side. It was a distinct style of walking that whites, unaccustomed to traveling in the forest, found strange. One nineteenth century Swiss naturalist described an Ache captive's style of walking in the following unflattering terms: "From the first moment, his gait struck me, for it was exceedingly peculiar, I will say, even grotesque. He seemed to be walking in a straight line, sometimes deviating abruptly like a drunken man, and setting foot on the ground in a hesitant and uncertain manner, his torso leaning forward slightly, his legs wide apart, and [walking] with a sort of waddle" (LaHitte 1897: 15). Despite such an ungenerous characterization, an Ache hunter's style of walking allowed him to move silently through the forest, protecting himself against its dangers, while looking carefully for such minute signs on the ground as the

⁴² On walking and hunter-gatherers, see Amato 2006; Lee and Ingold 2006; Widlok 2008.

tracks of a passing animal, broken branches, fruits left half-eaten, or the smell of feces pointing to a troop of capuchin monkeys in the treetops above.

When a hunting party left the camp, there were always people – women, some children, uninitiated boys, and men too old to hunt – who stayed behind and waited to leave some time after the hunters. After the hunters left, women packed the household's belonging in their carrying baskets: their woven mats, containers of various sizes and manufactures, and their husbands' possessions – wallets of feathers used to fletch arrows, cabybara teeth or knives used to cut notches in the arrowheads, etc. Along with their baskets, they carried their infant children, their axes, and perhaps several coals from the morning's fire. When the group left camp, it moved in a direction parallel to the hunters – along the way, collecting fruits and larvae.⁴³ Women's style of walking was quite different from men. Ache women took short steps and walked at a shuffle. They carried their heavy palm baskets with a tumpline, a headband fitted over the top of the woman's forehead that distributed the basket's weight to her spine, which kept her back straight. For her neck to support the weight of the carrying basket, her head and torso pitched slightly forward at the hips, pushing her gaze downward as she walked.

Though men and women spent most of the day apart from one another, the groups remained close enough so that they could remain regular communication with each other. Routes might be adjusted from the sketch offered in the morning, and many tasks required cooperation. This improvisation required communication. If a hunter finds a

⁴³ Fruit is bountiful in the early summer months. Women gather fruit from *Myrciaria cauliflora* (jaboticaba, *pretylla*); *Camponesia guaviroba* (guabiroba, *virella*); *Philodenron* sp. (philodendron, *membe*); and *Eugenia* sp. (Brazilian cherry, *buoilla*). In the late summer, *Jacaratia* sp. (wild papaya, *challa*) is popular; the fruit attracts coati, and the trees may be cut down so that *guchu* larvae will grow in them. During the winter months (May-August), *Syagrus romanzoffiana* (palm fruit, *pytälla*) and wild volunteer oranges (*browilla*) are popular.

cluster of palms or a tree with honey, he calls to his wife to bring her axe and basket (see Hill and Hawkes 1983).⁴⁴ Some might use an axe to chop out honey from a standing tree or larvae from a rotten trunk. They call out to each other. The message and importance of the call is perceived by the cry, by the request with which it is carried out. Other short calls follow in response. When a hunter kills a game animal early in the day, he might leave it along a trail so that he can continue hunting unencumbered. He calls out to his wife for her to pick up the game. "There are two monkeys on the ground. I killed them. Put them in the basket." Or he calls out, "Chupape cho djache ra!" ("I will take [the monkeys] on my shoulders to camp!). Those who find a good fruit tree call to others nearby to collect fruit with them. Usually a teenage boy or older man will accompany the women and children to climb fruit trees and shake down fruits that the women collect on the ground below. These quantities of fruit are brought back to share with others.

Pregnant women did play a significant role in hunters' movements and the positioning of the band, as the movements of the unborn child in the mother's belly pointed to specific concentrations of game animals. To hear Ache tell it, pregnant women walked together through the forest, and they spoke about where they suspected the game animals were concentrated and the direction they traveled. A man accompanying them would call out to the hunters, indicating the likely path the animals would take. Later in the afternoon, the two groups would call back and forth to each other in deciding where to camp for the night – somewhere close to where they planned to hunt the next morning.

⁴⁴ About 60% of game (by weight or by animal?) is taken in cooperative pursuit (Hill and Kaplan).

The Ache word *ekōandy* literally means “living-space” or “existence-place.” Each being in the forest had its *ekōandy*, described in terms of its habitat. Animals had their *ekōandy*. Enemies also had their living-space, with Paraguayans living in the treeless meadows (*prana*) and the Guarani who lived at the edge of forest clearings. Even the dead and forest spirits had their *ekōandy*; the *ekōandy* of ancestral spirits called *krei* was in the clouds, that of the specters of the recent dead was in the impenetrable parts of the forest, and a long-haired spirit called *bykapukugi* (“the long-crested one”) lived between the rocks beside waterfalls.

The *ekōandy* of individual Ache bands was most often identified by the resources found there, the typical game animals, fish, palms, and fruits (e.g. the peccaries that lived there, the honey that one could extract, and so on) as well as the “improvements” made to it (e.g. pit traps dug for tapirs, the palms felled for growing larvae, etc.) The relation between the *ekōandy* of particular Ache bands and its relevant features was not imagined along the lines of a relation between container and content. An *ekōandy* was not imagined as a continuous area of land but a series of concentrations of forest resources.⁴⁵ As Eduardo Kohn (2013) has argued, life is distributed unevenly across a tropical forest landscape. Long stretches of relative emptiness are punctuated by localized concentrations of useful stores. Take for example, the palm fruit that matures during the winter months. Palm fruit (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) is not only eaten by humans; places favorable for gathering fruit also make for favorable hunting grounds. Palm fruit is also eaten by capuchin monkeys,

⁴⁵ The Ache word *ekōandy* is etymologically related to the Guarani territorial concept *tekoa*. On the latter, see Melia 1989; Pissolato 2002; and Mura 2006.

black howlers, agouti, ring-tailed coati, and squirrels. Tapirs too are rapacious eaters of palm fruit, so Ache hunters dig their pit traps beside the trails that lead in and out of palm groves. These concentrations of plants and animals became the names of places. In the Ache language, the suffix *-ty* (or *-dy* when it follows nasal vowels) modifies a noun to mean “a profusion of” or “a collection of” that thing. Thus, a single stalk of bamboo was called *takua*, while a bamboo stand was called *takuaty*, and these stands were locatable places where Ache bands can expect to find bamboo larvae during a particular time of the year. The same limited number of names was repeated over the immense stretch of a band’s *ekōandy*.

Though the living space of a band was typically identified with the band’s owner, the “ownership” of foraging bands did not entail any sort of control over access to space. Neither the *ekōandy* identified with the band nor the locatable places stretched across it were the property of the band leader. Specific persons might own the individual palms they felled to grow beetle larvae or the pit traps they dug to capture tapir, but the ownership of a felled palm was a claim for the larvae grown in it and not a claim upon who is allowed to access what type of space, and when.⁴⁶ Even if an individual “owned” a felled palm, this could not extend to a palm stand or any other of the particular concentrations of resources that dotted the forest. These were not “ownable” features of the landscape.

The identification of a band leader with an *ekōandy* was based on the ownership of the band rather than his ownership of land. The group’s mobility was a means of “positioning” itself in relation to these discontinuous concentrations. The band

⁴⁶ Animal masters appear to work the same way. The small white-haired “master of honey” named Djakarendy owns the trees where honeybees build their nests but has no broader territorial claim beyond this.

moved camp near one concentration of resources, and by means of small collaborative groups, killed or collected that resource and moved it to camp. At any given time, hunters might be near one resource but far from another. And the satisfaction of one resource provoked a move to another resource within a distance coverable by foot. These concentrations were often talked about in terms of destinations, but they may also be singled out as places to avoid as one moves along a trail. For example, bands tried to avoid walking through spiny thickets called *kwānty*; bands generally avoided the meadows (*prana*) where Paraguayans built their houses; and menstruating women were specifically prohibited from passing through cedar thickets (*chingyty*), whose pleasing smell had some connection to ancestral spirits.

An *ekōandy* was not merely a punctual landscape but also one of lines, edges, and familiar trails (see Ingold 2007). Rivers were also basic orienting geographic features for Ache. Places along the rivers could indicate concentrations of resources in the same way that a forest might (e.g. “the river where the fish are”), but more importantly, the sinuous rivulets that spread throughout their *ekōandy* were invoked as lateral lines to coordinate the band’s movement. A river has a “base” (*y apo*) and a “head” (*y ākā*), and these features are, not coincidentally, the names for the parts of a tree, so that the network of waterways is analogous to tree branches that flow into an ever-wider trunk. The “base” and the “head” imply a direction, so that walking along the banks of a river or stream, one walked in the direction of its flow or against it.

The *ekōandy* was a seasonal space. The Ache language refer to stretches of time by adding the temporal suffix (-*bu*) to some seasonal forest resource (*kymata pirāmbu*, “when *kymata* fruit turns red”; *biadjubu*, “when there is philodendron fruit,” etc.) As we can see from these examples, much of Ache time reckoning was connected to the relation between seasonal changes in the forest and food gathering. Ache time intervals were best thought of as events in the world, with which other undertakings or happenings might coincide, or to which other events were indexed. These occurrences are not, however, used as quantifiable measures. Unlike the Ecuadoran Huaorani, who use the appearance of *chonta* palm fruit as a regularly increasing temporal unit to locate other events in the past (e.g. referring to an event that happened three palm seasons ago) (Rival 2002: 47), Ache time-reckoning does not measure time as one would some physical object (in terms of length, etc.). The event-based time intervals used by the Ache were related to other events by relationships of sequence and simultaneity – and not by metaphoric containment of some calendric unit. More particularly, because time-reckoning was figured with respect to the qualities of physically located objects, talk about time could motivate inferences with a strong spatial component (e.g. that at a particular time, say, “the time palm fruit ripens,” a band should move to palm groves to fill their baskets).

2.2 A Kind of Movement

Residence was based on social relationships. Movement was less a matter of following a *plan* or route than it was following a *person*. “Following” was, in other words, a political act. In Ache, as in English, the verb “to follow” (*mudja*) has

polysemous spatial and political valences: those who “move behind another person in the same direction” may stand in some subordinate political relation to that person. Following someone was therefore an icon of the other’s influence. *But of what sort?*

The decisions regarding where to travel were typically made in the afternoon camp, at the culmination of the day’s hunt and the collective meal. What might appear as merely innocuous talk about the day’s hunt was in fact of essential importance to where and how the band moves, for in recounting the particulars of the day’s events and what they had seen and done, individual men made announcements about what they will do for the following hunt. The hunter would say that he would go toward some specific concentration of resources or to follow specific game animal, through a phrase such as “I will go toward [a known place in the forest, such as a peccary trail, an orange grove, or a salt lick].” Or such a response might be inferred from his mentioning the fresh tracks of an anteater that he saw on his way to camp.⁴⁷

Reasons for walking to a specific place were not given in terms that all those who will be affected by a decision would reasonably accept; the statement was made neither as an order nor as position to be debated by equals (Brightman 2016). A hunter simply made a claim about the future. He vocalized a project, and whether others in the band either followed him or went their own way, they did so without going against him, without discussion or protest.

⁴⁷ In some cases, these destinations took them away from the band for a day or two, such as when a man decided to return to rotten palms he felled months before to collect the larvae that have grown in them.

There is no verb in Ache “to lead” that would correspond to *mudja*, “to follow.” One simply described the route he had taken, announces that he will do something, and waited to see if people would follow. There is a real sense that persons, because they cannot easily compel another to act, cannot lead others at all. Obviously, some men were more influential than others. There were those who had shown themselves proficient in finding game and generous by sharing his food to feed others, and these outstanding personalities were more likely than others to provoke the movement of camp by their individual decisions. This sort of limited influence that leaders enjoyed is well captured by Sahlins’s description of a petty chieftain: “One word from him and everyone does as he pleases” (1968: 21).

Once they have heard a hunter’s intentions, others will communicate that they will “follow” him.⁴⁸ Reference to the first hunter’s announcement might be more or less explicit. In his reply, a second hunter might signal his willingness to hunt with the first hunter by asking, “Where are you going to go?” or by telling the hunter, “When you see peccaries, call out to me.” Or the second hunter might simply announce that he will travel to the same destination without directly responding to the first hunter at all. There was a considerable degree of spontaneity in this. Other men will often deferred a decision about whether to stay, whether to accompany the man who was moving, or whether to move elsewhere, until the move begins. The band’s movement resulted from this series of *ad hoc* individual decisions.

⁴⁸ Parallels exist with other Amazonian groups. It is common for Arawete to call their leaders, “he who begins” and whom others follow (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 110). Rivière (1984: 72-73) writes that Trio leaders are “expected to lead from in front, by example and by initiating activities, and not by issuing orders from behind.”

There were obvious limitations to such spontaneity, however. Living alone was an existence reserved for lone spirits and solitary hunters like jaguars. For humans, one could leave the cooperation and companionship of the band only for the cooperation and companionship of another band.⁴⁹ To be “left behind” (*wedja*) by the band, as happened when one became too ill to keep pace with the band’s movements, was a frightful possibility.

Certain relations were expected to follow others as part of the expectations involved in “ownership.” People were explicitly instructed to follow their older consanguineal kin: young spouses (of either sex) may be advised to follow their affines, adult wives to follow their husbands, and children to follow their fathers or mother’s brothers. The general idea in following “owners” was that people should follow kin who were obliged to take care of them, and that people should be aware of those relations should sudden changes in residence occur.

Bands moved through these lines of multiple followings, with a few lines brought together through siblinghood or the ties of sons-in-law to their father-in-law. Bands were the composite point of the relationships that produced them, a grouping of persons continuously composed and decomposed through various “followings.” It was only as a fetish (in Lévi-Strauss’ sense of the term) that the band appears as a relationship between a leader and followers, as an objectification of the multiple relations of leading and following that produced them. It is only from the outside, that is to say from a particular point of view, that a leader is said to “own” the band.

⁴⁹ No one would choose loneliness; to leave the band voluntarily was an act tantamount to suicide, undertaken by elderly men who had become ashamed of the burden put on others.

It is as if “the group owes its form, size and even origin to the potential chief who was there before it came into being” (Lévi-Strauss 1974: 347).

2.3 Where to Go, Whom to Follow

Shortly after the birth of her child, Chedjugi’s husband had left their resident band and visited another. This was, by itself, quite common. The parturient blood of their wives contaminates new fathers; Animals are attracted by the clinging odor of a woman’s blood on those who come in contact with it. Just as it might draw a band of capuchin monkeys within range of the hunter’s bow, so might the smell stimulate the sensitive olfaction of dangerous jaguars and venomous snakes. The new father’s liminal state was spent away from the band. Yet Chedjugi’s husband had stayed away for several weeks, far longer than new husbands typically did, and she became increasingly concerned about her relationship upon hearing rumors that he had fathered another child in his absence. As she described it,

Cho ichywe k’bae rekollāndy cho. Cho memby cho etakra watawe. Cho ime Djapegi baydja kudja pedja pukuwe cho ime Djapegi. Cho ichywe wedja kua’allā. Cho āpā Kradjagirō cho ichywe rekoaty. Gobu cho ichywe chinga bechema cho wedja kua’allāwe.

I was a new mother, and I did not own a man. My child and I walked alone (i.e. did not follow a man). My husband, Djapegi, went far away. I was a new mother he left me. I was a new mother, so I followed my father Kradjagi. Then I no longer cried because he left me.

Ai Chākrāmagi ga cho tarā djawu. “K’bae rekoeme dje ichywe wedja kua’allāwerā.” “Cho kowebu k’bae rekollāwerā,” na’ā. “Cho rekollāwerā Djapegi. Cho wedja kua’allāre cho rekollāwerā.” Cho myrō uryrawe cho kuyrōechebu. Cho pradjallā cho ime cho wedja kuallāwe.

Mother Chākrāmagi often said to me, “Don’t own the man who leaves a new mother.” I said, “Now, I will not own a man. I will not own Djapegi. He left me, so I won’t own him.” I was going to run away when I was angry. I was angry at him for leaving me.

Ymaeche wachubuma cho ime Djapegi reko. Gobu Chewugi brawowachu djapomami. Gope chope kiuma Chewugi “Brawodjiwa emi Djapegi miwe.” Cho djawullā. Cho ollāwe.

I was grown, and my husband Djapegi owned me. Then he made Chewugi pregnant. There, Chewugi told me, “Djapegi made me pregnant.” I didn’t say anything. I didn’t leave.

Gobu Djapegi rekoma idja brekoty dji, Chewugidji. Brawo wachu mimbyre oma amaty. Prāndjā buchā Chewugi. Prāndjabu kuirōma Djapegi mondo. Eru erurawe ore endape. Go erubu cho rekollārawe Djapegi. Ore rekoaty erubu prāndja. Gope cho Chewugi wedjamirawe.

Then Djapegi owned his wife, Chewugi. After she became pregnant, they went somewhere. Chewugi was very mean. When he was mean, Djapegi left her. He was going to bring her to our camp. If he brought her, I would have not owned Djapegi. When they followed us, she was mean. There I would have left behind Chewugi.

Djary Baetapagi chope inama, “Kbae rekoeme.” Cho kbae rekollārawe cho pawe Bywāngi djawullābu. Cho pawe Bywāgirō chope djawuare. “Myrōeme kbae mechābu. Gorō dja memby kyra wēwādji. Bue myrōdjipa?”

Grandmother Baetapagi said to me, “Don’t own a man.” I was not going to have a man if my sibling Bywāngi hadn’t spoken to me. My sibling Bywāngi said to me, “Don’t run away when a man looks at you.” He will fatten your child. Why are you one who runs away?”

Chedjugi in Sammons (1987: 33-34)

As Chedjugi’s case shows, the interruption of residing to considerable uncertainty about the status of relationships. There was considerable latitude regarding *where* that hierarchical relationship might apply, as one could follow any number of people. And even professedly short visits to neighboring bands might lead to the dissolution of existing relationships and the creation of new ones. The composition of one’s residential band was therefore not something that could be taken for granted. This created choices for who one should follow and where ownership relations should apply, choices that could be deliberated among one’s familiars, as Chedjugi’s story

describes. No longer living together, Chedjugi no longer “owned” her husband, and her husband no longer “owned” her. Yet the relation still provoked instruction by Chedjugi’s co-residents about whether it was better to follow a man who “owns badly” than to have no man at all.

Chapter 3 Scolding, the Agonism of Ache Ethics

Part of the way ownership became consequential in the lives of Ache lay in the ways it came under evaluation. Owners might be evaluated on the basis of their ownership, as “owning well” (*reko gatu*) or “owning badly” (*reko buchã*). And although dependents – as persons owned – were not evaluated on that basis, owners evaluated those they owned in ways they could not do with other kinds of relations. One of the most explicit ways ownership relations were evaluated was through a genre of scolding called *kura*, and *kura*-scolding was mostly (though hardly exclusively) confined to ownership relations. This was for good reason. Cases of scolding tended to cluster in places where social relations were well-defined, intimate, and hierarchical – precisely those relations characterized as “ownership.”

The Ache language features a specific postposition construction – used exclusively in a speech genre called *kura* – which transforms verbs into questions of the sort: “Are you one who does (some undesirable) act?” (e.g. “Are you one who hits your husband?”) Essential to the meaning of the utterance – what it is and what it does – is the sort of semiotic relations people make between “action” and “character.” The kind of ethical critique implied in Ache *kura* is immersed in the thoughts and ideas that it opposes. By this I mean that *kura* criticizes some person’s actions, but because speech is also an action, *kura* itself frequently falls under scrutiny. So the notion of *kura* (and its cross-cultural counterparts like “scolding”)

encourages us to reframe critique in a broader horizon of action. And it implies that differing shades of critique—from corrective training, to moral critique, to outright scolding—are distinguished from one another, with important social effects. Critique can backfire. This is precisely what a notion of “scolding”—as opposed to “mere criticism”—is thought to capture. How can moral critique fail and with what consequences? What are the risks involved?

These are, I think, pretty fundamental questions, but my sense is that they don't always get the attention they deserve from anthropologists. This may be because an important part of what many anthropologists do is critique. And we have certain taken-for-granted assumptions about what we do when we critique something. As critics, we tend—Foucault's genealogy of the particularity of “truth-telling” notwithstanding—to treat critique as an act of individual freedom directed at some injustice that we correctly pick something out about a person or situation. We are “speaking the truth,” if not “to power” (as the Quaker activist mantra goes), then at least to someone able to do something about the problem. Still, there is the possibility that one's critique can be “truthful” or normatively grounded and still be wrong.⁵⁰ Critique is not simply a matter of “telling the truth,” fault-finding, and correcting; its success or failure depends on a number of pragmatic conditions—the localized situation, the identity of the actors, indexicality and implicature, and so on—through which the evaluative stance of the critic is—or is not—shared by others. And, as in the case here, the pragmatic considerations may overwhelm the content of the criticism, to the extent these things may be separated at all.

⁵⁰ A prospect evoked in a famous line from the Cohen brother's film *The Big Lebowski*: “You're not wrong, Walter, you're just an asshole.”

In this chapter, I want to explore how a certain anxiety around moral critique might be rendered as integral to the imagination of an ethical life. At the root of this anxiety is an inherent risk found in Ache scolding: The anger that one experiences in a given situation is experienced in relation to something, such that scolding has an object. One is angry *about* something or *with* someone. Yet scolding is itself an act and others may treat it as a sign of the enduring character of the scold (specifically, the scold's angry temperament). Just as a quality of an action (its slow pace, for example) may point to some enduring character trait (e.g. laziness) in the actor, so can an act of scolding indicate something about the person expressing it. One can simply *be* angry.

The idea that critique can fail is exactly what is captured in a number of readily characterological tropes easily recognizable to the reader: the scold, the Puritan, the nag, the paranoid, the finger-wagging moralist, whose critiques are dismissed as nothing more than the cries of rootless curmudgeons, sullen and cut off from the commonality or kinship with those around them. What these figures suggest is that moral critique may be taken to reveal as much about the critics as those they criticize. In what follows, I show how Ache scolding constructs characterological types to evaluate relations and sanction behavior.

3.1 Happiness and Anger

What order and cooperation there was in these dispersed groups – how individuals got along and affected each other's actions – depended on the ties of recognized relatedness, and the satisfaction of these relations was often discussed in emotional

terms. Interpersonally, emotions provided them with a way of making sense of other people's motives. Anger, jealousy, and love served as dispositions that motivated actions, reasons for why people do what they do. Collectively, emotions provided a measure for contented sociality, and considerable ethical work is devoted to showing others just how contented one is. Laughter, for example, accompanied the daily activities of gathering, food preparation, and other convivial activities, and served as a sign that people are "living happily" among their kin and affines.

Happiness (*ury*) is a moral ideal, an emotion the Ache say that people *should* have. The central themes of the Ache moral order revolve around the ideal of closely cooperating kin, and it is in terms of this understanding that Ache attempt to define when and how one should be "happy." Being among kin, to be shown affection and concern, and to show it, should make one "happy." Like acts of giving and laughter, certain ways of speaking serve as signs of the contentedness of relations. Happiness also implies a way of talking so that "good speech" (*djawu gatu*) – softly-spoken, carefully worded, loving speech – is directed toward one's kin and intimates. But it is also recognized that "happiness" may be achieved in illegitimate and gratuitous ways, that some individuals are made "happy" by doing the wrong sorts of things.⁵¹ There are those who, to cite the most prominent examples I encountered, are "happy to joke around" (*djudja ury*), "happy to talk too much" (*djawu ury*), "happy in their excessive grief" (*chēnga ury*), "happy to fight" (*djuka ury*), and even "happy to shoot others with arrows" (*djywō ury*). Happiness, *real* happiness, was a fragile accomplishment.

⁵¹ These constructions are somewhat similar to the English adverb "happily," as in, "I'll happily share my food with you," though *ury* is generally applied to more durable dispositions.

The Ache considered the feeling *prāndjā* – a term associated with “wrath,” “fury,” or “rage” – to be the cause of and the effect of the degeneration of happiness. *Prāndjā*, as with other emotions, had both corporeal and social correlates. On the one hand, the sensible signs of anger were thought to index certain physical states of the body. Anger was often described as a hotness in the blood – something feverish. On the other hand, *prāndjā* was an undesirable emotion whose effects were registered in the lives of one’s co-residents. By inspiring fear, anxiety, or anger in others, *prāndjā* hindered the performance of contented harmonious relations. In both its corporeal and social senses, the “heat” of *prāndjā* was explicitly contrasted with “coolness,” (*ruy*), whose bearer possesses health, contentment, and thoughtful restraint. The association with emotion and bodily temperature is meant in a more literal and physical sense than the expressions “hot-blooded” or “cool-headed” do in English, a difference which becomes apparent in the techniques through which violently angry people might be subdued: the body of the “hot” angry person is rubbed with palm heart or fibrous palm pith – foods associated with “coolness” – to soothe it and return the person to a normal state.

Scolding was considered to be one such expression of anger. Even though it purportedly responds to the moral failure of another, the act of scolding itself was open to further critique in a potentially infinite regression. As Judith Irvine has written, “The act of making an evaluative statement about someone is itself a social act subject to evaluation” (1992: 113). One was, in other words, responsible for what one says when scolding another, and consequently, was open to the same characterological questioning. One could scold another for being a scold, something

that (if the reported speech of my informants is any indication) happened with some regularity. *Djakaetedjipa?* "Are you the one who scolds so much?"

This appears to be quite different from what is reported in other parts of the South American lowlands, where harsh criticism was often given indirectly through ritual or heavily formalized verse, effectively excluding the speaker as the source of critique. Charles Briggs (1992; 1993) has described how in Warao funerary laments women assiduously note the lapses in care and generosity thought to have led to the death. In Bakairi initiation rituals, unsuspecting spectators may be scolded for stinginess and adultery by masked dancers who appear in the guise of animal masters, the origin of the critique seemingly lying outside of humanity itself (Barros 2003). In each of these examples, the speakers are not held individually responsible for their speech even as the addressee's behavior is called into question (cf. Irvine 1992).

But for the Ache, the agonism of critique is neither masked nor projected outside of society but considered part of the cost of interaction. Of course anger may render people unable to control themselves, growing out of proportion to its causes. Yet it does not seem that people can do without it; anger can and *ought* to be felt in some cases, and people should act upon in response to certain injuries inflicted on them or on those they care about. Whether anger is appropriate or not is not something determinable in advance but depends on the particulars of a context. This was precisely Aristotle's position in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "There is praise for someone who gets angry at the right things and with the right people, as well as in the right way, at the right time, and for the right length of time " (2014: 72). The problem for

Aristotle, as it is for the Ache, is how and to what degree anger is a sensible solution to the intolerable actions of others, and it is necessarily a practical one whose answer cannot be given in advance.

Whatever *kura* is, it is something far more than simply a disagreeable act from which the Ache can't seem to rid themselves. It plays prominent roles in some of the most elaborate rituals in Ache life. These highly formalized uses of *kura*, featured most prominently in funerary rites and male initiation, not only dramatize the everyday experience of interpersonal conflict, they play fundamental roles in making the right sorts of people. I will save discussion of funerary scolding for the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to point out that, whatever the differences between these isolated cases of ritual scolding and their more everyday forms, they share the ambivalent sense that scolding is (in the abstract) both unavoidable and unacceptable. The trouble it brings is a general condition of social life: part of "the costs we pay in order to live," as Veena Das (2013: 19) has so expressively described sacrifice.

3.2 The Accusation

The Ache word that I translate here as "scolding" is *kura*. The term itself refers to the characteristic intonation and emotional expression of the scolder. *Kura* is also used to refer to the deep guttural growl of a jaguar, and like this other sense, it points to the sensible signs of something's being angry. To do *kura* is by definition a forceful and angry act, so much so that the emotional expression of the speaker is a constructive feature that distinguishes *kura* from other kinds of discourse. In other words, the

speaker's expression of anger is a necessary condition of a man or woman's utterance counting as *kura*.

If the expression of anger is not a separate feature of the criticism "added" at the discretion of the speaker, neither is it the case that speaker's emotional stance excludes a consideration of linguistic form. *Kura* is defined by a particular grammatical construction not found in other speech genres:

[action+*dji*+*pa*]
[verb + nominalizer + "strong" question marker]

The various components of the utterance are as follows:

A. Verb-*dji*

The *-dji* attaches to a verb, and effectively nominalizes it, so that the specific act criticized is turned into "one who does the act" thus criticized.

B. "Strong" question marker *-pa*

Like other Tupi-Guarani languages, Ache encodes speaker attitudes in its questions. The question marker *-pa* indicates a direct question, while the "soft" question marker (*-ko*) indicates perplexity or astonishment. The use of the question marker *-pa* in *kura* constructions is not softening an assertion. The *-pa* suffix is forceful and always directed at an addressee, whereas *-ko* is often used in the presence of unaddressed bystanders. While it is grammatically permissible to use a "soft" question (*-ko*) in scolding, it would be attitudinally improper to use *-ko* with a kind of speech described as angry.

We can get a vague sense of how the utterance comes off through some examples:

1. Pichu uechedjipa?

Are you the one who eats so much palm larvae?

2. Dja kyminoperō karadja krypy idjy wachu. U kuallādjiipa?	The tough howler monkey thigh meat is for your grandchild. Are you the one who doesn't know how to eat?
3. Dja memby mendymi. Memby topaechedjiipa?	You didn't give to the child. Are you the one who picks up [becomes a ritual godmother to] so many children [that you don't care for]?
4. Dja memby kāndjāma. Chipolla maiechedjiipa?	Your child is lost. Are you the one who looks so much for manioc [instead of watching your children]?
5. Piāmbyre rupi djarawā ekōwā beru. Picha krumi reko buchādjiipa?	Do you want the Paraguayans to come to take you? Are you one who is so bad to other children?

We can see that in its most basic form, *kura* involves, first, a statement of fact about the action a person committed (or its implication by the speaker) that specifies the actions as deficient in some way. In example 2, the speaker points out in front of others that an older man has kept a cut of meat that was intended for that man's grandchild – with the added offense that the man should have known the tough cut of meat was for someone with better teeth. In examples 3 and 4, the speaker begins by pointing out that the addressee has neglected an essential obligation to a child. Even in cases where the opening statement is omitted, such as in examples 1 and 5, the speaker still implies that an offense has been committed (e.g. that the addressee is eating or has recently eaten palm larvae or the address has ill-treated a playmate.) This offense forms the basis for the question that follows it.

Secondly, *kura* involves a question about whether the doer of the action is the kind of person who performs acts like these. At stake is the difference between “a

person who cried” and a “crying person.” Sometimes the form is accompanied by a specific sanction in the form of an external threat (as it is in example 5). Thus, unruly children or those who struggled to keep pace with the band might be reminded that a jaguar or a Paraguayan might attack them. But there is a strong sense that *kura* is its own punishment, and the formalized language of scolding contains its own kind of threat. Specifically, Ache *kura* threatens to define the character of individuals through the undesirable actions they perform, and it does so by means of a question: “Are you one who commits *x*, *y*, or *z* act?”

3.4 Actions and ethical types

In these and other examples, the focus is not on the act per se but on *the kind of person* who would regularly perform that act. Scolding therefore involves a particular relationship between action and character, a behavioral token and an ethical type. *But what kind of relationship is this?* Moral philosophers have formulated various ways in which action and personhood might be – or *should* be – connected. For the sake of simplicity, I cite the two prevalent options.

The first option argues that being blameworthy is “really” about being responsible for a defined action. This is the position of a number of moral philosophers (mostly Kantians, but also neo-Aristotelians like Nussbaum [2016]: 233), who make a strong distinction between critiques directed at persons and critiques directed at acts. By strictly separating the person and the person’s act, they argue, we may identify and correct abhorrent behavior while still respecting the dignity of the person. Put otherwise: the dignity we grant to all persons requires that

we judge acts singularly and not as a direct reflection of the person who commits them. (This attitude is also commonly found in Christianity, where judging persons is reserved for God. Or the saying popular with evangelicals “Hate the sin, love the sinner.”⁵²)

The second option directs criticism at the person who has originated the action. Action is still important here, but it is important for what it communicates about the person who performed it. Or to put it in more semiotic terms, it posits a certain relationship between character and action, where a person’s actions index some enduring aspect of that person’s character, personality, soul, disposition, etc. Central to this option is an essentialization about a person who committed an act, an answer to the question, “what must one be like to have committed this action?”

We might treat the sort of ethics implied in *Ache kura* as a third option. It shares with character-centered critiques a concern with action and personhood. For both, the idea of character is thought to explain a particular action. There is, in other words, some basic sense in which *we are what we do*. But in *Ache kura*, the relationship between an action and the person – the “the one who does things like that action” – is always posed as a question: “Are you the one who eats so many palm larvae while your children go hungry?”⁵³

Just what is at stake in posing character as a question? We might grant that “action” and “character” have the same paradoxical character as the “grain of sand”

⁵² I thank Carla Jones for bringing this example to my attention.

⁵³ I am not concerned whether such an account of character is philosophically defensible. In other words, I am not concerned, as those working in meta-ethics are, with whether character is or isn’t real, whether character actually picks out an existing disposition in a person or whether it is a case of fundamental attribution error. My interest in these aspects of ethical life is anthropological: given that people do, in practice, treat others’ actions as an index of their character, how are persons imbued with character?

and the “heap” from Eubulides’ famous “sorites paradox.” Character is not something immediately perceptible to others: it is a habitual or otherwise naturalized component of the person, whether it accumulates primarily from the fulfillment of generous acts, or whether generous acts index a character that was there all along. A single act is never enough by itself to make the difference between one particular kind of character and another. After all, how many “bad acts” must one do to be considered a “bad person?” At what point does “a man who lied” become “a liar?” Perhaps this is why character is so often attributed to something indefinite about a person’s essence: something “internal to the person” (Aristotle), the “operations of the soul” (Aquinas), “personality,” or some other vague predicate like “soul” (see Severi 1993).⁵⁴

The scolder’s address to the offending party derives its force from this very ambiguity between act and character. The act is named in the accusation. But from this Ache scolders not directly conclude, “You are lazy” or “You are malhumored.” The ethical type can only be *suggested* by the accuser. *Kura* is therefore not an act of naming another; it is rather a *threat* to characterize another as a moral failure. Just as it is impossible to determine how many “bad acts” makes one a “bad person,” the form of Ache scolding invokes the frightening possibility that one’s next “bad act” might be the defining one in the eyes of others. In other words, Ache *kura* acquires its force from its open-endedness as a question.

3.5 The Recipient

⁵⁴ Character (type) and action (token) can and often do act as evidence of each other. Henry James noted the circularity of the terms in *The Art of Fiction*: “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?” (cit. MacIntyre 1981: 125).

One way to see why *kura*'s particular qualities might matter is to compare them with the way anthropologists have often treated moral education since Durkheim – that is, discourses on acceptable practices, their purpose, how individual behavior should be adapted to it, and how breaches to morality might be resolved. For moral education to work, in such a view, critique must achieve a particular goal. It is the violation of a collectively sanctioned idea – and only this – that entitles us to lecture them and punish them. The offender experiences not just the feeling of social discomfort or a fear of the scolder's wrath, but an admission that they did what they knew to be wrong at the time. In feeling shame, a person feels not just the other's view of what that person is, but a collective sense of failure from that view. And this affects the person's view of him or herself. The admission of the offense, where through symbolic acts like atonement, expiation, or apology, actors demonstrate their adherence to moral and ethical values of the group to others, and in so doing, repairs the damage his/her actions have done.

But something very different happens in Ache scolding. The moral force is not external to the *kura* utterance but is the internal possibility of the expression itself. The social life of ethical claims is mediated by discursive interactions (Keane 2016). Though critique is packaged in a strongly formalized accusation, the interaction is not closed by a similar degree of formality. In fact, in most of the cases of scolding I witnessed or heard described, the question often elicits no immediate response in the accused at all. The question asked in *kura* – “Are you one who does such a thing?” – is not a straightforward question, to be answered truly or falsely. There is no acknowledgement of the utterance or the offense nor is there a resolution to it. The

accused avoided direct eye contact with his accuser. Staring downward or sidelong, stooping slightly, the accused typically suffers the sting of the accusation in silence.

Everyday scolding mostly occurs between cross-generational consanguineal kin or between spouses. In the former case, the person scolded is already dependent and indebted to his or her accuser. And that hierarchy gives force to the accusation made. Parents may scold their children; grandparents may scold their grandchildren; elder siblings may scold their younger siblings without escalation, though as we will see, not without resentment.

The outward signs of the accused's passivity often conceal an inner rage. When recalling past incidents when they had been scolded, my informants described the rage they struggled to hide in response to being exposed by their accuser. Here is one such example:

The midday camp was cold. Mothers nursed their babies, and the older children stoked and added wood to the fires, as they warmed themselves before the hunters returned to camp in the late afternoon.

Suddenly, a hunter's call rang out from a distance outside the camp. "Aaaa. Aaaa. Aaaa. There is honey here. Bring your baskets." Two older children sprang up from their seats, and reached into their mother's woven palm leaf carrying baskets to find the baked clay cylinders they would use to collect the honey that had just been discovered.

One girl remained by the fire, trying to steal a few more moments of comfort by the fire before leaving with the other girls. Just as her older sister left the cleared space of the camp in the direction of the hunter's voice, she noticed her sister remained by

the fire with their mother. Within earshot of the others, she shouted at her younger sister, "Paraguayans are going to come get you! Are you a lazy person? Why would anyone save you from being abandoned to the Paraguayans?"

The younger sister, who told this story to me, was furious at her older sister's scolding. The suggestion that because of her laziness, she was unwanted by any of her co-residents in the band left her humiliated. "I would have liked to have hit my sister with a firebrand," she confessed as she recounted the event to me decades later. But the girl did as her sister said, and left the warmth of the fire to go bring back honey with the others.

Being singled out in this way not only embarrasses the accused. The scolder's deliberate disregard for the other's autonomy or integrity induces anger. In the particular case just mentioned, the younger's sister swallowed her bitterness in silence. But the potential for direct confrontations to immediately escalate hung over these interactions. Likewise, as a verbal confrontation, some degree of risk – or danger – of failure is inherent in every performance of Ache *kura*.

3.6 Too Much *Kura* Makes One *Prāndjā*: The Scold as an Ethical Type

Threatening to define others with ethical types comes at a cost. The general sensitivity for people who scold too much places clear limits on criticizing others. If scolding was common, it was also commonly resented, so that criticism was often a dangerous action in its own right. Here we encounter the doubled-sided nature of criticism: The resources a person has to form a critique are also the terms in which others will interpret his or her behavior. The threat of ethical typification extends

meta-pragmatically to scolding itself: “those who scold” may find themselves accused of being common scolds: “You are so angry with your children. Are you a real scolder?”

Perhaps this was why it was so common to talk about *being* scolded. In the character evaluations of their peers, Ache regularly identified the habitual emotional states of others – as angry people, as kind and caring, or as scolds. And as evidence, they carefully cited the way particular “angry people” had scolded them, reproducing the same blistering critique in other settings so that others might also hear how aggressive the scolder was. In reporting the scolder’s critique of their action, speakers made no effort to hide the accusations leveled against them or to defend their actions. They seemed unconcerned whether their person listening to the story might agree with the scolder’s account – that they might in fact, actually be a “stingy person,” a “lazy person,” or a “someone who eats too much palm larvae.” The final framing of the event was enough to suggest the fault of the critic.

Moreover, the ethical type “scold” is more durable over time than other, less ambivalent, ethical types like “lazy person” or “stingy person.” At death, scolds and violent people (both of which are ultimately motivated by anger) may become voracious jaguars or ghostly specters called *adjawe* that prey on living kin.⁵⁵ Or, better put, a jaguar is the particular body the dead person inhabits for purposes of revenge and carnage. While someone’s laziness or stinginess does not carry on after one’s death, one’s anger does. Dead scolds – in the form of jaguars or ghostly *adjawe* – were responsible for a variety of ailments and misfortunes (in addition to

⁵⁵ As I was told, *Prāndjā ekōwerā adjawe*. “The angry ones will become *adjawe*.”

jaguar attacks). They might enter the stomachs of living persons and sicken them. They might cause cramps in people during their daily treks through the forest. Or they might, as jaguars, maul those they encountered.

Dead scolds also preserved some connection with their biographical past, so that any misfortune suffered by a living person could potentially be attributed to some deceased person who had once scolded the victim. These injuries seemed personal to the living persons who suffered them, perhaps not in the same way as the original scolding, but at least as different manifestations of an angry character.

Critique is, in one way or another, a negative act. To engage in critique is to grapple with omissions, insufficiencies, or evasions in the person one is critiquing. It is to formulate a limit, to perceive a deficiency, to heave a sigh of disapproval or disappointment. And because that disapproval is directed at a person, it implies an assertion of authority over the person being scolded. Its possibility and risk comes from violating the recipient's autonomy. Scolding comes from resentment and circulates it. To borrow James Siegel's depiction of witchcraft, we might say that scolding "is a violence that inheres in the social and that turns against it" (2006). It involves a violence that does not serve to restore existing social forms but at least makes visible the breakdown of relations and their obligations. And in that regard, it may be just as important to Ache society as the "happiness" that Ache so often extoll.

Chapter 4 The Dangerous Remainder

Relations have lifespans. They are built up over a time and subject to dissolution through neglect. In other cases, relations must be purposefully and deliberately ended. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the content of that detachment. I show that not only was the stance of detachment that funerary rites cultivated in relation to dead kin not necessarily a gesture of moral disregard; it was a moral imperative. Funerary rites provide the content of detaching ownership relations, where relations of ownership are systematically taken apart. As I argue, the content of those relations affects how they are ended, and again evaluation, plays a role in decoupling the relations between the living and the dead.

4.1 The Body After Death

Death, as an event, was marked by the soul's departure from the body. The Ache term for "soul" (*owe*) encodes this central point. Ache, like many Tupi-Guarani languages, uses the nominal past (*-we*) to refer to a part separated from a whole. The *owe* then is what has separated from flesh (*o'o*) at a person's death. Exactly what it is that left the flesh at death is somewhat uncertain, though it did have a definite itinerary: Once separated from the body, the *owe* traveled skyward to the land of the dead, where it became a *krei*, a shadow. It left behind a body, its flesh, an unwanted and dangerous remainder.

Both these aspects of the deceased – its ephemeral and fleshy aspects – were dealt with in funerary rites, but they did not receive the same degree of attention and concern. Ensuring that the *owe* found its way to the land of the dead was fairly straightforward and little concern was given to it in Ache funerals. The dead were buried along the path of the sun with their feet toward the east and head to the west to direct the *owe* to the land of the dead, and a trail was cut westward from the place of burial to guide the departing *owe* in its intended direction to the western skies. The *owe* was sometimes aided in its upward journey by necrophagous animals, hitching a ride on the back of an armadillo as it crawled to the treetops or lifted on the back of a king vulture to fly through the forest canopy. If the deceased was a child, it would be carried to the sky in the arms of an already deceased relative who descends to earth to retrieve them. But in no case did I ever hear of the *owe* ever becoming lost on its way to the sky. This journey took place as a matter of course (cf. Clastres and Sebag 1963).

The physical body of the deceased was not so easily moved, however. It required careful attention to stave off its dangers, and from its beginning to end, the focus of the Ache funerary rite was devoted to this task.⁵⁶ The Ache funeral therefore was not an act of remembrance, a cathartic turning back to reflect on the entirety of a life lost. The actions performed in an Ache funeral did not, at least overtly, concern

⁵⁶ It is not the case, as Clastres argued, that living bodies have no soul, that “only at the death of the body do souls begin to exist” (1974: 317). One can speak of an *owe* or *krei* whenever one’s consciousness has separated from one’s body – not just when one has died, but also when one dreams. The *owe* can leave the body as it sleeps, and the dreams remembered in the morning is evidence of the activity of *owe*. The information revealed in dreams is useful primarily as a forewarning of unfortunate events. When I asked about this, I received was the same answer as Susnik (1974: 140): *ukēmbu cho owe kāndjare o*, “when sleeping, my soul escapes.” Clastres is nevertheless correct that the soul only becomes an object of concern for the Ache when it separates from the body. It is by nature a “de-carnated” entity.

themselves with the past at all. Instead the Ache funeral concerned itself with the practical effects of forestalling the future dangers that the dead body posed, either by impeding its capacity for movement or destroying its presence altogether.

4.1.1 Adjawe

The contrast between the ephemeral and fleshy aspects of the dead was categorical and made explicit by the Ache: “*Owe* are not *adjawe*.” Their paths diverged at death, and from then on, their encounters with living Ache were decidedly different, never to encounter each other, each ensconced in different interactional settings. The *owe* moved on; the *adjawe* remained. (For this reason, I will discuss the ephemeral, “celestial” soul in a later chapter.)

Adjawe, the Ache name for the specter a body produced at death, was not a well-defined discrete class of beings. What distinguished them from the other spirits of the forest, however, is that they were dead, or more accurately, “not quite living.” My informants were unsure – and untroubled – by my question if animals had *owe*; but it was apparent that both dead humans and dead animals had (or produced) *adjawe*. The form of *adjawe* was susceptible to transformation, and they might appear to humans in both embodied (*etegi*) and disembodied (*etellāngi*) states. In the cases with which I am most familiar, human *adjawe* tended to appear in embodied form, and animal *adjawe* tended to appear in disembodied form.⁵⁷ But since part of what defined *adjawe* was their capacity for metamorphosis, it would make little sense to insist on a rigorous distinction here. Both human and animal *adjawe* were said to

⁵⁷ People saw the *adjawe* of their parents. People do not see the *adjawe* of animals; that an animal *adjawe* has entered the body of someone is inferred from symptoms.

cause disease, and their capacity to do so could be causally intertwined: human *adjawe* were sometimes considered to be the ultimate cause of diseases immediately attributable to animal *adjawe*. There appears to be a hierarchy of agency here. The human dead might employ the *adjawe* of animals, but animal *adjawe* were not the ultimate cause of the actions of human *adjawe*.

Within the context of an Ache funeral, however, human *adjawe* did take a relatively consistent visible form. They were described to me as a hideous specter that retains the generic image of Ache enemies. A few Ache I spoke to had actually gotten a glimpse of them. Their appearance was grotesque and dirty. Their bodies were painted black, as the Ache did themselves when raiding the bands of their enemies, and they gave off a foul, musty-smelling air. These “night-walkers” would typically attack the Ache in nighttime raids, sprinting into the camps to shoot invisible arrows into the stomachs and legs of sleeping Ache and split their heads with long warclubs of *piry* wood (*Lonchocarpus* sp.). As quickly as they appeared, the *adjawe* would dash off into the night with a woman (often a former wife of the deceased) thrown over its shoulders to make them their wives far away from where they came.⁵⁸

Virtually every adult I met who had grown up in the forest had a collection of stories describing the abduction of some missing relative by *adjawe*. Their aim is to provide a close description of what happens during an encounter with these deathly monstrosities. Testaments to the continued efficacy of the dead, these tales of

⁵⁸ Raiding enemies for marriage capture was not something the Ache did in the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, the Ache did attribute that practice to fearsome distant enemies (whom they called *bakadju* and *bwara*), and, if Jesuit sources from the 17th century are to be believed, it was something the Ache did regularly in the distant past (Thompson 2019).

deathly encounters detailed the myriad ways *adjawe* spirits affected the living. Many of the stories I heard included a reckoning of responsibility, where one's abduction by *adjawe* was due to bad behavior or carelessness, as indicated by the disastrous consequences that had resulted (e.g. an abduction as the result of an unsupervised child, a hunter who wanders out of shouting distance from his peers, or a woman who strays from her friends while picking fruit on the trail.) In such cases, *adjawe* struck persons out of place.

The "dwelling space" (*ekōandy*) of the *adjawe* was earthbound. Generally speaking, their territory was the reverse of that of the living, so that the *adjawe* inhabited one or a number of forest types that the Ache avoided. They skulked in the depths of the forest (*ka wachu*), in bristly thickets (*kywainty*), or around the grassy *cerrado* where the Paraguayans live. In this sense, the *ekōandy* of the *adjawe* was an inversion of the social space of the living. Still, though the living and the dead dwelled in different parts of the forest, encounters between them were inevitable. *Adjawe* could travel rapidly to inflict vengeance on the living from such a range as could not be covered in the time by a normal human being. They were elsewhere, but could be here at any moment. Though generically, the "dwelling space" of the *adjawe* was imagined in opposition to the places that living Ache regularly inhabited, individual *adjawe* did retain some spatial connections to their individual historical selves. They might return to the place of burial, the place where the placenta was buried, or other places where exuviate was deposited during its life.

The ailments caused by human *adjawe* were conceived as invisible arrows shot into the stomach or the legs of their victims, or in the case of animal *adjawe*, claws or

teeth that lodge themselves in victim's bodies. These object intrusions would cause one's legs to become emaciated, to cramp, or throb with pain. More frightening than this, *adjawe* were responsible for a class of illnesses called *djuwy* (or in another Ache subgroup, *baiwā*). Associated with eating undercooked meat, the *adjawe* would enter one's stomach and cause cramps and "heaviness." The image invoked here is the eater being eaten by the animal he or she has consumed. The sick person would become immobilized and would be left behind by the others as they continued on. The *adjawe* were also held causally responsible for a variety of infirmities that encumbered a person's mobility. These maladies were not merely playful tricks or minor pains to endure in silence. As with *djuwy*, these were injuries that, if even for a short time, slowed one's pace or kept them from walking altogether, which could easily leave one behind the band in its continual push forward.

Straying far from their regular routes placed the Ache in the most danger of encountering an *adjawe*, as attacks by *adjawe* spirits nearly always happened when the victim was alone. As one Ache told the anthropologist Leon Cadogan, *Kudjā etakrāmbu kybai ymarō adjawe ra'a. Kudjā tārāmbu yma adjawe rallā*, "When the woman is alone, the *llāwe* of the man [her husband] takes her. When the woman is with many people, the *adjawe* of the man will not take her" (Cadogan 1968: 194). *Adjawe* attacks are both the cause and the effect of isolation from one's living familiars. Being alone left one vulnerable to *adjawe* attack and the sicknesses that resulted from those attacks. Conversely, the sicknesses brought by *adjawe* often limited one's movement, debilitating a person so that he or she would be unable to keep pace with

the rest of the band, so that they would be left behind by the band. *Adjawe* would follow the band, occasionally overtaking the laggards or an isolated person.

4.2 The Funerary Rite(s)

Ache funerals were a means to dispose of the dead. In actuality, however, there were a variety of means to achieve this goal. Funerals were “weakly ritualized” in that their ritual formulas did not derive from a fixed, preordained text. What took place in any one funeral was always one of several of possibilities. The variations upon Ache funerals the Ache considered the biographical details of the deceased or by the deceased’s status when disposing of the body. Death was not a “great equalizer.” People lived different lives and died different deaths, and this affected how dangerous they could be for the living. Why then shouldn’t they be given different funerals?

People were buried a short distance from the place where they died, usually only a few meters. If the person died in the camp, hunters would be called back from their hunt to begin preparations for the burial. If the person died outside of camp, as typically happened to hunters who died suddenly from snakebites or some other unexpected accident, the band traveled to the body to bury it and a makeshift camp would be cleared beside the body.

One or two men prepared the grave. Several hundred meters outside the camp, they cut a small clearing in the forest, and in the middle of it, they dug a cylindrical hole of about a meter and a half. This work was not delegated to any specific class of people, and there was no discussion about who would do it. Meanwhile, close kin

(of either sex) prepared the body for burial, washing the bodies with water. If the deceased were a man, his male kin would shave his beard with a bamboo knife, and the female kin of the dead cut their hair short in mourning.⁵⁹

Dead bodies were lifeless but not inert. Even the bodies of those who led amiable, peaceable lives required rope to encumber limbs that still contained within them an impulse to move. The women tied the body's calves to their respective thighs, the forearms to their respective arms with stands of nettle fiber and hair, which the women kept in their baskets for their husbands to use as spare bowstrings. They bound the legs together as well with a thick *bupi* vine, which was knotted and then passed along the body and around the neck. The vine was then tightened, drawing the folded arms and legs into the body, forcing the body into a fetal position. Once the bound body was pulled together, it was wrapped in two woven sleeping mats and is carried to the grave. Sleeping mats were made by women and considered their personal property, but the wrapping of dead bodies in woven sleeping mats cannot simply be explained by a need to dispose of the deceased's property, as men must also be wrapped in palm mats as well. If the deceased was a woman, she was wrapped in her own palm mats, but if the deceased was a man, a spouse or close relative volunteered their own mats.⁶⁰ The two men who carry the body touch only the edges of the mats, careful not to touch the body.

The men passed the body to a man standing on the floor of the grave, and he positioned the body. A stake was fixed to the floor of the grave, and the body was

⁵⁹ Its regrowth, as Lima has described for the Juruna, will be a "calendar of mourning" that measures the time until the woman resumes her everyday activities after seclusion (Lima 1995: 224). Techo (2005 [1673]) describes something similar for the seventeenth century Guarani.

⁶⁰ It is interesting here that when so much concern is placed on violence inflicted on the body, it is important that the body must be protected from dirt and from rain.

leaned upright against it, so that the deceased's body sat almost vertically. The face was positioned toward the sun, the destination of the dead's celestial-bound spirit. The deceased's possessions might be tossed into the grave at this time. After the corpse was positioned, the men who dug the grave immediately begin to cover the body with earth. As the dirt began to cover the body, the deceased's close kin were given stern warnings to avoiding looking at the body as it was buried. At this point, the mood of restrained sadness that had been so far maintained gave way to eruptions of uncontrolled grief. And it is here that the differences between the mourners and the others became pronounced. The mourners became distraught that they would be separated from their dead kin forever. And the distant kin of the deceased feared that the mourner's attachment had become too close. As the dirt is first poured over the body, it was common for kin of the deceased to attempt suicide by throwing themselves into the grave. Overcome with grief, close kin begged others to bury them with their kin, so that they might accompany them to the land of the dead. And as the grief of the mourners intensifies, so did the efforts of affines to restrain them. The non-kin pulled them out and attempted to console the mourners.

The men tamped the earth flat with their feet. On top of the grave, they constructed a small shelter. It does not resemble the shelters that Ache built to shelter themselves from the rain, though they are called by the same name, *tapy*. Their way of construction is utterly different. The shelter's foundation was a fence of palm staves fixed into the ground around into the perimeter of the grave; this barrier would keep away animals, and the raised earth around it would keep rainwater from pooling on top of the grave. Several long palm fronds were draped over the

side of the wall. Once the shelter was complete, a fire was built on top of the flattened grave with logs of some slow-burning wood, such as the Brazilian maple tree (*Balfourodendron reidelianum*). In this way, these nomadic people could evade the ghosts of the dead by *fixing the dead body to a place*.

The kind of funeral one receives is the result of certain characterological assumptions about the deceased, whether based on that person's biographical past or the stereotypical qualities of the age grade to which he or she belonged. The funeral as just described was the most common one, and it was given for those who were considered "not-angry" (*prāndjāllā*). The procedure was defined negatively; binding was provided for those who were *not* quarrelsome and aggressive during their lives, who had *not* died violent unexpected deaths, and who would not be expected to cause vengeance after they died. Of course the binding of the body was still a necessary precaution, and even "not angry" people were capable of horrific acts of vengeance on their living kin, this was exceptional. After all, "not-angry" people were not like children, whose death inspired no such fear at all, who could be buried with little preparation in shallow graves, who could be mourned intensely without dangerous consequence, and who did not stir the band to travel great distances from the gravesite to avoid their ghosts.

The bodies of "angry persons" were singled out for special treatment. Binding was insufficient to thwart their vengeful projects, so they were given different funerals, though in a general sense, their funerals were clear transformations of the ones just described. The mourning of "angry persons" was more sharply curtailed, and the violence inflicted on the dead body was intensified. (Or, to put it formally,

we could say that the permissible expression of sympathy was inversely proportional to the violence inflicted on the deceased's body.)

If the deceased was an adult man, he might be buried with one of the children he "owned," typically his young daughter or the daughter of an unmarried sister. She was "dropped on his chest" (*chape ity*) along with his other possessions and is buried with him. Despite past ethnographers' characterization of *chape ity* as a "sacrifice" (Clastres 1998; Hill and Hurtado 1996), the killing of children at funerals does not warrant that label in the classic Maussian sense of the term. The characteristic feature of a sacrifice, according to Hubert and Mauss (1964 [1898]), is that it establishes a connection between two disjunctive terms. The thing sacrificed is ritually made sacred so that it might cross an ontological boundary. But in this case, a connection between the living and dead was precisely what *chape ity* was intended to avoid. The child was not "offered" to the dead in exchange for the security of the band; as close kin "owned" by the deceased, she already belonged to the dead person, and this was the stated reason that the child must be killed: The children were buried with their male kin in a similar way that a person was buried with his possessions – destroying these links to the world of the living would help to create a firm boundary between the living and the dead.

In other cases, the bodies of the dead were destroyed outright. Rather than being buried, bodies of killers and particularly belligerent persons were placed on a rough wooden bier and burned. The body was placed on a wooden scaffold, similar to those the Ache use to roast game, but larger, approximately 1.5 meters tall. A mound of dry firewood was placed under the rack, and the body was burned until it was

reduced to ashes. The remaining bones were crushed with a bow stave or buried. This appears to have been performed by men for their male kin, and women were not allowed to see or take part in the body's cremation (Mayntzhusen 2009 [1948]).

How can these fearful images be attributed to the bodies of individual dead persons, who just a short time ago, were so familiar? At issue here is the kind of transformation that death effects in a person. The violence directed at the dead body can only appear incomprehensible if we consider dead bodies to be inert – and if inert, then harmless, and if harmless, then pitiable. However, should we consider the inertness of death not as given but something that must be effected through ritual action, as the Ache do, then such familiar sympathies given to the dead cannot be taken for granted. Those who dropped children in the graves of the dead or burned the bodies of their kin feared their own deaths and turned to these acts to prevent the dead's revenge from happening. They saw the violence they inflicted as a means to restart a normal life, the temporary suffering of someone as a way to provide a worthwhile life for others.

4.3 Leaving the Past Behind

Co-residence was a prerequisite for ownership. And destroying the relationships that connected the dead to its former intimates required the living to rapid distance themselves from the dead and their former places of habitation.

After all funerals, the site of burial had to be abandoned, though here too the Ache stress that the distance the band traveled from the grave to the new camp depended on who the dead was. *Ache manobu pe puku llāwepurāmbu. Kromi manobu pe*

pukullã, “When an adult man dies, they cut a long trail so the *adjawe* won’t take them; when a child dies, the trail is not long.”⁶¹

It is commonly reported by lowland ethnographies that death requires a reconfiguration of residential arrangements. The living had to avoid the spaces where the deceased had cooked, eaten, and slept. This does not mean that an entire village was definitively abandoned and rebuilt elsewhere every time an adult member of the village died, though in some rare cases, villages do seem to have been definitively abandoned at the death of important people. But it does require the living to distance themselves from the spaces of commensality and its routines. More often, as Viveiros de Castro (1992) has stressed for the Arawete, this abandonment involved the group’s dispersal into forest until the specter of the dead was no longer considered particularly dangerous, a period typically lasting several months, after which they would return to inhabit the village. Piro typically dismantled the houses of the dead, the most desirable parts reused in the construction of new houses (Gow 1995). The Kawaiwete dead were buried in the houses in which they

⁶¹ Viveiros de Castro (1992) also finds this correlation in Arawete funerals between distance maintained between living and dead and the deceased’s age grade: “Deceased children who did not yet have a name are buried inside or nearby the house; those who were a little older are buried in the nearby brush. Adults are interred at least five hundred meters from the village along a hunting path that henceforth will be abandoned” (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 197).

One of León Cadogan’s Ache informants connects the spatial distance that the living must maintain with the emotional distance they must maintain. While Ache mourners sharply curtailed expressions of grief for their adult consanguines during and after funerals, the same expectations were not applied to the deaths of related children, where parents’ grief was given greater license. The child did not pose the same dangers as a deceased adult: *Krumi manobu chengaete. Wedja djuellã. Āpã chengaete, ai chengaete. Adjawe purällã. Ywyri kybape*, “When a child dies, they cry a lot. They don’t want to abandon [the gravesite]. The father cries a lot, the mother cries a lot. [The child’s] *adjawe* is not *purã*. [The child] is curled up in the earth” (Cadogan 1960: 3). Interestingly, in Viveiros de Castro’s account of the Arawete, the age grade of the deceased affects the size of the funeral’s cortege, but not their permissible emotional display: “Although the death of a small baby arouses little emotion, its burial may draw many people; by contrast, the retinue for the funeral of an adult is small” (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 197).

lived, which were later burned and a new house built over the site (Oakdale 2005). Whether the ties of co-residence are uncoupled through a temporary avoidance of the deceased person's house, the house's disassembly, or its physical destruction altogether, the destruction of the house is meant to aid in the dead spirit's dispersion; no longer enclosed by the confines of domestic space, the dead was free to drift away.

The Ache appreciated the need to redefine co-residence, but as hunter-gatherers, their avoidance of the dead involved a somewhat different spatial orientation to the dead. When the burial was completed, the band left the camp, lighting small fires along the footpaths that led out from the gravesite to impede the *adjawe's* pursuit. Further precautions were taken after the band had established a new camp: For several nights following the burial, the Ache burned freshly cut bamboo close to the relatives of the deceased. The wet stems would swell from the heat and explode with a loud dull thump. The vengeful spirit of the deceased, they hoped, would be frightened away by this unwelcoming sound and left behind as the band hurried on to a distant camp.

The centerpiece of many women's laments describe the place of burial and the band's distancing relation to it:

Dja paparō dja paparō wedja puku
pachawe

My father, my father, we left his
bound body far behind.

Dja papa kwarewerō wedja puku
pachawe

My father's grave, we left his bound
body far behind.

Dja irōndyrō dja irōndyrō matā buku
pachawe

My habitual friends, my habitual
friends, we fled from their bound

	bodies far away.
Dja mamarō ywy wachurō peche pachawe	My mother, they covered her bound body with a heap of dirt.
Djamo kudja baechedjima lluāndywety myrō wachuma baydja purā tupa djamino	She became a female jaguar, we ran a great distance to the camp for the <i>baydja</i> . ⁶²
Djamo kudja baechedjima lluāndywety myrō wachugima myryrō puku pachawe	She became a female jaguar, we ran a great distance, ran a long way from her bound body.
Djamo kudja baechedjima lluāndywety myrō wachuma bytā ěmbeterō wyra puku pachawe	She became a female jaguar, we ran a great distance along the edge of the tall trees away from her bound body.
Dja paparō dja paparō wedja puku pachawe	My father, my father left his bound body far behind.
Djamo chue baechedjima bytaty pyte o wachuwe krā puchī djamino	He became an old male jaguar, we went from where the corpse expelled excrement.
Dja āpā kwarewerō dja āpā kwarewerō tōnkapewerō wedja puku pachawe	My father's grave, my father's grave, his skull, we left them far behind.
Dja djamorō dja djamorō wedja puku pachawe	My grandfather, my grandfather, we left his bound body far behind.
Dja djaryrō budjarō matā buku pachawe	My grandmother, we fled far away from her bound body.

Laments like this one (called *chenga ruwara*, “sung crying” or simply *chēnga*, “crying”) were gradually created through the mourning process and then sung whenever the woman remembers the dead, such as when one encountered animal that bore the same name as the dead relative. (People are named after game animals).

⁶² As has been mentioned, a *baydja* is someone who attracts jaguars, usually on account of his (*baydja* are almost always men) being exposed to blood.

Chenga laments often describe the person's death or funeral and biographical details are effaced: what is remembered about the dead is precisely the leaving of him/her. This particular example of women's lament progressively describes the actions taken by the band to dissociate themselves from the dead – the binding and burial of the dead bodies, as well as the band's departure from the site of the burial – precautions taken to avoid the dead's vengeance (as jaguars, as sickness, etc.) The enumeration of relationship terms that begin each line, laying out the plentitude of senior kin (father, mother, grandfather, grandmothers, and habitual friends), demonstrates that such precautions would be needed for all of one's close relations. Everyone – one's father, mother, grandparents, co-residents, and allies – must eventually be left behind.

4.4 The Dead's Possessions

The deceased's personhood is difficult to destroy. This is because personhood, as Alfred Gell reminds us, lies "not just in our singular bodies, but in everything in our surroundings which bears witness to our existence, our attributes, and our agency" (Gell 1998: 103; see also Laidlaw 2015). Of those objects that index the dead, personal possessions and names are particularly important for the Ache in the time after someone dies. Possessions and names⁶³ have different temporalities than the human

⁶³ Ache received their name from the game animals cooked and eaten by their mother during her pregnancy. During a woman's last term, the expectant mother receives gifts of game animals from various hunters, usually male affines. Though the stock of names is fairly limited in this regard, it is nevertheless rare for two persons to have the exact same personal name. This is because the name includes distinguishing features of the game animal in question – its color, its size, or the fact that it had a piece of its ear missing. Moreover, preferred names often come from uncommon species, so that no correlation exists between names and the most frequently hunted species (capuchin monkey, armadillo).

bodies to which they refer, and they stubbornly exist even after the person from whom they originated ceased to exist.⁶⁴ They may circulate widely and yet still remain intimately linked to the personhood of the dead. It is exactly this fact that makes possessions and names a problem for the living.

As Gabriel Marcel (1965) has eloquently described it, “In the fact of thinking of someone, there is already an active denying of space, that simultaneously material and abstract character of proximity. *Thought about a dead person is the active denial of his extinction* (consider the metaphysical value of memory, or even, in a sense, of history). The denial of space denies death, death being in a sense the deepest expression of a separation as can be realized in space” (Marcel 1965: 31-32, emphasis added). The efforts made to put distance between the living and the dead were subject to continued risk, and even after the body had been immobilized or destroyed and the band had distanced itself from the place of burial, that risk remained. Remembering one’s dead relatives threatened to collapse the

It is these animals that *bykwa* the child. Though *bykwa* literally means, “to put the *by’y* into,” the term *by’y* has no well-defined meaning. In fact, it is never used alone, and Ache typically express some mix of amusement or bewilderment when some impetuous ethnographer asks for its gloss. Still, its use in several constructions points to a common meaning. Affable and light-hearted persons are said to have a *bygatu*, a “good *by’y*.” One can also lose one’s *by’y*. The negative form, *byllā*, describes a state of passionate anger; when one is *byllā*, he is filled with an inconsolable rage, and he must commit revenge. Thus, from its use, we might gather that it means “temperament,” or something to that effect. After the birth, the mother chooses one or several names from the animals that *bykwa’d* the child, with preference usually given to the largest or most frequently eaten animal. For the most part, these names are simply the words for animal plus a person-marking suffix (-*gi*). Adults tend address each other by name and not by kinship terms. (Though the person marker -*gi* is usually dropped in such cases.) Most persons have more than one name. Nearly everyone shares a name with someone else. There are no sex distinctions in names.

In choosing a name for her child, the mother establishes relations between herself, her husband, and her child on the one hand, and the *bykwatygi*—the hunter who gave her the meat—on the other. The name-giver enters into a relation of gift exchange with the father, and normally the relationship between them is, at least on the surface, friendly.

⁶⁴ It would therefore be an exaggeration to suggest for the Ache, as Nimuendaju (1978: 52) said of the Guarani, that the name *is* the person, just as it would be to say that a man’s bow *is* the man that made it.

spatiotemporal distance that had to be carefully maintained between the living and the dead, such that the dead that had been made *then-and-there* might return to become the dead *here-and-now*.

The name did not disappear when its owner died. An essential connection still remained between it and the person, much like a dead person retained some connection to the arrows he made or the bow he carved. But they could be disposed of in the same way. Possessions could be burned; names could not. The name of the deceased was avoided in conversation for months after the burial, and when the name was reintroduced, it did not return as it was.⁶⁵ Ache speakers (in the past and now) affixed the term *marĩ* (or *maĩ*) to the personal names, kin vocatives, and nominalized descriptors of anyone who is deceased at the time of the utterance.⁶⁶ Speakers did this even when these names or kin vocatives appear in direct quoted speech reported from the past. For example, in reporting a decades-old conversion between two siblings, both long dead, one speaker recounted a man's purportedly

⁶⁵ This is frequently mentioned in other ethnographies of lowland South America. The Yanomamo (Albert 1985), Mundurucu (Murphy and Murphy 1974), Bororo (Crocker 1985), and many other groups prohibit speaking the name of the deceased so that its specter will not return to the living. In such cases, ethnographers' inquiries into the genealogies their informants have sometimes been met with stinging rebuke: "Told in graduate school that we should take down genealogies and thus build up an outline of the more extended kinship units, we queried our informants unmercifully about the names of their grandfathers, their grandfathers' brothers, and so on, only to be told by some that they could not even remember the name of their father. One middle-aged man finally became impatient with us and exclaimed: "Do you think we bandy the names of our dead around as if they were children, like you white people do?" (Murphy and Murphy 1974: 97). Moreover, some societies refrain from uttering the real names of living persons – as opposed to nicknames that connote a physical characteristic or general characterological trait. As reported for Yanomami (Albert 1985), Warao, Jivaro, Nambikwara (Lévi-Strauss 1948), and others, persons conceal their real names in fear that an enemy's knowledge of it would leave him vulnerable to sorcery. Whether as a vehicle to destroy that person or a means to invite its specter, both practices share the idea that personal names are essential part of the persons, so that the sound of uttering the name can exercise a causal effect over that person.

⁶⁶ Those familiar with the ethnographies of Tupian groups will recognize the term *maĩ*, which in those cases refers to the souls of the dead after they have become gods (Viveiros de Castro 1992).

direct address to his sister as, “*nypurāngi marĩ*,” “my late sister.” The sister (*nypurāngi*) of the narrated event becomes “the late sister” (*nypurāngi marĩ*) because the speaker is alive and the people whose conversation he has reported are dead. It is important to note that the anxieties of citation specifically concerned the deceased’s name: reported speech from the dead person does not invoke that person’s presence in the same way; nor does the speaker’s performing the gestures or tone of the dead person from the reported event. But for the names of the dead, at least, the past is an inseparable part of the present utterance. Even when the speaker’s point of view on the past is otherwise masked, there remains an unwanted concrete relation to the dead persons he invokes which the term *marĩ* is meant to neutralize.

4.5 *Kura* in Ache Funerals

In his recent book, *The Subject of Virtue* (2014), James Laidlaw appeals to Beth Conklin’s (2001) historical work on Wari’ mortuary cannibalism to argue that the Wari’ practice of eating their dead affines was fundamentally an ethical act. The Wari’ ate their dead affines because they “felt sorry” for them and for the bereaved relatives, and they reviewed funerary cannibalism as a way to save the corpse from decay and to help lessen the sorrow of mourners. When asked, the Wari’ emphasize that affines ate because the dead person’s close consanguines asked them to do so. They bore a responsibility to perform emotionally difficult tasks that kin could not or did not wish to do themselves, and it was a responsibility that affines owed one another. One ate the corpse out of a sense of compassion and duty to their affines,

not out of desire for the flesh itself. Human flesh was not ordinary meat. Wari' reject the idea that anyone wanted to eat the corpse; to treat the corpse like animal meat and eat voraciously was insulting to mourners (Vilaça 2000).⁶⁷ That eating human flesh was allegedly considered repulsive to the Wari' becomes, in Laidlaw's account, a test of the duty owed to non-kin during their period of mourning.⁶⁸

Laidlaw's point leaves out what ethnographers of the Wari' have deemed crucial points. First, by placing sympathy as the principal "cause" of ritual action (a controversial point given that most sentiment tends to be the effect of ritual rather than its cause), he ignores a central point: at decisive points in the ritual, the deceased's kin (i.e. the mourners) and the non-kin do not share a common understanding – either of the immediate situation or of reality more generally. As described by Vilaça (2000; 2014), Wari' funerals involve a conflict between rival perspectives: between the dead person's kin, who still see a relative in the dead body of their kin, and the dead person's non-kin, who see the dead body for what it really is. Kin and non-kin are equated with social stances, or different positions in relation to the dead. Non-kin were aware of this difference in understanding and set out purposefully to change the views of the mourners.

Though Wari' funerals were concerned with the relation between the perspectives of mourners and non-kin, these social stances were themselves evaluated in ethical

⁶⁷ Yet as Vilaça (2000: 101) and Conklin (2001: 182) have written, in some contexts of the ritual, the Wari' corpse was treated "like meat" to differentiate them from living people.

⁶⁸ Given that the Wari' practiced exocannibalism during the same period as they practiced funerary cannibalism, one could reasonably doubt Laidlaw's claim that the revulsion to eating human flesh that "we" share with the Wari' is what allows us to appreciate just how committed the Wari' were to the responsibilities owed their grieving affines. Though Wari' were expected to show restraint in eating, their disgust came as a result of the body's often putrid state and not out of any general abhorrence for human flesh.

terms (see Londoño Sulkin 2012). Essential to the ritual was that mourning kin did not see the body of their relative *as it really was*. The compassion that affines felt for mourners was not born of a merging in point of view or emotional state, and here invoking the English term “sympathy” is misleading. Indeed, the compassion affines felt toward the mourners was not born of an identity between kin and non-kin. The moral significance of the living and dead existing in different worlds is this: one cannot remain in both worlds at once. For the living to share in the perspective of their recently dead relatives is to invite death, not just for themselves but for others in the band as well. The issue, I suggest, involves the ethics of detachment.

Elsewhere, Laidlaw (2015) has been a sensitive observer of this particular problem:

The attenuation or even the cutting of relations may have positive aspects: positive both in the sense that detachment is not merely an absence of connection – there may be various kinds of definite *content* to detachment, and these different forms need describing – and positive also in the sense that these various forms of detachment might be sought as desirable states of affairs (Laidlaw 2015: 130-131).

This, perhaps even more than in Wari’ funerals, is the central dilemma in Ache funerals. I received two explanations for the steps taken in the funeral. Each act performed in the ritual – the binding, the quick burial, the suppression of the mourners’ grief, the swift retreat, etc. – was done either with the purpose of preventing vengeance (*djepy*) by the dead’s specter, or done so that the mourners would “no longer feel affection” (*prawollā*) for their lost kin. These explanations appear as different sides of the same coin when we remember that the mourner’s longing allows for that vengeance.

The problem that Ache funerary rituals was meant to solve involved *both* the mourners and their dead kin. Those who expressed deep anguish at the death of a loved one were “stingy.” The dead, still possessing something of their living selves, were also “stingy” with their relations and sought to return to their familiar relations. Both mourners and their dead kin had to be cured of their stinginess.

Elizabeth Ewart has perceptively observed that Panará notions of “generosity” and “stinginess” refer not only to a focus on relationships but also to a lack of attachment to things:

...the concept of generosity in Panará refers not exactly to the principle of altruism, but rather describes the quality of *not “desiring things.”* A person should be seen to be passing material goods on, rather than retaining and accumulating them. [...] A central feature of Panará “generosity” concerns the *absence of attachment* between people and their objects, rather than relations among people mediated by “meaningful” objects. *That people give others their things is as much a sign of their lack of attachment to their own things as it is an expression of close social relations* (Ewart 2013: 40).

We can observe a similar dynamic at work here with both the living and the dead. Ideally, death was the relinquishing of life, a willed leaving behind of the body, a transformation that mourners could bear with stoic resignation. That resignation, to paraphrase Ewart, is as much a sign of their lack of attachment to the dead as it is an expression of close social relations among the living. Yet the dead, bereft of their kin, were lonely. Those who, when they died, jealously clung to their spouses and kin imperiled them with their desire. Likewise, the mourner’s loneliness was described as a kind of rapaciousness, a stinginess that leads them to kill their living relatives in an effort to reunite with them. Just as game and other foodstuffs had to be “given up” to enter circulation, so too did the newly deceased have to be “given up” to a new

form of existence away from its former surroundings. The “stinginess” of the living and the dead had to be broken, and *kura* was meant to force this break.

Scolding, as a means to prepare for the separation of the living and dead, took place in two specific contexts. The first context dealt with the soon-to-be dead, those who, because of an illness or an augury that foretold of death (from dream signs to the material signs of cutting down a palm with rotten pith), were suspected of dying soon. These signs often led to a consideration of whether the person thus marked was ready for death. Would that person’s grudges carry on after death by their own inertia?⁶⁹ Would that person’s lingering resentment turn to a desire for vengeance after death? The fear that the soon-to-be dead might exact posthumous vengeance

⁶⁹ If living persons could willingly allay the possibility of taking post-mortem vengeance after their deaths, then the perspectives between living and dead could not entirely exclusive, as formal accounts of perspectivalism would assume (Viveiros de Castro 1998).

Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (1978; 1981) was the first, to my knowledge, to call attention to what would become known as the perspectival quality of living-dead relations in lowland South America (see Viveiros de Castro 1998). She begins by saying that living Krahó and the *mekarō*, the “double” that endures after a person’s death, appear to be opposite in character. The places they live appear as inversions of each other: “The spatial framework of the dead is the reverse and the complement of that of the living. The Krahó have often said to me, “The moon is the sun of the *mekarō*.” The *mekarō* like the shadiness of the forest and detest the plain or the cleared zone of vegetation at the foothills which for the Krahó is the ideal form of landscape. [...] The *mekarō*, on the contrary, like dark and hidden places and winter days (i.e. days of rain) and fear the hot sun; during the daytime, I have been told, they stay in their village, but during the night they wander in the forest” (Carneiro da Cunha 1981: 164; see also Carneiro da Cunha 1977). Not only this, but their norms of conduct appear to be inversions of each other as well. As the Krahó describe them, the dead are like animals; they know nothing of the restraint required in the norms of proper interaction, shamelessly flouting the deference, modesty, and generosity expected in affinal relations (1978: 123). Yet, as Carneiro da Cunha demonstrates, for the Krahó the difference between the living space, morality, etc. of the living and the dead cannot be understood in terms of a simple opposition or negation. The living are not the simple opposite of the dead, because the living and the dead *both* see themselves as the living. As she was told, “The *mekarō* call us *mekarō*, they don’t call themselves *mekarō*; they are afraid of us” (Carneiro da Cunha 1978: 120/1981: 165). The Krahó dead, in other words, see themselves as living humans, and they see living Krahó as dead. The living and the dead see different worlds in the same way.

The reader may notice some similarities between my account of Ache living-dead relations and Carneiro da Cunha’s, particularly with respect to the living-spaces and moral habits of the dead. Future work should attend to these similarities and whatever tensions exist between the perspectival aspects of the living and dead with the biographical residue that attaches to dead individuals as *krei* and *adjawe*.

prompted others to shore up existing grudges with them and plead with – or scold – the soon-to-be dead into accepting their fate.

Djawu ore mano putabu. Mano putabu djawu. Go nonga djuwy ra; dja djakaty djuwy rawerā. Go nonga djawullāmbu.

We talk when we want to die [i.e. are about to die.] When one wants to die, they talk. The dead take them with sickness like that. The one who scolds will take them with sickness. It is like that if they don't talk.

Baipurāngi in Sammons (1978: 41)

Picha manobu duwe djakama. Picha imeperō djawu, “De manobu, djepyeme. Djambueme.” Nawe, “Manorō kua. Djambupaka.” Go nonga na’ā wāiwipurā duwe chuepurā. “Djepyeme de manobu, Krombegi.”

When someone is about to die, another scolds him. The old women talk to her husband. “When you die, don't take vengeance. Don't be angry.” She said, “Just die. You mustn't be angry.” That's what the old woman said to the old man. “Don't take vengeance when you die, Krombegi!”

Achīpurāngi, interview (9/13/10).

I did not encounter any of these discussions during my fieldwork, though they often appeared in reported speech in the narratives I heard about death auguries. The kin of those persons considered “about to die” looked to the latter's future state as deceased spirits, as a particularized, experiencing thing with direct connections to its former self and the lives of the living persons it left behind. Speakers addressed their “about to die” kin to urge them not to return to take them, to not be “stingy” in the holding on of their relationship. *Manorō kua. Djāmbueme. Tāeme.* “You know how to die. Don't be angry. Don't be stingy.”

The second context of funerary scolding took place in the period following the burial, and it was directed at mourners. The period of mourning after an Ache funeral did not end through a formal period of closure, but rather in a gradual extinguishing of sadness. Grief has a duration: a beginning and, if not a formalized end, at least point where grief ceases to become acceptable to others. In the weeks after the burial, it was expected that mourners return to the daily rhythms of life and to show their contentment in performing the everyday routines of contented commensality. And accompanying that expectation was an increasing worry that the mourners' anguish might color their whole character, that they might become like the dead they had left behind, and that their feelings of grief spread to others. At the level of interaction, this concern involved metapragmatic claims about the kinds of emotions one should display after a person has died. The longing that mourners display for their dead kin has expected effects, threatening to bring future misfortune not just on mourners, but on those in their remote vicinity. The mourner was responsible for the emotions he or she displayed for his or dead relative in the weeks after death. A person's excessive grief, because it was a danger to the group, was *immoral*.

It is perhaps fitting then that Ache mourners were commonly considered "stingy." As I have already noted, the Ache word *tã'ã* pertained to the holding on to something that is typically circulated. Though the term has strong ethical valences, it is not easily to predict what those valences are outside of a given context, as it might suggest either a moral fault in the way a person possesses something that *should* be circulated, like food, or suggest ethical praise of someone who has cared for their kin

and kept them close around them. Both these meanings are at play in Ache mourning.

In its broadest characterization, funerary scolding intended to adjust the position of mourners in relation to the dead. *Kura*, as I described it in the previous chapter, is an interrogation of a person's character. It is, in other words, to question if an act reflects something of the person's character. The sort of *kura* that took place between a speaker (an affine) and an addressee (a mourner with kin ties to the dead) was similar in some respects to its quotidian forms. It involved the same grammatical form that I discussed in the previous chapter. As a form of criticism directed at mourners, funerary *kura* suggested that the grief expressed by the mourner had ceased to become an acceptable reason for the mourner's actions. The mourner who cried for her dead husband (for example) has simply become – or might become – a “crier.” Yet there are also essential differences between the everyday forms and the ritual form of *kura*. There was no risk to the scolding of mourners; funerary scolding had no risk of backfiring for the scolder. The danger of excessive mourning was taken for granted so that one could not be scolded for improperly scolding a mourner.

Funerary *kura* was often extremely harsh in its delivery, even more so than in its “everyday” forms. One mourner, anguished by the death of her husband, was scolded by her distant affines this way:

Gope dje tāndy. Kuerabu ywydjiwa
nuēga chi eru. Pēnde chā buchā
kuratywerāmi manobu chēngaeme.
Duwe dja prawotydjirō rekopa,
chēngaeme.

You are stingy with [your dead
husband]. If you can heal your dead
lover, then you should take him out
of the ground! Don't cry when your
ugly-faced lover dies. You'll get
another lover. Don't cry.

Though they were not the recipients of scolding per se, the dead were evaluated as well, and these assessments carried over into the evaluations of mourners. Scolders might tell mourners that a particular dead relative wasn't worth mourning, that the dead had failed in his basic obligations to his kin, so that there was no real relation to mourn in the first place. Take these two examples:

1. Dje chēngaete-djipa katy ywy
pechabu. Katy membo chupyrā katype
nakō kua bue mellāmbyrā wepe katy
ywy pechebu chēngaetewe!

Are you the one who cries when
your daughter-in-law is buried? She
was bitten by a snake because she
didn't share the food from her
basket!

2. Chēngaete-djipa? Djapo mēndymi.
Djapo mēndymi chēngapa.

Are you one who cries so much? He
didn't share. He didn't share with
you, [yet] you cry all the time.

Such aggressive speech might seem shocking to those accustomed to American funerals, in which the dead are customarily lauded, and discussions of their shortcomings saved for more private times and places. But if the purpose of Ache funerals was not to memorialize the dead but to forget them, then the objective of these statements may be better understood. The point is not to invoke some context that would make such scolding appear "normal" to the mourners. Funerary scolding – cutting and personal in its delivery – was *intended* to be shocking for the mourners who hear it. And yet, when I asked one of my informants why a mourning woman had been scolded in terms that I considered particularly harsh, the answer I received explaining this practice was this: "They scold [the mourners] to make them happy (*uryma*) again."

If the intentions of the scolders were simply compassionate, as Laidlaw (2014) claims for the Wari', why wouldn't everyday forms of compassion do? As it happens,

compassionate scolding was hardly the only means to divest living mourners from their grief. Grieving, particularly if it is deemed excessive or prolonged, could be met with male rage and physical violence as well. "If you child dies, don't think about it. Those who cry a lot will be hit. Those who don't cry will soon have another" (Djapegi in Hill and Hurtado 1999: 95). The aggressive methods might not make mourners happy, but they would assist them – even force them – to return to the living relations that would. Therein lies the potential for the mourner return to "happiness." Why should attempts to put an end to mourning take the form of scolding normally found in everyday ethical evaluation? I suspect it has something to do with the reflexive stance-taking the latter provides. If, as Webb Keane has written, "One does not develop morality all by oneself," neither does one get over one's grief all by oneself (Keane 2010: 74). Through scolding, the mourner is not merely distracted from her mourning. She comes to view herself through the evaluations and reactions of living others. Scolding, in other words, is the condition for the mourner's capacity to take a distance on herself (Keane 2015). Mourning so often ends only through relations with living others.

Chapter 5: Ownership and Bodily Integrity in the Settlement Process

In the past chapters, I have described how ownership relations are created, maintained, and evaluated. While it might appear from these chapters that ownership was confined to the intimate relations of sharing and caring between relatives, ownership was hardly just a matter of local group's internal relationships. Ownership existed outside society, or perhaps more accurately, ownership was able to bring the foreign into the immediacy of feeding and care. In this and the next chapters, I extend these aspects about ownership to the context of settlement and Christian conversion. Ownership was central to how the Ache understood their relations with Paraguayan administrators and North American missionaries, yet as I show, in these entanglements, ownership took on new meanings and formed the basis for new relationships.

As I have already outlined in the introduction, Ache history has been related to the outside for centuries, and for much if not all of this time, the Ache spoke of their relations with non-indigenous Paraguayans and enemy Ache in the idiom of ownership and male consanguinity.⁷⁰ All Ache subgroups extended to whites the

⁷⁰ The eagerness of newly settled Ache to take on the unfamiliar practices of their Paraguayan captors has presented a problem for past ethnographers working with the Ache. In his work on the settlement period, Mark Münzel (1978; 1982) noted that "Ache acculturation" was related to other cases of becoming-other, such as the potential metamorphosis of the dead into jaguars and predatory specters. Indeed, in Amerindian cosmologies, metamorphosis is often the consequence of relating to predatory others, who capture people to live as members of their own group, and those who were eaten by spectral jaguars were thought to be transformed into jaguars themselves. Münzel argues that because the Ache initially addressed the Paraguayans as *djamo* (a term

formal vocative for father and father's brother (*ãpã*), and several Ache subgroups used the generational term for grandfather (*djamo*) to refer to whites. These terms were used both as categorical terms and terms to describe specific relations. As categorical terms (e.g. the "whites"), *ãpã* and *djamo* were not possessed. When they referred to actual relationships of "familiarization" between specific Ache and Paraguayans, these terms were possessed. Thus, after establishing relations with certain whites (*ãpã*) during the settlement period, Ache men would commonly refer to a Paraguayan ally as "my father" (*cho ãpã*) and would refer to themselves as "their son" (*idja ray*).⁷¹

As Carlos Fausto (2012) has observed, relations between father and son or owner and pet are frequently employed by Amerindians to describe relations of control and protection with powerful others (whites, indigenous enemies, etc.) in a process of adoptive filiation. One of Fausto's principle examples of this phenomenon is the equation made by numerous Amerindian groups between war captives and adoptive children, likening the assimilation of captives to their captors as the creation of consanguineal ties (see also Santos-Granero 2012). In such situations, the

meaning both "grandfather" and "jaguar"), that the logic of acculturation must correspond to jaguar metamorphoses of the Ache dead: "[A]s, according to Ache belief, the victim of the jaguar or *janwe* returns as a jaguar or *janwe* to capture more humans, so must the Ache captured by the whites transform into a white to search for his brothers still free in the forest." Thus, according to his argument, an Ache was transformed into a predatory specter when he was abducted by the whites: "In their own opinion, the already captured Ache is not an Ache (or rather human, as this is what their tribal denomination means) but a ferocious shadow, a non-human, whose desire and reason-for-being is to hunt those that really live, the forest Ache" (Münzel 1978: 235, emphasis added). There is no evidence, however, that the Ache extension of male consanguineal kinterms to Paraguayans (discussed in the present chapter) and the statements regarding "no more Ache" (discussed in the introduction) involves this fanciful interpretation.

⁷¹ The use of male kin terms such as *djamo* and *ãpã* to designate non-indigenous people is common throughout lowland South America and seems to have been a well-established practice for other Tupi-Guarani-speaking groups. For example, the sixteenth-century Tupinamba called the arriving Portuguese *tamoi* (grandfathers) (Thevet 1955/1573; see Metraux 1928: 7-22; 1948: 131), and the Parakanã called them "fathers" in the twentieth century (Fausto 2012).

relationship between a father and son is analogous to that of captor and captive or pet owner and pet or animal master and animal.

I have argued elsewhere (Thompson 2019), in the Ache language, there are important semantic differences in the way the terms *āpā* and *djamo* applied to non-Ache when compared to how they applied to Ache kin. First, the generational salience of *āpā* and *djamo* as Ache kin terms did not transfer to whites; in the latter case, the use of one or the other was completely unrelated to the age or generation of the person in question. Second, these terms had gendered values that differed from their ordinary use as kin terms. Ache women were not daughters (*radjy*) to a Paraguayan ‘father,’ and Paraguayan women were not categorically referred to as ‘mothers’ (*ei*). It is nevertheless the case that there is a clear relationship between the uses applied to senior male Ache consanguines and uses applied to distant enemies, a relationship that Ache themselves have made explicit. Ache fathers were said to be the “owners” of their children, in a way “like” (*nonga*) to how Paraguayans and enemy Ache “owned” their Ache sons.

Similar analogies were made to other forms of mastery relations. In 1897, the French naturalist Charles LaHitte visited one captive Ache living on an estancia along the southeastern frontier. LaHitte described the captive man, in response to his poor treatment by his Paraguayan overseers, repeating, *Che rupia, che rupia* [“I am a pet, I am a pet”] (Tenn Kate and LaHitte 1897: 15). In his estimation, Paraguayans “owned” him as Ache pet owners “owned” their orphaned pets. The man’s observation was not merely a local “metaphor” for his condition. In fact, Ache

notions of ownership would prove pivotal to their understandings of their subordinate relations to outsiders for the rest of the 20th century.

5.1 New Owners

The construction of new roads in the early 1950s brought waves of new settlers from the country's central region to the forests of the eastern border region. Unaccompanied by formal state institutions, the settlers' move east was often a haphazard affair, and fears of "hostile Indians" encouraged pitiless abuses of the rural indigenous population, in particular, those Ache who remained in the forest. In some cases, settlers formed mutual protection groups to protect those "rights to life and property" promised by the government's settlement agency, which were typically spontaneously organized by *estancia* foremen or local policemen to issue reprisals against the Ache's (real or imagined) raids of livestock, corn, and manioc or to drive Ache bands out of the area entirely. Spontaneously organized groups of settlers tracked Ache bands to kill as many Ache as they could. The children they captured were given – or sold – to Paraguayan families. In other cases, more organized groups of settlers saw profits in the direct capture of Ache. By the 1940s, crews of forest trackers called *montaraces* in the small frontier towns of San Juan Nepomuceno and Tavaí began raiding Ache camps for the particular purpose of capturing Ache to sell as slaves in local markets. The area's trade was largely managed by one man, Pichin López, who was well known by both Paraguayans and Ache for his cruelty and violence.

Kybwyragi, a young man nearing the age of initiation and the son of one of the leaders of his band, was captured in 1954 by a group of Paraguayans, who as

Kybwyragi notes, included several Ache trackers, and his eventual re-capture by López himself. He described his capture this way:

Nondebu nonde pychyburō djamo ure endape. Djamo go rupirō Achewe urepe ikōma beru rekowe. Mirō gorō djamoete ache reko nongaete. Goburō ukewepe pychypami. Urerō reko. Chuwi wywy. Goburō ure achĩ, “Tu! Tu! Djamo wywy.” Kudja myryrōmbama o.

The whites [“grandfathers”] captured us at our camp. There were Ache there who arrived with the whites [“grandfathers”]. Then they captured all those who were sleeping. We were sleeping. There were rifles everywhere. And then we screamed: “*Tu! Tu!* The whites [“grandfathers”] are all around us!” All of the women ran away.

Goburō ure pychy gobu tapype rama. Gobu kabwyri myryrōma o. Krỹmballã.

Then they captured us, and we were taken to a house. We later fled into the forest. We were afraid.

Go duwebu mawēmbu ikō duwe djamo, ure puka gowe ure pychybu djamo ure puka, “Pichigi.” Cho Pichigi dja ray, dja raywe. Gobu pychypyre ure bapo kokue tārã. Djamo Pichigi go cho reko.

Then later, another “grandfather” came [to where we were in the forest], and he captured us again. We called that one “Pichigi” [Pichin López]. I am Pichigi’s son, his former son. After we were captured, we worked a lot in the fields. “Grandfather” Pichigi owned me.

Kybwyragi in Meliá, Miraglia, and Münzel (1973: 95), my translation from the Ache

Kybwaragi’s experience of capture was not unlike that of many other Ache. It was fairly common for forest bands in the mid-20th century to have had several Ache among them who had lived with Paraguayans for a part of their lives. The slavery of Ache along the farms and ranches of the eastern frontier was too irregular to create an economy of scale, in part because farms in eastern Paraguay lacked effective means to confine their captives for very long, and because the dense forest was never very far away, but this very fact allowed for a degree of movement between

these worlds. Ache captives were able to escape and return to their bands in the forest, and when they did, those that had lived with Paraguayans returned not as they had left. Their changes became icons of their bodies and the new knowledge they had acquired – emblems of their extraordinary experiences while away. I was told of one Ache man, who after working for a time on a Paraguayan logging crew, no longer shouted like an Ache, trading the protracted, “Yeeeeey!” that the Ache used to call out to one another in the forest for the shorter shout used by rural Paraguayans. In many cases, it appears that former Ache captives eagerly retained signs of their time with Paraguayans despite the often callous and inhumane treatment they had experienced among them. Some of those who returned subsequently adopted their Spanish given names (e.g. Karina), and others had adjusted their traditional names: instead of the Ache animal terms that had provided basis for their name, they chose the Spanish or Guarani loans of the same animal (e.g. Vakatorogi, from the Spanish *vaca* and *toro* [cow and bull, respectively] or Koategi, for the Guarani and Spanish word *coati*).

The presence of these Ache who had knowledge of the whites would prove essential to the relatively peaceful settlement of Ache bands. As colonial migration to the eastern border region intensified and violent encounters with Paraguayan settlers became more common, many Ache bands found that the life as they had lived it in the forest had become unbearable. The decisions they made against this impossible backdrop drew from the past experiences of the whites that some resident Ache had knowledge acquired through previous experiences of captivity, and the fears that decades of attacks had instilled in them. In some cases, those who

had formerly lived with Paraguayans refused the possibility of returning to the world of the whites, and they retreated deeper into the more inaccessible parts of the forest; in other cases, the individual connections that some had made through capture would become instrumental to the settlement process.

For the subgroup living between the Tebicuary River and the Caazapá Cordillera, this connection began with an Ache man named Pikygi. Pikygi had been captured by Pichin López sometime between 1950 and 1953 and was given (or sold) to a friend of López's named Manuel de Jesus Pereira. Pikygi worked for Pereira for several months, but he eventually left Pereira's ranch to rejoin his band in the forest. The band had suffered terrible losses during Pikygi's absence. A single raid by López's men in 1953 resulted in the capture of 40 Ache (Clastres 1998), and further attacks by Paraguayan colonists had resulted in at least four deaths. Pikygi's decision to return to Pereira was a painful choice made against a background of external threat and ever-increasing confinement. In August of 1959, he convinced the leader of the band – his brother Dywukugi – to go with him to Pereira's ranch. 20 persons from the band followed.⁷² Shortly after their arrival, they were fed and clothed. Pikygi visited the remaining 12 members of his band in the forest to convince them to join their kin on Pereira's ranch.⁷³

⁷² This group was composed of 10 men, 6 women, and 4 children.

⁷³ One of these remaining Ache describes Pikygi's visit to him in the forest: "Pikygi came to my camp, and he said, "Father Pereira – not Pichigi [Pichin López] – but another one – Father Pereira, he is coming; let us go to Father Pereira's home. Father Pereira won't kill us." We arrived after the new moon; we arrived at his house. We told Father Pereira: "Pichigi liked to kill." We told him everything. "When they took our children, we fled back into the forest!" That's how we said it. Then Father Pereira said, "I will not give anyone away, I will not give away your sons." And then he said: "I do not kill, I will not kill you." That's what he said. And we stayed there. My mother was still in the forest, then I went and I brought her; I returned. I did not run away" (Kybwyrugi in Meliá, Miraglia, and Münzel 1973: 95-6, my translation from the Ache).

Pereira's ranch was located along a stream called Arroyo Moroti, around 10 km southeast of the town of San Juan de Nepomuceno at a property called Torín. In the days following the arrival of the Ache, Pereira provided beef and clothes for the band of 32 Ache and wired the government's Department of Indigenous Affairs (DAI) in Asuncion for assistance. León Cadogan, an anthropologist who visited Pereira's ranch as a representative of the DAI, lent effusive praise to Pereira in a letter he wrote to the DAI's director describing the situation.

I know positively that Pereira received tempting offers for his Guayaki, and without extra risk, he could have vastly bettered his economic situation by selling most of them. Nevertheless, he chose to welcome them, feed them, clothe them, and bring the fact to the notice of the proper authorities [i.e. DAI]. He ran into debt in order to defray traveling expenses to Villarrica and buy meat, etc. The nobility of this rough country fellow contrasts remarkably with the apathy with which the organizations responsible for caring for our aborigines received the [settlement of the Ache], an outstanding event in the annals of Paraguayan indigenism and South American ethnology... (Cadogan, October 20th, 1959, in Chase-Sardi 1972: 197).

The DAI responded by appointing Pereira as an official agent of the department who was to assume its local responsibilities. His ranch was declared a reservation and the Ache camp christened "Campamento Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz." Mostly consequentially, the DAI gave Pereira a personal monthly salary, and regular infusions of food and medicine were provided by an Asunción-based NGO.

Residence in the "Campamento Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz" was quite different from the one their "Ache fathers" had managed in the forest (described in chapter 2). The roughly few dwellings that made up the "Campamento Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz" were built in a rough circle in a small forest clearing. The low frame shelters were more permanent than the bivouacs that the Ache had periodically constructed in the forest when they faced in climate weather. They had

gabled roofs (unlike the flat or single-sloped roofs of the forest bivouacs) and most had walls of wooden stakes. The DAI had also built a few ramadas in the first weeks after the Ache had arrived, open post and beam shelters with gable roofs, which provided a place for people to cook and eat together during the day. But in its layout, the settlement was essentially that of a traditional Ache hunting camp. The shelters the Ache had built were essentially small enclosed hearths, housing a couple and their children, each with its own fire.

My informants gave special attention to Pereira's house when they spoke of the time they had lived on the colony. It was a large house by the standards of rural Paraguay, with two rooms in the front and a separate kitchen in the back.

Surrounding it was a two-meter high palisade. Between five and ten Ache lived in his house at any given time. Though the house stood nearly 300 meters away from the cluster of Ache shelters, the colony, as a residence, was identified with Pereira. He had been the ultimate cause of their residence.

The well of Pereira's power lay in his ability to provide steel tools, metal pots, and clothe to the Ache, things that had been only been attainable by capture in dangerous raids. Pereira, as the primary link between the Ache and the resources provided by the government, was able to leverage the scarcity of these goods to gain considerable influence over the new arrivals. The Ache provided Pereira with a fairly large labor force for the area, and Pereira organized the labor in and outside the reservation: he taught Ache to grow maize and manioc and regularly lent out Ache to work as laborers for Paraguayans in neighboring towns. He also received contracts from the Paraguayan government to clear forest and build roads in the

area. The Ache living with Pereira saw little return for their work. Many of the products from the fields and forest were sold in San Juan de Nepomuceno and other nearby towns, and the Ache were never paid for the work that Pereira had contracted.

Starting in the early 1960s, Pereira encouraged the newly settled Ache on his ranch to find more Ache bands and to settle them. At first, settled Ache brought their kin from allied bands still living in the forest, and later once these allied bands were settled, they began contacting enemy bands to bring to the reservation to live with them. As more Ache bands were settled on the property, a hierarchy developed among the Ache living on the reservation. Here too this hierarchy was described in the idiom of “ownership” and male consanguinity (see chapter 2).

Gope ore ache matawã ore eruare San Juanpe. Cho-rõ ray tãrã matã nondje.

We brought Ache out of the forest, at San Juan [de Nepumuceno]. I brought out lots of “sons” long ago.

Cho-rõ baecheche ache djaraty. Cho-djirõ ãpã Pereira prawoty. Gobu cho ache djara etama cho. Cho matãmbawe ache manollã wywy.

I was an “owner” to many Ache; Pereira loved me. Then I “owned” many Ache. The Ache I captured all lived.

“Djerõ dje ray eru ywy rupi eru kua’a ray’y.” Gobu cho ury gatuma cho. “Dje-dji cho uryma,” ãpã Pereira chope.

[Pereira said to me], “Your ‘sons,’ you really know how to bring your ‘sons’ [out of the forest].” That made me happy. “I’m happy with you,” Pereira said to me.

Kadjagi in Sammons (1978: 124-125).

5.2 New Bodies

The relation of ownership between earlier and later arrivals was reciprocal in that newly settled Ache considered themselves the “sons” of those Ache who captured

them. Early arrivals considered themselves “fathers” to the enemy Ache they settled – their “sons.” And as new arrivals became captors of forest Ache, they would have “sons” in turn.⁷⁴ In other words, those Ache closest to Pereira became owners to those least acculturated, and in many cases, persons owned some people and were owned by others.

One Ache man brought to the reservation by enemy Ache recalled his relation to the already settled Ache this way:

Ache uagirō ore āpāete. Ore āpāete ore pychy ore pychyare.

The Ache-eaters [the anthropophagous Ypety subgroup already living on the reservation] were our “real fathers.” They were our captors.

Āpā Budjagirō ore ymare. Idja tapype ore tārā reko idja ray tārā nonga reko idja tapype.

Pereira grew us. He “owned” many of us in his house; he “owned” many that were like his sons in his house.

Ore ekōllā ore āpā djāwe.

We didn’t live with our [Ache] fathers anymore.

Āpā Budjarō ore āpā Budjagi tapyperō ore ekōandy.

Father Budjagi, we lived in our father Budjagi’s house

Paiwagi in Hauck, Roessler, and Thompson (2019)

The habits that early arrivals had acquired from Pereira became corporeal icons that distinguished them from later arrivals, as well as the means by which they gained influence over them. In the first days after having emerged from the forest, he

⁷⁴ These relations of “father” and “son” were not transposable: if a man was a “son” to his captor, who was a “son” to his own captor, the latter did not become a “grandfather” to the man captured by his “son.”

Though all Ache subgroups called Paraguayans “fathers,” I cannot yet explain why some Ache subgroups called Paraguayans “grandfathers” as well.

fashioned the hair of the Ache men in the style of Paraguayans. Pereira, evidently repelled by the long crests of hair (called *byka*) that Ache men wore after the initiation, gave the men closely cropped hair, side-parted with tapered back and sides (see photos below). Their bodies had changed by living with Pereira, not just in outward appearance, but in the new knowledge they acquired. One Ache, who had worked on a logging crew, described the new arrivals to me in these terms:

Krỹmballã gogi ache. Krỹmballêtegi.
Gobu cho djawu reko, "Krỹmballãeme.
Llellãllãwerã. Kari mrỹrõme."

Those Ache were terrified [of the whites]. They were really terrified. I told them, "Don't be afraid. You won't be hungry. Don't run back to the forest."

Kuallãetegi bapo. Kuallã acharã. Karã
kuallã. Kupi kuallã. Nõty kuallã.

They knew nothing of work. They didn't know how to till with a hoe. They didn't know how to weed. They didn't know how to cut with a machete. They didn't know how to seed a field.

Acharã tyrõgatupami manioba kowe
nda'e kadji.

Tilling, clearing land for manioc, there weren't these things in the forest.

Cho bio reko go bapo.

I taught them how to work.

Krachogi, interview (9/20/2011)

Pereira's increasing hierarchy drew the attention of many visitors to the colony. León Cadogan, who had initially praised Pereira, had abruptly changed his estimation after further visits, and in 1960, he officially recommended Pereira's dismissal. "This suggestion was not accepted," Cadogan remembered, "and as he found himself free of all control and discipline, it is logical that he began to feel very powerful, becoming the absolute ruler and master of the unhappy Aches..."

(Cadogan 1960 cit. Munzel 1973: 21). Cadogan was not the only one to remark upon Pereira's authoritarian style of management. Clastres described Pereira as effectively a "tribal chieftain" of the settled Ache, who in contrast to Ache owners, "exercised his authority through coercion" (Clastres 1998: 80, 106). One visitor to the colony noted, "Pereira lives as the 'father' of the group and is called 'papa' by the children" (Gajdusek 1963: 17).

The practice of calling whites by terms of male consanguinity had long predated their settlement with Pereira. Still, even if the Ache saw Pereira in terms common to Ache ownership, he had introduced forms of coercion that were alien to that relation. Pereira had ushered in a different relational configuration. All Ache living on the reservation with Pereira considered themselves "sons" to the Pereira, whom they called "Father Budjagi," and he was owned by no one. Yet he was an "owner" all the same. Despite his regular graft and sometimes violent temperament, Pereira's gifts of food had concentrated the group, uniting them in co-residence. Through his gifts of food, he had become the "owner" of an amalgamation of previously unallied and unrelated bands (see Costa 2017: 169-172). And when, after nine years, the DAI relocated the colony 75 kilometers north to San Joaquin, so that Pereira might settle Ache bands there living around the headwaters of the Jejui River, his "sons" went with him.

But Pereira, as I was told, had "owned the Ache badly." He had embezzled most of the resources provided to him by the DAI, and under his charge, waves of sickness would decimate the Ache who lived on his property. By July 1963, complications from measles (pneumonia and dysentery) had killed sixteen

persons – mostly the aged and the new arrivals (Clastres 1974). The situation did not improve, and another 53 Ache would die in the next five years. Between 1963 and 1968, sixty-nine individuals – approximately half of the inhabitants on Pereira's property – would die from preventable respiratory infections (Hill and Hurtado 1996: 49).



Figure 5.1. Manuel de Jesus Pereira, 1960. Photo taken by Branislava Susnik and used with permission of the Museo Andres Barbero.



Figure 5.2. Pereira cutting an Ache man's hair, 1960. Photo taken by Branislava Susnik and used with permission of the Museo Andres Barbero.

Chapter 6

God the Owner, God the Healer

Pereira's ownership proved to be short-lived. When it was discovered that Pereira's embezzlement of funds and medicine had significantly aggravated the colony's health crisis, he was removed from his post and was briefly jailed for his crimes in 1972. To replace Pereira, the government's Department of Indigenous Affairs (DAI) chose the New Tribes Mission (NTM) to manage the Cerro Moroti reservation. The DAI sought to integrate Christian missions into the everyday operation of the reservation, thereby avoiding the sort of unwanted attention that Pereira's scandal had caused while hastening the Ache's assimilation. They believed the missionaries would stem the catastrophic waves of epidemics that Pereira had failed to contain: Of the 215 persons (in four Ache bands) that had been settled in Cerro Moroti since 1968, roughly half had succumbed to measles, fever, and secondary pneumonia (Hill & Hurtado 1996). Yet the DAI's willingness to turn over management of the Cerro Moroti community was a reflection not so much of a coherent set of practical reforms than it was the acknowledgement that the NTM was one of the few groups able and willing to take the job.

6.1 Trails and Trials

Their missionaries had in fact been in Paraguay since 1946 and had been trying to contact the Ache to establish a reservation of their own. They began expeditions to contact and settle the Ache bands in the forests north of the Acaray River in 1950.

Two-man teams of missionaries set off from the small frontier town of Itakyry, located at the edge of the dense forests of northeast Paraguay. For weeks at a time, they hiked northward into the foothills of the mountainous curves of the cordillera, along the cross-crossing network of trails that stretched through the forests where the Ache camped. Yet each time, they found only long-abandoned camps and the traces of their past movement.

When the missionaries realized that their goals would not be so easily achieved, they rented houses in Itakyry to establish a more enduring presence in the area. Itakyry had been created in the final years of the 19th century by the yerba mate conglomerate, Industrial Paraguaya S.A., and for most of its existence, it had operated as a company town. But by the time the missionaries had arrived, the Industrial Paraguaya's tight control of rural Paraguay had crumbled. The company store, which doled out exorbitantly priced goods in exchange for company script, had shuttered its doors, giving way to a number of clapboard shops, and the company's former lands had been parceled into agricultural colonies. Gone were the shifting group of hardened wage laborers that had populated the town only years before, replaced by a new class of farmers and shopkeepers. But the missionaries, as they recalled, were not well received by their new neighbors. Wary local Catholics snubbed their evangelical message, and the missionaries' pigs and chickens were stolen with some regularity. Worse still, their move to Itakyry brought them no closer to encountering Ache bands. Their interactions with actual Ache were confined to the two young Ache girls that Itakyry shopkeepers had purchased from an Indian hunter who had captured them in the forests outside Laurel. (By 1969, five

Ache children in Itakyry were living with Paraguayan families as domestic slaves.) Between their attempts to meet “wild Ache,” NTM missionaries made regular trips on horseback to the Ava Guarani villages in the area, whose brushes with Christianity had begun centuries earlier with the Franciscans and Jesuits. Correcting the mistakes of the Catholic missionaries was to them only a small consolation. The NTM would stay in Itakyry from 1953 until 1971 without contacting a single Ache band.⁷⁵

The NTM missionaries’ direct involvement with the Ache would only come about through the government’s tragic mismanagement of the Cerro Moroti reservation. In response to the public revelations about Pereira’s abuses, the NTM pleaded with the DAI to grant them some involvement in the reservation’s management. After preparatory visits in May and June of 1972 with physicians and two Peace Corps volunteers, the NTM built a clinic in early July. Once it was completed, they promptly requested a mission be built, which the DAI approved on July 22nd, and Jim Stoltz and his family moved to Cerro Moroti in August 3rd. The timing finally appeared fortuitous for the missionaries. When it was discovered that the Pereira’s embezzlement of funds and medicine was at the root of the colony’s health crisis, he was removed from his post and arrested. The NTM, who had settled in Cerro Moroti only weeks before, immediately assumed full control over the reservation.

⁷⁵ The anthropologists Pierre Clastres and Lucien Sebag were aware of the NTM’s efforts during their fieldwork in Arroyo Moroti. Publically, they dismissed the NTM’s efforts to contact the Northern Ache as a token of the “the vastness of evangelical failure.” Yet privately, they expressed their worries about the NTM’s attempts to contact the Northern Ache. One North American doctor noted after a meeting with the French anthropologist, Lucien Sebag, “Sebag is further depressed by the idea of fundamentalist Protestants in with his ‘gentle’ Guayaki, but he does not need contact with the northern group and no one has yet made it for him and Pierre. The missionaries, not the French anthropologists, have the time and means, unfortunately” (Gajdusek 1963: 33).

The DAI generally considered the missionaries to be allies in their efforts to concentrate and “civilize” the Ache and other “uncontacted” groups. But the DAI’s eagerness to turn to foreign Protestants to manage Cerro Moroti is not immediately obvious. The relationship between the DAI and the Catholic Church had deteriorated in the previous decade after the Church had vocally criticized the Stroessner regime’s repression of suspected dissidents, so the state was more susceptible to work with foreign Protestant missionaries. The DAI seemed satisfied with the work of the Protestants and with the NTM in particular: In 1971, the director of the DAI praised the “close bonds” with the NTM and concluded that their cooperation had “improved and facilitated the DAI’s work to acculturate our indigenous people” (cit. Bejarano 1977: 44).

For its part, the NTM had accepted this charge because they had been commanded by God to evangelize the world. The purpose of the New Tribes’ mission had to be evangelical. This was their moral imperative. Les Pederson, the Director of New Tribes Mission in Paraguay at the time, had this to say,

Why do people leave the shores of our country to bury themselves in some lonesome jungle spot? What motivates some Christian people to do this; or, we might ask, why foreign missions? Is it because of sympathy for the underprivileged, undernourished unfortunates we see pictures of, that die from diseases of all kinds? If this is the motive for going, then the motive is wrong, unless the whole idea is simply humanitarian. Of course, we sympathize with them in their plight. The little fellows with their tummies protruding are heartrending to all of us. Their lack of medicine to cure their ills is a concern of ours. In our missionary work we deal as much as we can with these needs. Hunger is a very real thing among many of these peoples. Does it stir us to do something about it? Yes, of course, we do what we can. However, none of these things are the *real reasons* for going to the mission field; they just aren’t adequate enough when the going gets tough for us. Then what is the real motive for missionary work? I believe the only really valid reason to get involved in foreign missions is found in the Bible. In Mark 16:15 Jesus says, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every

creature.' This constitutes the only valid reason for missionary work. *We have been commanded to go* (Pederson 1969: cite page).

God's call to missionary work held a fundamental cosmological importance for New Tribes missionaries. Dispensationalists place believers' obligation to evangelize the world as one distinct period on a sequence of historical stages. For dispensationalists, Biblical history is to be understood as a series of discrete periods of time called "dispensations," each one marked by God's fulfillment of a different set of promises for humanity. The Latin *dispensatio*, used to translate the Greek term *oikonomia*, from which the English "economy" is derived, referred to the "administration of the house (*oikos*)." This administrative connotation of the *oikonomia* was retained in its theological reformulation as "dispensation" to characterize the relation between God and the created world. As the creator, God's "property" was all of his creation, and as the head of his creation, God ordered his creation according to an ultimate purpose. His commandments and promises were revealed to his people for that end: the salvation of humanity.

There were various ways that this goal had been accomplished in Biblical history. The current dispensation – the Ecclesial dispensation – is marked by God's offering of salvation to all who sincerely accept the Word. The missionary project defines the period of time in which they found themselves, one that began with the resurrection of Christ and would end with the fulfillment of the events described in the book of Revelation, when Christ would return to earth in bodily form and a new dispensation would begin with the establishment of his millennial kingdom. Naturally, in the face of such a momentous historical unfolding, dispensationalists eagerly sought signs that might indicate when these events would occur. For many

evangelicals, including the founding members of the NTM, the appropriate textual signs of the Second Coming were to be found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, collectively referred to as the “Olivet discourses.” There, Jesus describes to his disciples the period of tribulation that would come to pass at the culmination of the dispensation. When the disciples ask him, “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus points to a succession of common and ambiguous events – wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, persecutions against Christians, etc. – that everyone on earth would endure. Jesus concludes this prophecy with what some dispensationalists took to be a fundamentally different sign than the others: “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, *and then the end will come*” (Matt 24:14). Surely theirs were apocalyptic days.⁷⁶

Yet the dispensational premillennialism of the missionaries did not lead to empty cynicism or fatalism, as one might expect for a doctrine promising the world’s imminent destruction. The founders of the NTM found in this passage (and others like it, such as the “Great Commission”) a call to action.⁷⁷ In this dispensation, unlike previous ones, the missionaries’ acts of expanding the Word – through the translation and dissemination of scripture – could actually bring a new dispensation into being. The founders of the NTM did not merely believe that the world’s

⁷⁶ As Susan Harding has eloquently described it, “What is consistent is the implicit dispensational instruction to ‘read history backward,’ to interpret the significance of present events as ‘signs’ that tribulational prophecies are always already coming true, that future events are unfolding now” (Harding 1994: 31-2).

⁷⁷ In the Great Commission, when Jesus orders his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Here too, the commandment is accompanied by seemingly apocalyptic effects: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28: 17-20).

Christians *had a duty* to spread God's Word before Jesus' earthly return. They in fact believed that by presenting the Word to all the peoples of the world, they would actually *enact* the Jesus' Second Coming. To make the translation and witness of the Word to all nations a precondition for the Second Coming is to put the community of believers at the center of historical becoming.

Their task of Christian missionaries – “to complete the body of Christ” – did not require the conversion of the entire world; it was rather to “*preach* among every *nation*.” This idea had been underlined by the Apostle Paul, whose itinerate preaching had long been a model for Christian missionaries: “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: ‘Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand’” (Romans 15: 20-1). This imperative to preach among every nation gave priority to those “nations” where the Word was wholly absent over those already exposed to Christianity whose beliefs needed further correction. The millions of heterodox Catholics who haphazardly mixed Christian and pagan beliefs could never be a missionary's priority for they had already heard the Word. The missionaries' priority was instead to reach those unreached peoples – “the new tribes” – who had no such encounter.

The “new tribes” were not just groups of potential converts; it was a place. It was located not only beyond Christendom, but beyond any place where Christianity was even known, in the most isolated areas of the world. God's commandment to preach

among every nation directed the missionaries to those entirely cut off from communication with the Christian Word.

Bringing the Word to peoples distant and remote held challenges quite different from evangelical efforts at home. In theory at least, God's Word was univocal. The Word was the agent that did the converting. The performative force of the Word exceeded any particular animator or medium it might flow through, such that its meaning could be broadcast without misrepresentation through printed text, radio, television, and human bodies. Yet the infrastructures, institutions, and cultural norms that brought Christ to Americans were not those that would bring Christ to the new tribes. Such practical forms of communication as printed books and radio were impractical tools for spreading the Word to remote peoples. The New Tribes Mission's founder, Paul Fleming, recognized this very point:

If God wants to reach some individual here in the States, He has all kinds of ways to get through to him – services on TV, churches, Bibles in dime stores, and so on. But if he wanted to reach down and save a tribesman in the middle of the jungle, *He could not do it. Some man has to go and tell him.* God has no other way to reach him! (Fleming cit. Johnston 1985: 275, emphasis added).

While the missionaries often talked of themselves as mere intermediaries of the Word, they recognized the human effort needed to conduct the requisite metalinguistic tasks of translation, instruction, and persuasion. As Fleming recognized, the spread of the divine message to “the new tribes” necessarily relied on face-to-face encounters between missionaries and remote peoples. There could be no substitute for the missionaries' physically traveling to exotic lands and learning their language to bestow that divine message on them. God needed the NTM.

Believers' principal duty to God is to continually expand the Word. This is the common purpose of all believing Christians; they are entirely taken over by this common task, entirely identified with it, even if other "Christians" do not fully grasp the importance of their role in the unfolding of God's historical project. As Susan Harding has described it, "dispensational discourse produces a point of view from which history is narrated. It constitutes those on behalf of whom history is directed ("we") and those whom history happens ("they") (1994: 20). In contrast to the wars and natural disasters, to which believers would stand as mostly passive participants, this prophecy spoke to Evangelical Christians as dynamic accessories to the events of the future. As one NTM missionary put it, "One of these days, the last soul that is needed to complete the body of Christ, the Church, will be saved. That last soul will very possibly be some tribesman out in the jungle somewhere" (Johnston 1985: 283). The various roles of other "nations" could take in Christian theology – as a foil for believers, as a missionary object, or an instrument for God's mysterious interventions – were subsumed under the idea that they might provide the essential fodder for a dispensational revolution. The missionaries were to go out and find *that* tribesman.

The correspondence of the missionaries' goals with divine purpose was an immense source of pride for them. They held a sense of an eminent and inevitable triumph in spite of great odds and difficulties, a sense of being involved in Christ's ever-amplifying conquest of the world and the assurance of the submission of the Godless to the Word. But this pride involved more than simply their *association* with God. As missionaries, they were a technological appendage of God's will and voice,

and divine agency became enmeshed in theirs. Even if it is God's Word that is actually doing the converting (a point NTM missionaries often emphasized), the missionaries were the tools of that Word, and conversion would be impossible without the missionaries' physical presence in the encounter with the unconverted.

The missionary project was as much a conquest of time and it was of space. Their mandate gave them the feeling of being part of a dramatic story that stretched from the first day of creation to the last judgment. Missionary work would bring "the distant future" of prophecy into the near, foreseeable future of person experience. The circulation of God's word to far-flung locales would bring millennial time closer. The timeline was imminent: the NTM set out "to reach the last tribe with the Gospel *in our generation*" (Johnston 1985: 32, emphasis added).

God's commandment to preach the gospel was a binding duty for all Christians in a way that the "good works" of humanitarian efforts were not. How could missionaries, in the name of morality, chose humanitarian goals over divinely commanded ones when God was himself the source of all morality?⁷⁸

No doubt grounding their task in God's commandment preserved its objectivity and clarity of purpose. Yet the tasks they faced in their first months in Cerro Moroti prompted questions of what was and what was not covered under dictates of the Great Commission, and some NTM missionaries doubted that their evangelical and

⁷⁸ Pederson feared that taking on humanitarian tasks beyond the mission's stated goal of church planting might actually serve to undermine it: "Initially the objective is simple. Preaching the Gospel is the one vital thing, everything else secondary. Before long schools and hospitals emerge as helps to the main objective. In time, institutions take over and become the main thrust. Sometimes the simple preaching of the Gospel becomes secondary. We certainly don't want to fall victim to this subtle trick of our enemy [i.e Satan]. Yet, to do missionary work among tribal people without involvement in their economic problems becomes unrealistic. We have to become identified in their culture in more than just phraseology. [...] Our prayer is that this involvement will be kept in its proper perspective. Our main objective, of course, is to see local churches established in every tribe" (Peterson 1969: 5).

humanitarian work could be so easily separable as the stark formalism of their mandate would suggest. Jim Stolz argued that medical work might open doors for their missionary work: “All these sicknesses are new to them, and they don’t realize the dangers involved. Treating them has been a real means of gaining their confidence as well as giving us constant contact with the people” (Stolz 1973: 19-20). Another missionary, Ruth Sammons, argued that without careful attention to the health and economic problems of the colony, achieving their evangelical goals might prove impossible:

Must we get involved in all these other areas: economics, medical, etc.? How we wish this aspect of the work could be handled by professionals in those fields and we be free to spend more time in language and culture – so pertinent to getting the Gospel to these people. What if we just didn’t get involved in those areas? After all, we came to preach, not to worry about the people’s physical or material needs. But – if we *don’t* help them in these areas, there’ll be no need to think we *can* give them the Gospel. Many would die first – for lack of food and medical care, having been a nomadic people, now with no place left to roam and having to be taught how to care for themselves and fit into a society they hadn’t previously known. Many don’t fear death, believing they’ll go to the sun anyway and be safe and happy there. Dare we not care whether they live or die before having an opportunity to hear the Gospel? (Sammons 1976: 5).

Medical intervention was not merely compatible with the evangelical imperative, Sammons argued; it was absolutely *necessary*. First, as Sammons implies, *death foreclosed the possibility of a person’s conversion*. It marked the end of evangelical opportunity; it was the point at which the not-yet-saved became the unredeemable.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Sammons was hardly alone in her judgment. The idea that death marked the temporal nexus between salvation and damnation had been a popular trope in NTM media since the organization’s creation, and for good reason: Paul Fleming, the founder of the NTM, had highlighted just these concerns decades before in his highly mythologized account of the NTM’s founding. It was in witnessing one Senoi burial in the Malaysian highlands that Fleming was able to grasp the enormity of damnation – and the need for a global missionary movement. “This man they were burying never had a chance to accept or reject Jesus Christ. The full realization of it startled me... this same thing was happening to multiplied millions the world over. Men were

The Ache had to be reached before they died. With so many Ache dying of illness, there was a real danger for the missionaries that there would be no one left alive to redeem.

But the Ache, as Sammons states, could not see the seriousness that this danger posed. *This was because the Ache had no fear of death itself.* Death was not the ineluctable end of individual human life – it was above all a life lived elsewhere. The Ache would become *krei* when they died and eventually reunite with their kin to trek across a celestial forest. Lacking a notion of death’s utter finality in such a vision, there seemed little at stake in God offer of salvation and eternal life.

Communicating a notion of salvation required the missionaries to align Ache notions of death and dying with their own. They had to install in their potential converts what Michael Lambek has called a different “kind of ending,” one of several possible ways a thing finds completion and closure (2019: 254). They had to establish *finis* as the “default setting” for human existence, as the price of sin. Death, then, became the pivot between the properly religious and the humanitarian goals of the missionaries as well as the point of equivocation between a notion of death where finality had to be ritually achieved and one where death’s finality was given. These issues turned on the reality of *krei*, the spirit that separated from the body at death and lived on as ancestors in the sky.

6.2 The Healing Dead

born into these jungles. They lived their whole lives through and died without one chance to know Jesus and His saving power. Shocking was the realization – a Christless grave before my very eyes” (*Brown Gold*: March 1944: 8).

The *krei* was an image, an ancestral shade, a shadow-cloud – the visible form of the dematerialized *owe*. Unlike the *adjawe*, which is closely associated with material body of the deceased, the *krei* lacked the material connections to the dead body it has left behind. It may be best glossed by the somewhat antiquated term “shade,” because it simultaneously captures the idea of a person’s ghost and that person’s visible trace (a shadow).

Ywadjirō kreipe nande manowe owerã.
Kreirō owe. Nande manowe. Gobu
ywadji oma. Nande djamo gope opama
djarypurāngi. Gope opama kreipe.

The *krei* goes to the sky when we die. The *krei* goes. We die and then we go to the sky. All of our grandfathers and grandmothers went there. They all went there, where the *krei* are.

Ywydjiwa pechepyre emi oma ywadji.
Gorō ore na, “krei.”

What was buried in the earth goes to the sky. That’s what we call *krei*.

*Baipurangi in Sammons 1978 [1975]:
40, my translation from the Ache*

The *krei* goes to the sky, to the land of the ancestors. As the *krei* make their way, they are said to follow the path of the sun, cutting trails across the forest-in-the-sky so their kin can later find them when it came their turn to die. Their destination, the dwelling place of the dead, appeared as an immense forest with groves of remarkable trees and unfamiliar animals. Bands of dead ancestors moved through this forested expanse, as they did when they were living, and relations among the dead appeared as they did before those persons had died. Individual *krei* co-resided with their kin, and ownership relations appeared as they had when living.

Dja brekowe ra’a kreï ywadji. Go rekoma The *krei* [of the speaker’s

emi ywadjj dja breko.

Djarypurāngi rama emi ywadjj kreipe
krei ape rupi. Gobu emi rekoma krei dja
brekowe. Dja radjype djawupa krei
ywadjj rawā. Emi dja radjy emi ywadjj
rapama.

grandfather] takes his former wife to
the sky. That one [the *krei*] owns his
wife again in the sky.

Grandfather takes grandmother to
other *krei* in the sky, along the path
to the other *krei*. Then the *krei* owns
his wife again. *Krei* talks to his
daughters in order to take them to
the sky. He takes all his daughters to
the sky as well.

*Baipurangi in Sammons 1978 [1975]:
40, my translation from the Ache*

The *krei*'s connections to the living were not entirely benevolent. There is a fear that *krei* who do not reside with "owned kin" in the afterlife might grow impatient waiting for their kin to join them and turn back to bring those he owned during his life.⁸⁰

Dja apāpe emi owerā. Gobu djawu
djypywagi maĩ djawu duwe mano
putabu. "Krōrōeme. De djoāwe rupi cho
owerā krei apepe."

He will also go to his father. One of
the dead ancestors talks when
another is about to die. "Don't shout.
I will go on path to the *krei* along
where you've gone."

Dja apā mano putabu na'ā tay purā,
"Chēngaeme. Apā djoāwe rupi cho
owerā krei apepe. Dje djoāwe rupi cho
owerā apā llo," na'ā. Go nonga na'ā tay
purā. "Krei apepe cho djoārā de nōnde
kua," na'ā. Go nonga na'ā tay purā
djamope. Djamope na'ā, "Bueme." Go
nonga na'ā, "Ywadjj krei rawerā
buepaka."

When his father is about to die, the
son says, "Don't cry. I'm going to go
along where father has gone on the
path to the *krei*. I'm going to go along
where you've gone, father." That's
what the son says. "On the path to
the *krei*, I will follow where you went
before." That's what he says, "Don't
cause it." That's what they say, "The
krei in the sky will take me; Don't
cause it"

⁸⁰ Interestingly, of all the cases, I did not encounter any cases where siblings killed other siblings to co-reside. It was almost exclusively ownership relations.

The celestial *ekōandy* of the *krei* remained opaque to the living. For the most part, theirs was a “life” lived elsewhere. But they did occasionally appear among the living. The *krei* are, in theory, visible, even though informants attributed to them a tendency for them to withdraw (*kāndjā*) just as one caught a glimpse of them. They could be seen in the play of light reflected on waxy palm leaves when animated by the passing wind, the shimmering effect of the sun on rippling water, or other chromatic effects considered peculiar or “strange” (*purā*) to the viewer.⁸¹ The presence of *krei* was also perceivable through a cool breeze or a sudden chill felt in the body. Though the earthly presence of the *krei* was limited to these few generic signs, they were not anonymous. And in this regard, Ache *krei* differ from what has been reported for other groups in the South American lowlands (cf. Viveiros de Castro 1992; Taylor 1993). *Krei* retained something of the presence of historical individuals. They were often named familiars – that is, the *krei* were identified as the *krei* of someone in particular – and they retained personalistic relations with those they owned during their lives. This had implications both for how the living related to *krei* and for how they expected the *krei* to relate to them.

There were a number of occasions in which *krei* might appear to the living below them. The *krei* could take revenge on its living enemies through violent storms called

⁸¹ Other strange light formations signaling the presence of *krei* spirits include: “strange morning light” (*koēpurā*), “strange moonlight” (*krendypurā*), and “strange rainclouds” (*bakypurā*).

pichua that could topple the trees of whole stretches of forest.⁸² Vengeful against enemies, the ancestors' *krei* could take on an altruistic role to its living allies.⁸³ It was said to advise relatives through dreams, leading them to safety when they were lost or in danger. The living were subjects for the *krei*, not only because the *krei* might intervene in the lives particular people (their sons, daughters, spouses, etc.) but also because they were attentive to the events that take place among their living kin. The *krei* appeared as a synthesis between past biography and news extraordinary

⁸² Ann Christine Taylor has written, "Amazonian groups transform their dead quite systematically into paradigms of sociological foreignness, and it is their *relation* to this alterity, rather than the fate of the dead as such, that really engages their interest" (Taylor 199: 654, emphasis in the original). The Ache were no exception. Just as the *adjawe* appeared as enemies, Ache *krei* took the appearance of Guarani shamans. They were in effect shamanized, uncanny beings able to capture the capacities of their avian familiars through powers inaccessible to the living. This fact is all the more striking because, in stark contrast to their Guarani neighbors, the Ache did not have living shamans.

Interestingly, in this case, historical linguistic data accompanies this phenomenon. According to the Ache, *pichua* is enacted by certain "messenger birds" that unleash acts of meteorological vengeance. When the soul of the deceased rises to the sky, one of a number of these "messenger birds" will descend, bringing its particular form of turbulent weather with it. Thus, should an Ache encounter a particularly turbulent storm in the months after a band member's death, she knows exactly which bird the deceased employed to produce it: The *pichua* that blows down trees is enacted by *kyminō* and *kruma* birds; rain without lightning is caused by the birds *hoka*, *uru*, and *pirabua kako*; heavy rain is caused by the *gacho* bird; the bird *kryta* causes hail; and the *kwipiru* bird brings the cold. At least some of these effects appear to be iconic of the animals that cause them: For example, the *pirabua kako*, known in English as the Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forticatus*), has a bifurcated tail that resembles a fish's and is commonly associated with water and with fish in Ache myth (even though it is not an aquatic bird and does not feed on fish.) Naturally, it is one of the birds that bring heavy rainfall. *Pichua* is related to the concept of *tupichua* in cosmology of neighboring Guarani groups as a regular semantic shift. In his *Tesoro de la Lengua Guarani* (1876), the seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary Antonio Ruiz de Montoya defined *tupichua* as a "spirit familiar," a non-human auxiliary employed by the Guarani shaman to prey on his human enemies (Montoya 1876 [1639]: 404). Montoya's definition suggests the common practice of familiarization by Tupi-Guarani shamans, whereby a shaman offers gifts of tobacco and honey to certain animals or spirits so that he may control their predatory impulses (Fausto 1999). Once adopted by the shaman, the *tupichua* become his children, and they obey the shaman as one would obey a father. Should the need arise, one of these tractable auxiliaries could then be charged by the Guarani shaman to take vengeance against his human enemies. Thus, among the seventeenth century Guarani, *tupichua* designates not the meteorological effects produced by spirit auxiliaries (as in Ache) but the avian auxiliaries themselves.

⁸³ Though the form of vengeance was different for each, deceased ancestors could take revenge on the living whether they were "good" *krei* or "bad" *andjawe*. The Ache say that in the forest, it was common for individuals to tell their rivals that their *krei* would return to exact revenge on them after their deaths.

qualities, and it was that synthesis that allowed individual *krei* to cure their specific kin.

Often, for this to happen, the *krei* had to be summoned or “called out” (*puka*). The word *puka* means to “call out” to a physically absent addressee. The sick appealed to the *krei* of deceased relatives – the spirits of those kin who had “owned” the sick person during their lives and could be counted on to care for them in death. The *krei*, who lived elsewhere in a distant celestial forest, had to be summoned *here* to the place of the sick person.

Kreirō kuerare emi āpā. Puchī bwiey
buchāwe āpā. Manorāwe.

Krei healed my father. Father had really bad diarrhea. He was going to die (but didn't).

Ore chēnga āpā mano putabu. Gobu kreī
kuerama.

We cried when father was going to die. Then a *krei* healed him.

Krei-rō ore āpā. Krei-rō krey-djiwā.
Gope-rō ore na'ā kreī. Go ore āpā.

Krei are our fathers (ancestors). The *krei* come from the sun. The ones there we call *krei*. Those are our fathers.

Gope-rō dja memby mano putabu eigi
puka. Djamo-pe-rō puka djamo
ekōllāmbu. Djarypurāngi ekōllāmbu
pukapa djarypurāngipe.

When her child “wants” to die [i.e. is about to die], she calls out to them. She calls out to the grandfathers when they are about to die. She really calls out to the grandmothers when they are about to die.

Dja eigiperō puka eigi. Cho pya durubu
puka eigi.

Mother calls out to her mother [i.e. her mother's *krei*]. When my liver swelled, mother called out [to her mother].

Baipurāngi in Sammons (1978: 40)

As a healing agent, the *krei* cured the sick and injured through direct contact with the sick person's body, by forcing the painful object (*achygi*) out of its host. The victim appeared as the passive object of something that is both a sickness and a spirit, which had lodged in the victim's body. The wind – the *krei*'s breath – was imbued with agentive force that takes the source of pain away by cooling the afflicted body. The agentive capacity of the painful object became the object of the *krei*'s own agentive power. Central to this idea is the instrumental use of smell. Generally speaking, just as fetid odors produced harmful disease, pleasant odors drove them away. A number of substances used as remedies for sickness (beeswax, vulture feathers, and the barks of certain trees) possess a strong and characteristic odor, and it was through the odor that they achieve their effect on the patient. When burned, *padje* bark is crisp with a green floral undertone and was described to me as “good-pungent” (*teiwvy gatu*). The soft-bitter smell of burned vulture feathers and the sweet smell of beeswax were also described as “good-pungent.” But the perfumed smoke that was pleasant smelling to humans was suffocating to the foreign spirit that had invaded the body. When certain substances were burned beside the patient's body and blown over it, or when certain barks are massaged into the victim's skin, the resulting smell “made the pathogenic spirit's eye's water,” forcing it out of the body. Third, the painful object might be forced out through massaging the affected areas. Anyone could do this, but the massage of pregnant women was preferred, as her hands were considered particularly cold. The pregnant mothers were not the authors of coolness, which came from the unborn child and ultimately derived from

the *krei*, but her massage was capable of harnessing these signs, even if only for fleeting moments.

6.3 The Epidemics

There is scant information available about how Ache understood the epidemics that resulted from their contact with whites. If Pierre Clastres' descriptions of the sickness he witnessed in 1963 are representative, the first outbreaks of disease on the colony were attributed to *djuwy/baiwã*, fevers originating from the spectral *adjawe* or from the vengeful spirits of game animals (Clastres 1998 [1972]: 247).⁸⁴ What is clear is that by the epidemic of 1968, the whites were recognized as the cause of the escalating deaths there. The specific pathogenic powers of the Paraguayans derived from their clinging bodily odors (*ãpã eche teiwy buchã*), and through contact with them, one became susceptible to their malignant agency.

Wendu djuellã go nonga eche teiwy.
Eche duwe nonga. ãpã eche kachĩ.

[The Ache] didn't like the smell of the sweat on [the whites'] bodies. Their bodies were like something else. The whites' bodies were strong-smelling.

ãpã pire teiwy buchãrõ nande eche
tuwapare.

The smell of sweat on the whites' skin made our bodies weak.

Bywãngi, interview, 10/20/2016

The strong connection between smell and illness is widespread in lowland South America (Lévi-Strauss 1969; Crocker 1985; Albert 1988), and was basic to Ache notions of disease that strong-smelling substances could penetrate the bodies in its

⁸⁴ A deadly outbreak of measles broke out just after Pierre Clastres, Hélène Clastres, and Lucien Sebag had left the colony, so Clastres' descriptions may not apply to the epidemic in 1963.

vicinity. For example, to smell the blood of game animals risked incorporating that animal's subjectivity into the body and being sickened by it. The Ache word *teiwɨ* referred specifically to the pungent smells of sweat, animal musk, and certain kinds of smoke. The term was often specified with the qualifier *gatu* (e.g. "good-pungent") or *buchā* (e.g. "bad-pungent"), and these qualifiers signaled different effects on the body: things that smelled "bad-pungent" caused illness, while things that smelled "good-pungent" drove illness away. As best I could tell, these qualifiers did not make categorical distinctions in *kinds of smell*. Thus, "bad-pungent" smells were "bad" because they emanated from dangerous objects and not merely because they smelled bad.

What appears different in ascribing illness to whites (as opposed to the dead or to vengeful game animals) is the kind of relations it evokes and colors. As Carlos Fausto has written, "In the Amazon, odor is more than a quality perceptible by smell; it is the vehicle of other's agency. The smell of the blood of the victim permeates the killer at a distance, as that of the parturient contaminates her husband. The smell carries the qualities of the other; it penetrates and transforms the body of the person who receives it" (Fausto 2016: 174).

6.4 Good Bodies

In the turmoil of the epidemics that had claimed so many of their relations, the Ache at Cerro Moroti wanted "good bodies." Given the strong association between the missionaries and the health services of the community, it was natural that they turn to the missionaries. They had built the first clinic in 1972, acted as nurses

treating the innumerable sick left by the epidemics, and had begun training of Ache medical orderlies to staff it (cf. Vilaça 1997: 93). The missionaries were responsible for health services for the community, and their presence in the early period of contact had been vital to the physical survival of the Ache.

One young convert told this to a NTM missionary one night after helping her with language work:

Kowebu ore eche gatu ndaipori mano.	Now that we have good bodies, there is no death.
Nonde Budjagi Wytatachegi ĩmbu ache tārã manõbawe.	Before when Budjagi [Manuel de Jesus Pereira] and Wytatachegi [Nelido Rios, Pereira's sometimes assistant] were here, many Ache died.
Kowebu pende Jesu Krito rekoã-rõ ĩkõmbu ore mano bechema. Proãty dja manollã. Kowebu ore uaty almacen* kwama eku tārã uaty orema eche gatu.	Now that you who belong to Jesus Christ came, we don't die anymore. Because of the medicine, we don't die. Now we know how to eat food from the store; we ate there a lot, and our bodies became good.
Eche buchã ore pawe wywy. Prãndja wywy ãndawe. Ore prãndja wywy ore wywy.	[Before] all our brothers had bad bodies. All of them were angry there [in the forest.] All of us were angry. All of us.
Kowebu ore Jesu Krito djawu wẽndawe ore prãndja bechema.	Now we have heard Jesus Christ's word; we are no longer angry.

Garagi, NTM field recordings (1978)

Yet the changes that the speaker attributed to the missionaries' arrival – the change in diet, the change from bad to good bodies, the change from angry to contented dispositions – were not attributed to a subjective reorientation. The Ache's response to the social rupture brought about by their sickness was not to focus on spiritual

matters, such as sin and grace, but to produce positive transformations in their bodies that this would enable them to escape the bodily afflictions they faced during their settlement. The attention, in other words, was directed not to their souls but to *their bodies*, and their initial interest in the message of the missionaries concerned how it might affect their physical state of being (Vilaça 2016; Grotti 2009).

They were the result of “calling out to God,” and much in the same way as debilitated Ache had called out to the *krei* to cure them, “calling out” to God initiated direct corporeal contact. The act of calling “causes him to come into the inside of their bodies” (*djāwāmpē ikēwā*). It did not refer to a change in subjectivity (as in “to let God enter your heart”). In this case, the “inside” (*djāwāmpē*) of the body designates the inside of something hollow, like a cave or the hollow of a tree. God would touch the soul of the sick person, thereby curing them of all illness.

Ore ī eche achybu ore pukapa Jesu
Kritope āpā ywa-djiwāgipe. Ore na, “Ore
eche gatu ami ore ikēmbu.

When our bodies are in pain, we call
to Jesus Christ, to our celestial
father. We say, “Make our bodies
good while we sleep. All our
brothers, heal our bad bodies.”

Ore pawe wywy ore eche bycheme
amia.”

And we tell our brothers, “When
you sleep, call to God, and he will
come.”

Go ore na ore pawe kiuape pende ikēwā
pende āpā nande āpā wachu puka eko ī.
Goga nānde kuwēndy ī. Prāndjāpe
mēllāndy kuwēllā ī. Wei nande dja ipo
mīmbyre gatu nande kwera gatu
pukapyty. Go emi nande gwei nande
krei emi poko emi nande djāndji. Nande
praruwā. Nande krei nande āpā
wachupe puka-rō krei chidja buchā dja
djāwāmpē.

That one always heals us. He
doesn’t care for those who are angry
and don’t give to others. With his
great shimmering hand, he heals us
when he is called. And he touches
our *krei* for us when we are weak.
Our *krei* calls out to the great father,
“Strengthen our *krei* inside our
bodies.”

Garagi, NTM field recordings (1978)

It is clear from their documents that NTM missionaries were ambivalent about the messages they had received from enthusiastic converts. They understood that the Ache's desire to receive "good bodies" was a matter of the immediate now, and because health was far more precarious at that time, they could understand that its pursuit might be felt to be much more urgent than the pursuit of ultimate salvation. But if the fruits of salvation – "good bodies" (*eche gatu*) – were achievable in the here-and-now, salvation as a future goal for believers could only appear redundant. The very thing that so attracted the Ache to this God – the desire to have "good bodies" (*eche gatu*) – seemed to eclipse the rest of the missionaries' message.

They felt a similar ambivalence toward the past efficacy of "calling out" to *krei* ancestors. On the one hand, the idea of "calling out" to a celestial healer had provided a fruitful parallel to explain God's beneficent influence and the power of prayer to elicit it. Yet the *krei*'s capacity to heal seemed entangled with that of God's, and the missionaries made various attempts to separate the capacities of the *krei* and this new God. One popular conceit involved treating Ache understandings of their *krei* ancestors as a misunderstanding of God's involvement in their lives. Not only was God healing them *now* through the antibiotics and vaccinations the missionaries had given them. God had been the "real" agent all along, curing them of illness and venomous snakebites even before the missionaries had arrived. It had been God – not the *krei* – who had answered the call, a God they had not known but one that the missionaries had since disclosed to them. But if God was merely the "right" agent behind a tangle of causes, nothing would seem to change, and there would be little

need to assent to a different set of moral prescriptions than the ones they had already known.

Rather than a simple substitution between terms, the figure of God had to replace the *krei*. The missionaries attempted to instill the sense that the efficacy of the missionaries' medicine and Christ's healing power resulted from the latter's *difference* with the *krei* ancestors. And without the clear understanding of their difference, there could be no salvation. Individuals had to *choose* whether they accept God's offer of salvation. God required that one perform a particular kind of relationship before he healed them. The Ache would have to realize themselves as persons capable of creating a relationship with God, in order to recover from illness, in order for them to receive a "good body." The bodies of non-Christians might be subject to sickness and other accidents, but Christian bodies would be protected.⁸⁵

Despite the missionaries' aggressive attempts to separate the qualities of the *krei* from those of Jesus, and to devalue the former, the signs that evinced supernatural healing were largely shared between them. As the "real" author of their good fortune in the forest, God simply inherited many of the qualities formerly assigned to the spirits of dead relatives.

The missionaries knew that simply translating terms between Christian and Ache frameworks would not lead to the leaving behind of a sinful past – the *sine qua non*

⁸⁵ This appears similar to the comments of Ache language assistant to the NTM missionary Ruth Sammons. While God would protect Christians from revenge by their ancestors, he would punish his enemies. As he explained to Sammons, "If a [jaguar] goes to eat one of God's sons, He'll say 'Don't eat my son; eat one of the Devil's sons'" (Sammons 1979: 8).

Early Ache converts were not alone in treating God as an avenger. The Jesuit missionary Anchieta recounts the words of one Tupinambá shaman for whom a violent storm was God's vengeance against a dog that had bitten him: "I knew God and his Son. Having been bitten by a dog, I ordered the Son of God to bring me medicine. He came immediately, and being angry at the dog, he sent this great wind which destroyed the forest and avenged me for the injury I received" (Anchieta 1812 [1560]: 135).

of what they considered conversion to be. To communicate their message, the NTM missionaries could not merely present God as the “real” defender against the quotidian worries of sickness and predation by malevolent spirits. God could not be a *krei* by another name, just another a superlative ancestor, because the *krei* could not be categorically distinguished from humanity. After all, the *krei* might cure sick Ache, but ultimately, a *krei* had once been a living Ache. And those Ache that had been cured by *krei* might in turn, after their death, become *krei* that healed. It was essential that the soul (the thing that was to be saved) first be estranged from God (the savior.) The conflation of God’s powers with the powers of the *krei* troubled the missionaries, for without their strict separation, the concept of salvation remained incoherent. Humanity, in other words, would first have to be seen as a problem before this new God could be seen as their solution.⁸⁶

6.5 The New Owner

The missionary linguist Ruth Sammons expressed in frustration, “We came here to give these people the Gospel, and we can’t even communicate. Now we find we not only have to learn their language, we can’t communicate the Gospel comprehensively to the Indian without knowledge of his culture...” (Sammons 1976: 5). To compensate for their initial unfamiliarity with the Ache language and the understandings of its speakers, the NTM sought to make parallels with what they knew of the Guarani language. This was a natural strategy. As source language,

⁸⁶ According to NTM missionary, Ken Johnson, “The unbelieving tribesman, like the [unbelieving] American, does not always recognize that is he *not* happy as he is. But the discerning one [that is, the missionary] knows he has a void in his heart which pleasures or riches cannot fill” (Johnson 1985: 274). It is thus part and parcel of this missionary strategy to encourage the unbelieving tribesman to see how unhappy he *really is* (see Sahlins 1996).

Guarani was genetically related to the Ache language and shared much of its lexicon. Moreover, several of the missionaries in Cerro Moroti were fluent speakers of Guarani with years of experience proselytizing in the Ava Guarani communities around Itakyry. In the absence of exegetical materials in Ache, Guarani provided a rough metalinguistic map that might allow commensuration between the language of the missionaries and Ache, and to was hoped, facilitate the movement of meaning between them. The movement of Christianity into the Ache language began with Guarani.

The most important of these sources was a version of John William Lindsay's (1913) Guarani translation of The New Testament.⁸⁷ Though Lindsay's New Testament, missionary linguists selected Guarani terms as temporary placeholders, to be later replaced with the appropriate Ache terms when the missionaries had a fuller understanding of the language. The most consequential of the terms the NTM took from Lindsay's translation was the Guarani term for God, *Nandejara* ("our owner.")⁸⁸

"What meaning would a relationship of subjection to God have," Valerio Valeri once asked, "if God were not explicitly conceived of as a lord and master who requires, like all lords and masters, precisely subjection and fidelity?" (1994: 35). The notion of Ache ownership, as I have described it in previous chapters, would appear

⁸⁷ Lindsay translated The New Testament from Greek in 1913, making it the first published New Testament in a South American indigenous language.

⁸⁸ Wittingly or not, by adopting *Nandejara* ("our owner"), the missionaries had inherited a term that Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries had been using for nearly four centuries. It appears in the Franciscan Luis de Bolaños' *Catecismo* from 1607, and was subsequent adopted by Jesuit missionaries like Montoya (1639) and Yapuguay (1727). The Guarani word *aña*, which referred to the deadly specter of the recently dead and the NTM used for "Satan" and "demon," originates from this time as well. Later, it was directly replaced with the Ache term *adjawe*.

to be an unsuitable term to communicate the hierarchy that God demanded. It was defeasible, dependent on the caprices of co-residence. Furthermore, its moral focus was directed to the “owner” and not the obedience of the “owned.” And yet, missionaries of the New Tribes attempted to explain God’s superabundance by analogy to the notion of ownership.

Even if it was the New Tribes missionaries who first introduced to the Ache the notion that God was an “owner,” the Ache quickly extended it along local lines. God the Father was not a patriarchal authority and domination; God was *āpā*, a father and owner. And as an “owner” of his people, God was depicted in NTM educational literature as a bandleader. The “future-followers” (*rupiwarā*) of God and Satan were depicted as those who followed those ahead of them on a trail.⁸⁹ Even when the principal Ache language assistant later recommended that the term for God be changed from the Guarani *Nandejara* to an Ache term, he was careful to preserve the notion of ownership captured in the original. One missionary described the language assistant’s reasoning in the following terms: “Fausto says the fact that God created these beings [i.e. humans] [is the reason] He is called their ‘father’ or ‘patron.’

⁸⁹ In their training manuals for new missionaries, missionary linguists described the opposition between God and the Devil through the image of a fractious division of a band by rival headmen, where the allegiances of band members had been put to the test:

Añarō nande djaradji byllā. Prāndjāngirō duwety ma djo. Aña buepyre duwety. Prāndjāngi rapama dja djāwewaty. Prāndjāngi djāwewaty adjawepama o. Gorō byllā nande djaradji.

The Devil is an enemy of our “owner” [i.e. God]. The angry one went to another place [away from God’s camp.] The Devil went to another place. The angry one took his companions. The angry one’s companions all became *adjawe*. They are also enemies of our “owner.”

El idioma Ache 1978: 133

Same is true of Aches working for their patron. It is spoken of with terms denoting ‘father/son’ relationship” (*El idioma Ache* 1978: 133).

6.6 Abandonment of taboos

The anxieties of partial identification between the missionaries’ understanding of Christianity and their understanding of Ache cosmology were ultimately destructive. Even while translating Christianity through its terms, NTM missionaries circulated the idea that Ache cosmology was an assortment of lies communicated to the Ache by an invisible but ever-present Christian Devil. In an article in the NTM newsletter *Brown Gold*, peculiarly addressed in English to an imaginary Ache reader, one missionary explained:

You can decide if you want to be born into God’s family, walk on God’s path, and to go to His Campgrounds; or you may continue listening to the one who lies and then go to the Big Fire. He’s the one who told you that God’s beautiful rainbow was a venomous snake who hides in the woods to get you. He is the one who told you that those animals out there, the fierce tigers and such, are your wicked ancestors out for revenge. The choice is yours. And tears would come to your eyes as you realize that your beloved parents and grandparents had already gone to the Big Fire because they did not have a chance to make that choice. Why did the missionaries not come sooner? Why couldn’t they come in time to tell the rest of your family? (Heckert 1985: 7).

Living Ache were not future-*krei*. Neither was God. The ancestors had in fact been damned for not knowing God. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the disagreements among the Ache over the efficacy of alimentary taboos (see Vilaça 2016: 134). God, as the “owner of all things,” had made the animals for humans, and unlike the Ache owners of the past, he did not withhold gifts of certain animals on

the basis of what the missionaries considered the “superstitious” effects of eating them.⁹⁰

One young Ache would voice her approval of the taboo’s abandonment in the following terms:

Gorō bue u kallāndy kadji ekōmbu.
Membo o ēngatu go mellā krumipe.
Idjarō upa mondo dja imedji.

The [grandmothers] prohibited meat when we lived in the forest. Delicious snake meat, that wasn’t given to the children. They ate it all with their husbands.

Kowebu go membo memba
krumipe. Krumiperō membo o
ēngatu. Memborō o ēngatu.

Now they give snake meat to their children. Delicious snake meat [they give] to the children, [they give] delicious snake meat.

Go o ēngatu uatyrō waiwi purā mellā
krumipe. Pia wachurō me’e krumipe.
Krumi ymaeche mai’i reko djarypurāngi
membo u rekobu. Gobu djarypurāngi
prāndjā buchā krumipe membo ubu. O
pykae ubu djēguru buchā waiwi purā.
Ka prāndjā waiwi purā.

The old women ate the delicious meat and did not give any to the children. They gave big snake eggs to the children. The older children watched the grandparents eating snake meat. The grandmothers were very angry with the children if they ate snake meat. They muttered [complained] if they ate a little snake meat. The old women were angry for no reason.

Kowebu Jesu Krito apepe
mudjāmbu go nonga bechemā.

Now that we follow the path of Jesus Christ, they are not like that.

Gorō bue u kallāndy ekōmbu
djarypurāngi. Prāndjā buchā. Karē
chuaregi ubu krumipe prāndjā gogi.

The grandmothers prohibited meat when they lived [in the forest]. They were very angry. If the children ate a coati that had bitten someone, they were angry.

Go kuallā Jesupe āpā wachu emi. Jesurō

They knew neither Jesus nor God.

⁹⁰ Similarly, Vilaça writes that because God made the Wari’ the masters of animals, food taboos were no longer consequential (Vilaça 2016: 134).

bue wywy djapopawe kowe ywype
nande upawā idja djapopawe emi.

Jesus made all things on this land so
we could eat them.

Baepurāngi in Sammons (1987: 169)

The devaluation of past knowledge strained relations between older and younger Ache. Many young Ache drew a political conclusion from the missionary's idea that God had created all animals for humans use: the old had been deceiving younger generations: the fearful consequences of breaching alimentary taboos were in fact illusory. They had laid bare the older generation's deeper interests in directing the distribution of food. That seniors had been so careful to remind others that one class of persons should be given a specific kind of meat or another class of persons should be given no meat at all could only be a mystification. They had invoked the taboos of the past to *inhibit* more expansive giving. Taboos, in other words, were an excuse to deny a gift, where, according to younger converts, a gift should have been given. And for those who had been deprived of food on the basis of such rules, their abandonment was a source of freedom.

Because Ache food taboos applied only to a person during a particular ritual state (e.g. initiation) or age grade, and not, as an absolute prohibition for an entire *ethnos* (Douglas 1999), foods prohibited to a certain class of persons at one time (pre-initiates, for example) would have been regularly consumed at other times. (In contrast to the taboos found in Leviticus, for example, Ache food prohibitions did not involve any disgust or contempt for the prohibited foods.) Their prohibition was thus experienced as necessary deprivation. This allowed for the particular dynamic of their abandonment: the Ache would be free to eat the things they had always

wanted to eat (Keane 2007). In this view, taboo was the absence of what the rule prohibits. Its abandonment implied a presence, in this case, the freedom to eat what one chooses.⁹¹

⁹¹ It might be tempting to explain such challenges to traditional principles of Ache authority as the simple voicing of missionary critiques. Missionaries, after all, often emphasized that the acceptance of Christianity was an act of freedom from false fears (see Keane 2007; Viveiros de Castro 2012). While this certainly played a role, it is also important to point out that there were existing motivations for this interpretation in Ache tradition. In Ache myth, seniors regularly appeared as caricatures – as exceedingly greedy, deceitful, or gullible – in stories about the virtues and vices of surround food sharing. In one popular myth, an old man called Pichuetegi, “the real palm larvae eater,” invents false prohibitions to avoid sharing his delicious palm larvae with two young brothers. The two hungry youths surreptitiously try the palm larvae and discover the old man’s deception before tricking the old man out his food. Though few clear cut and enduring stereotypes could be found in real life, the very nature of the seniors’ exclusive knowledge and the authority contained the possibility of its misuse (a dynamic not unlike that of scolding, discussed in chapter 3).

*Scars of tattoo marks without—
those of sin within.*



Figure 6.1. The sinful body. For NTM missionaries, the body was made by God, in advance of any inputs by humans. It was also made in his image, so it could only be complete and adequate to itself. As a result, the practice of scarring the body during initiation showed irreverence for the Creator's design. For the Ache, however, the body did not exist in a final form. The body was dangerously incomplete without the stripes cut into its skin and the particular foods given to and withheld from it. By attending to its surfaces and insides, a body was "made Ache." An unmodified body showed no signs of relation to other humans, and being unaffected by kin, put one dangerously close to the egoism of animals. (Photo: Land of the Guarani no. 13, January 1973).

Ache food restrictions were not immediately abandoned by everyone, and of course not everyone treated the abandonment of food prohibitions in such terms. Many considered the abandonment not as freedom but as a loss, an absence (of a set of instructions for achieving a "good body," way of life, etc.) For Kuategi, the aged

traditionalist, the achievements of the younger generation would never compare with the youthful exploits of his parents' generation. Before, there had been giants on earth. Men of Kuategi's generation had seen their fathers as strong hunters, bountiful givers, and fearless warriors.⁹² But today's youth was too idling, cowardly, and intemperate to match these feats. Of their many shortcomings, the adolescents' flouting of alimentary taboos was, in Kuategi's estimation, the most consequential.

Kowebu dare wei kakullā. Upama.
Kuallā. Dja ete kuwēllā. Allā aicho u
emollā ueme. Go nongallā.

Now the female initiates don't avoid meat. They eat everything. They don't know. They don't take care of their bodies. They don't put the *aicho*⁹³ over their hair; they eat unsweet things that they shouldn't. It's not like it was anymore.

Kuategi interview, 5/11/16

As Lambek (1992: 249) has written, "a taboo clearly differentiates between those who practice it and those who need not." The following of these rules differentiated them from others who do not eat the way they do. In so doing, they might provide an important diacritic between, for example, those who eat kosher or halal and those who do not, or those of a certain age grade who have rights to eat certain foods and those age grades that do not have such rights. But something very different is at play here. For Kuategi, however, the essential diacritic was between the way Ache used to eat—the way they were supposed to eat—and the way they ate today.

But Kuategi's frustration wasn't shared by many others, who placed no moral value on the taboos at all. Kuategi's half-sister, Pikygi, for example was starkly

⁹² And it was usually men, in my experience, who made these sorts of claims about the past.

⁹³ The *aicho* is a woven palm basket that the female initiate wears to prevent her from looking at others and from other looking at her. Wearing it also gives her long beautiful hair.

utilitarian in her assessment for why the taboos had been abandoned. Untroubled by the changes in Ache diet, she explained to me that the diseases that resulted from breaking taboos no longer existed. Adolescent girls no longer became light-headed and feverish if they ate predatory birds during their menstruation. Male initiates no longer got sick if they ate black howler meat. Without the sanctions that resulted from breaching the taboos, Pikiyi concluded, following them was simply longer necessary. Kuategi's and Pikiyi's responses to the collective abandonment of alimentary taboo stress different aspects of what taboo is and does, whether taboo is a causal claim or a moral expression (and in this respect, it is not surprising that they resemble anthropological explanations with Pikiyi playing Frazer to Kuategi's Radcliffe-Brown).

6.7 Autonomy without Relations

It was not simply the kinds of foods the Ache ate that would come under criticism by the missionaries but how they gave that food. "Whether one likes it or not, he becomes involved in a program of economic development for such people," wrote one missionary in the months after their arrival at Cerro Moroti. "It is either that or let them become beggars" (Cole 1973: 18).

Some NTM missionaries had misgivings about their involvement with the community's economic development, and a healthy suspicion of developmentalism had been one of the guiding ideas of their organization since its founding. As Courtney Handman has recently written, "Mid-century American evangelical missiology was framed as a response to the nineteenth century model of mainline

missions figured as welfare states. As opposed to the perceived excess of the older model of colonial institution building, postwar American missionization did not want to be colonialist. Local people would be offered *a choice* in religious affiliation, and in thus avoiding the coercion of state forms, they would also remain authentically themselves” (Handman 2015: 68, emphasis added).⁹⁴ As one such missionary fellowship to emerge from mid-century U.S., the NTM set out to win exotic converts from remote areas of the globe through a strategy of “church planting.” The essential goal of the NTM’s strategy was to establish indigenous churches that would eventually flourish without the direct support of Western missionaries, and when indigenous leaders had taken on the Great Commission just as enthusiastically as the missionaries themselves had adopted it, they might grow their own future missionary movements.⁹⁵

If these indigenous churches were to endure beyond the stay of the missionaries, they would have to be populated with self-sufficient converts. To encourage this, NTM missionaries drew up a deliberately capitalist plan for the community of Cerro Moroti to sustain itself. In addition to the subsistence crops grown in the community, they added several cash crops, particularly cotton and tobacco, that could be exchanged this with neighboring Paraguayan towns. The missionaries would also help the Ache negotiate contracts for wage labor with neighboring farmers to ensure

⁹⁴ Missionary groups of the size and influence of NTM obviously worked with governments to secure their presence in the countries where they worked, and in some cases formed alliances with even the most repressive Latin American regimes, with which they shared a fervent anti-communism. In following Handman’s account of mission history, I wish to point out that NTM missionaries did not consider their political relationships to limit the freedom needed for believers to undergo a sincere conversion.

⁹⁵ NTM missionaries expressed concern about the “viability” of indigenous churches against the threats of deconversion and financial collapse. The links between spiritual and financial constancy should be explored in detail in future work.

they were not cheated out of their wages.⁹⁶ The community's fields would be divided among the families, and the missionaries' farm equipment was made available for the Ache to use – with the stipulation that the Ache had to rent them, so that their self-discipline would not succumb to the self-pity that charity so often encouraged.⁹⁷ Finally, the missionaries built a general store where the Ache could spend their wages on meat, flour, rice, and clothes, while keeping profits within the community.

These arrangements were admittedly paternalistic, but without them, the missionaries reasoned, the Ache would never become independent. The Ache would *have to be taught* how to be free. It was here that NTM missionaries felt the need to supplement their developmentalist aspirations for the community with a critique of Ache gift-giving practices – particularly food sharing. Ache gift-giving proved to be especially puzzling for the missionaries: On the one hand, it was considered to be frustratingly non-capitalist – the missionaries regularly complained that obligations of Ache to their kin corrupted the kind of impersonal exchange needed for the proper functioning of Cerro Moroti's general store.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ The colony's previous administrator, Manuel de Jesus Pereira, received government contracts to build roads, for which he used the Ache to work without pay. Much of the work available to the Ache outside of Cerro Moroti was clearing the forest for nearby farms.

⁹⁷ On the antagonism between the "tough love" of ascetic Protestantism and the *caritas* of Catholicism and Lutheranism, see Weber (1948).

⁹⁸ The enthusiasm with which the NTM implemented capitalist practices in Cerro Moroti drew the ire of anthropologists in Paraguay and elsewhere. Miguel Chase-Sardi wrote that the NTM "confuse the essential principles of Christianity with the particular values of Western culture, and teach the latter as if it was the former" (Chase-Sardi 1972: 207). As is probably clear from my framing of the issue, I have strong doubts about the easy separation between the "religious" and "cultural," particularly in the case I describe here. Chase-Sardi overlooks precisely what many missionaries "learn the hard way": the porousness of Western notions of "religion" and the implications that purportedly "non-religious" phenomena have for self-consciously religious claims – things I take to be the more interesting problems typical of the mission encounter.

“The Aches always have their hands out; whatever gift was given once just becomes standard procedure, and they want their share *now!*,” the missionary Claudia Heckert declared in exasperation.⁹⁹ Gifts were not just solicited so much as they were demanded (see Peterson [1993] on demand sharing).

Neither did the gift-givers’ motives seem entirely innocent to the missionaries. The apparent selflessness and generosity of Ache giving disguised more interested reasons. She explained:

It’s not that they don’t share with each other. They give, but not out of a spirit of generosity. It is an embarrassing social stigma to be selfish, so they give to improve their reputations. One of the finest things you can say about a person is, ‘He really gives a lot.’ But they have stipulations to that giving. One *must* share with a close relative or risk the wrath of the village (which is the primary reason we cannot run a store.) But if times are lean and the relative is ‘shirrtail by marriage,’ there is no obligation. If one is not related at all, they take no responsibility whatsoever even if the person is starving. I have seen them gathered around a pot of food, stuffing themselves happily while a hungry child sits nearby without a thing to eat. Since the child is not related to them, they don’t have to share (Heckert 1989: 5).¹⁰⁰

Marcel Mauss famously argued that it was no coincidence the distinction between purely interested exchange and free gifts had been most fully elaborated in the West (Mauss 1966: 46; 1973: 229; cf. Gregory 1980).¹⁰¹ The notion of a free gift can act as an effective foil for purely interested exchange precisely because both ideas assume a particular idea of the person (with its indispensable concept of freedom), one indigenous to Western Christianity and the otherwise diverse strands of political

⁹⁹ For Heckert, the quintessential icon of the compulsory nature of Ache gift exchange was the absence of a term for “thank you” in the Ache lexicon. On the use of “thanks” in gift exchange, see Pitt-Rivers (1992).

¹⁰⁰ These observations roughly correspond to the findings of evolutionary anthropologists that Ache households give preference to kin who are more likely to reciprocate, rather than those who are most needy (Gurven, Allen-Arave, Hill, & Hurtado, 2001).

¹⁰¹ There is some precedent in emphasizing the religious basis of this connection. The connection between gift and grace is implicit in Mauss and explicit in Parry (1986), Pitt-Rivers (1992), Barclay (2015), among others.

philosophy that descend from it. In this view, the individual person stands as the cause of events, which may be distinguished on the basis of motives and interests. As Jonathan Parry succinctly put it, “Those who make free and unconstrained contracts in the market also make free and unconstrained gifts outside it.” Both the free gift and the commodity are both normatively governed by the expressions of the giver’s free and unconstrained intentions. “But these gifts are defined as what market relations are not – altruistic, moral, and loaded with emotion” (Parry 1986: 466).¹⁰²

As Heckert and other NTM missionaries saw it, Ache gift exchange confused these two poles, because, they supposed, the Ache were too burdened by kin obligations to possess real freedom (Keane 2006b). They would have to be made into individuals.

¹⁰² For Mauss, it was the lack of distinction between persons and things (because the thing contains the person) that the gift creates an enduring bond between persons. Persons and things, interest and disinterest have since been pulled apart, leaving gifts opposed to exchange, persons opposed to things and interest to disinterest.

Chapter 7 Being Seen is Believing

The Ache say that their knowledge (*kua*) of and from God comes through his speech (*djawu*). They first came to know God's word as it was transmitted through the reported speech of the missionaries, and more gradually, through the short Biblical passages translated in Ache by NTM and native language informants. The word New Tribes missionaries used for "believe" was *wenduty*, "to habitually listen to."¹⁰³ Ache Christians referred to themselves with the nominalized form, *wenduare*, "the listeners [of God's talk]." And churches were called *āpā wachu djawu kiutygi*, "the place where God's word is told."

This unmistakable focus on the aural foundation for their knowledge of Christianity fits uneasily with Ache metalinguistic claims about reported speech, however. In most contexts, the Ache grant knowledge gained through speech a low epistemological value, and they are always careful to distinguish knowledge obtained by one's own senses and knowledge obtained through the experience of others – a practice commonly reported for many other Amerindian groups (Basso 1988; Gow 1991; Urban 1996; Viveiros de Castro 2002; see Robbins 2001; Schieffelin 2007; Bloch 2008 for similar cases outside of South America). Viveiros de Castro has argued that these evidential practices are inimical to Christian notions of "belief";

¹⁰³ *Cho wenduty āpāwachupe*. "I habitually listen to God," "I believe in God." Strange that the NTM should use such a Pascalian assumption here.

knowledge gained from the testimonies of others “has no similarity to a revealed truth [or] the notion of dogma.” The careful citation of each individual source of information carries with it an individualizing force that “prevents the solidification of any orthodoxy” (Viveiros de Castro 2002: 40-1).

In this chapter, I describe how rival epistemic attitudes toward experience and reported speech held by Ache converts and New Tribes missionaries were first combined and entextualized in Ache conversion narratives. Jointly produced in ongoing interactions between Ache and missionaries, these narratives became central to the way Ache converts related the past to the present and unreliable to reliable knowledge. God’s word, rooted in the unchallenged capacity to see everything, has somehow become powerful enough to undermine existing evidential strategies. Specifically, conversion narratives became an important means to reframe the relation between visual experience and reported speech.

7.1 Conversion Narratives in the NTM mission

When the NTM arrived in Cerro Moroti in September of 1972, they knew little of the Ache language, and for the first years, most of their communication with the Ache was in Paraguayan Guarani, the lingua franca of the country’s rural east. The missionaries worked with a small team of Ache language assistants to translate Christian lessons and short Bible passages, which Ache language assistants passed on to the rest of the community at meetings held three or four times a week.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The Ache language assistants’ lessons were the reported speech of the missionary’s reported speech of Scripture. But new sources of evidence emerged. These lessons would sometimes be visualized with figures on a flannel board (see Sammons’ NTM teaching materials). This visual

On March 3, 1978, nearly five years after their arrival, the missionaries reported their first pivotal effects of this strategy when Fausto Bywāngi, their principal language assistant, converted. According to the NTM missionary Ruth Sammons, “Fausto was so enthusiastic about teaching his own people. He needed little encouragement to tell others of the truth he had come to believe. He was so thrilled and excited to share this great news and began having nightly meetings with his own people” (Sammons 1979: 8-9). As a result of these meetings, there arose a passionate interest in evangelical Christianity among the Ache of the Cerro Moroti. Conversions moved rapidly through Ache kin networks, and within a month of Fausto’s conversion, whole extended families had converted. As one missionary wrote, “These are a very group-oriented people; they prefer to do things together, and within three weeks [of Fausto’s conversion] we had about seventy professions of faith! That was a very high percentage of the adult population at that time.” The missionaries’ excitement at the Ache’s sudden conversion was measured, however: “We weren’t sure how many were genuine and how many were just following the crowd” (Goddard 1990: 12).

The missionaries’ doubts ran deeper than whether the Ache’s exuberant mass conversion reflected the hard-won, individual transformations they had imagined for the Ache when they arrived. They also bemoaned their own linguistic knowledge of Ache and the problems that this limitation created in communicating the evangelic message: “When the first fellow accepted the Lord, the language analysis was just being completed, we had not been in the tribe very long, nor was our team

evidence was not direct, however, as it referred to events that no living person had actually experienced. On the combination of visual and aural to present message, see Schieffelin 1995; Severi 2014; Hanks 1999; Besnier 1995.

established yet. So they sort of caught us 'flat-footed,' you might say, in that we were in the beginning stages of language study [and] there was no Scripture in their language" (Goddard 1990: 12). Unable to cull the disingenuous from the heartfelt, and unsure of the accuracy of their existing translations, NTM missionaries initiated a series of individual meetings with new converts in the missionary's homes. When an individual came forward with a claim of having undergone a conversion, the missionaries would judge his or her knowledge of Christianity through the telling of a conversion narrative:

We asked that anyone who professed to know Christ discuss it with us privately. We made it clear that coming to us has nothing whatsoever to do with their salvation, but we as missionaries need to know who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We also need to know how to help them in their understanding of the truths of salvation. We can only know these things if they tell us.

The response has been good, with over fifty of them coming individually. It has been a thrill to listen to these people, most of whom are able to give a clear testimony of where their faith is placed. [...] It has been a blessing to hear these Ache brothers and sisters expressing their belief in God, explaining how Christ was sinless and therefore able to die to save us who were hopelessly lost in our sins (Goddard 1990: 14).

Urging Ache Christians to give conversion narratives was therefore a way for the missionaries to rein in a message that had been mediated in large part through their Ache language assistants. It was no longer enough simply for the Ache to listen patiently to "God's talk" as related by the missionaries and their Ache language assistants. The Ache were enjoined to talk about it, to externalize God's talk as proof that they had internalized it in the form of a "clear testimony" (to use Goddard's words.)

7.2 Hearing and Speaking: Evidence and Authority in the Mission Encounter

The mandate that Ache converts talk about what the missionaries had told them suggests the Urapmin's sardonic characterization of Christianity, as related by Joel Robbins: "In Christianity, talk follows talk and charters talk that produces more talk" (2001: 904). Yet it is also true that the participant roles of (saved) speaker and (unsaved) listener give some order within the torrent of "Christian talk" surrounding the mission encounter: Knowledge of Christianity begins as a verbal message from missionary to the unconverted. It is repeated in testimonies that prove one's faith. And it is further reproduced if and when the once unsaved listener becomes the missionizing believer. It is this order that makes Christian "conversion talk" both "an *argument* about the transformation of self that lost souls must undergo, and a *method* of bringing about that change in those who listen to it" (Harding 1987: 167, emphasis in the original).

In some cases, these roles are materialized in the textual objects themselves, such as this Ache hymn, written by the missionaries to inculcate an ethics of listening and telling:

Wendu āpā wachupe Idja djawu wendu gatu	Listen to the great father, To his speech, listen well.
Wendu āpā wachupe Idja djawu cho mudjāndy Idja ray mewe Cho pepy mano Cho prāndjeare Cho ywa-dji djo	Listen to the great father, His speech I always follow. He gave his son, I am exchanged for death. I am remorseful. I will go to the sky.
Wendu āpā wachupe Idja djawu wendu gatu	Listen to the great father, To his speech, listen well.
Kiu'ū picha kbaepe Āpā wachu djawu gatu	Tell your fellow men, Of the great father's good

Kiu'u picha kbaepe
Idja djawu go mudjāwā

Cho kuallā wyte
Āpā wachu ray
Idja pepy mano
Gobu wēmabu

Kiu'u picha kbaepe,
Āpā wachu djawu gatu.

speech.

Tell your fellow men,
His speech, so that he may
follow it.
I don't yet know
Great Father's son,
His exchange for death,
Or when he was healed.¹⁰⁵

Tell your fellow men,
Of the great father's good
speech.

*(NTM 1985: 82, my translation
from the Ache)*

Ache converts would have to do more than propagate a message like the hymn above. They would have to demonstrate they had undergone the experiential inner change that distinguishes authentic conversion, and at best, the willingness to adopt the discourse of the missionaries could only be a sign of that change. Practically speaking, however, this meant that “sincere conversion” was to be determined through a specific genre of religious speech: the conversion narrative. Though they had converted as a group, Ache converts would have to speak *individually* about what hearing “God’s talk” had done to them. And unlike in everyday discourse, the speaker could expect no validation from listeners. Only the individual convert had the authority to narrate; despite its public performance, testifying remained – like Meyer Fortes (1967) said of eating – something you must do yourself.

7.3 Conversion Narratives as Evidence

¹⁰⁵ In this song, NTM missionaries use the term *wē'ē*, “to expel” to refer to Christ’s resurrection. Though the Ache term often refers to the practice of healing someone by expelling the sickness or intruding object, it does not capture the intended sense of death and resurrection.

What sort of evidence is a testimony? The qualities of one's acts (good works, speech, etc.) index a change in the actor's inner state. In its most basic sense, the conversion narrative is a presentation of a changed self, an account of the speaker's transformation in time. Minimally, this presentation involves the speaker's plumbing of autobiographical details to illustrate a "sinful past" from the standpoint of a "saved present." In many forms of Protestantism, the narrative's center of gravity lies in *the explanation of the speaker's change*, in describing the middle term that facilitates the switch from one state of knowledge to the other. An array of autobiographical events is brought together under a single cause not simply out of narrative contrivance, but out of an understanding that the world is structured around a divine purpose. Over time, speaker perceives a causal unity working through what previously seemed like unrelated events – acting "behind the scenes," so to speak, as a final cause. Speakers describe how they came to know the real, hidden sources of influence behind a seemingly diverse autobiographical elements – the proverbial "scales falling from one's eyes" – and how he or she was changed by that knowledge. That knowledge replaces the speaker's sense of emptiness, meaninglessness, isolation, and sinfulness with feelings of love, community, and newfound purpose.

7.4 Knowledge "Before": Modality, Epistemic Authority, Seniors, and Ethics of *Ka*

As a result, existing metalinguistic assumptions have significant bearing on what all this talk is about. But here the assumptions implied in the display of Christian conviction came into tension with other ethics of talk, namely what they could say about the things they had experienced and the things they had not. Ache Christians

faced a dilemma: How should the Ache speak confidently about a God they had not seen, related to them by strangers who had also not seen this God?¹⁰⁶

The Ache word *kua* (“knowledge”) applies to sensory perception generally as well as cognition, implying that the persons concerned must comprehend that and what they are experiencing. Though the Ache language does not have the kind of system of grammaticalized evidential marking common to many South American indigenous languages, there is a continual normative emphasis in discourse to specify the source of one’s information. Basic to this idea is that a person can speak about his experience in a way that he cannot of another’s. As is common for many groups in lowland South America, the Ache emphasize contrast between information obtained through the sense of sight (*mechã*) and information obtained through reported speech, which is based on the named or unnamed experience of others. I often heard from several of my informants, “When we see something, we really know it.” Direct visual experience avoids some of the more treacherous intentions of others, the potentially dangerous intentionality that might color a report.

Obviously, people had to rely on things they were not able “to see” for themselves or experience in a direct, firsthand manner. For the most part, this involved things we are told about or informed of. Ache notions of the authority of sight frequently appealed to the age and habitual experience of the person in

¹⁰⁶ For much of Western philosophy, epistemology begins with the possibility of our senses deceiving us. But broadly speaking, Amerindians seem to place more emphasis on the tension between the evident and concealed aspects of the people and events they encounter. In other words, it is not one’s senses that deceive, but *the people and events themselves that are deceptive*.

Moreover, knowledge was composed of *events*, not abstract truths against which the listener could oppose his own reason.

question. Vision was still important here. Persons with recognized acquaintance with particular tasks were often referred to as *mechāndygi*, “those who have habitually seen it.” The *mechāndygi* was therefore considered an authority, to use Benveniste’s words, “insofar as he ‘knows,’ but in the first instance because he has *seen*” (Benveniste 1973: 440, emphasis in the original).

Those considered *mechāndygi* were invariable seniors, and I never encountered a case where a woman was called a *mechāndygi*. In a mundane sense, the old had a greater store of knowledge and experience to draw upon. But some seniors had a form of knowing, a techniques of special understanding, that younger people did not. Some seniors were able to “see penetratingly” (*chāmpycho*) past the external appearances of things – for example, to “see” whether a jaguar is indeed a jaguar or if it might be vengeful relative wearing a jaguar’s clothes, or even to “see” the sex of an unborn child by the taste of the food cooked by its mother. This special kind of “seeing” was clearly something different from plain sight, in that it was available only to a few persons, and that it could even include other sensory modalities such as taste, as the above example indicates.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, *chāmpycho* constituted “real knowledge” and it relied on drawing conclusions from engaging with specific signs. As I was told, “The senior men see penetratingly, and they really know. It is the senior men who know.”

These confident assertions about the knowledge of seniors were never attributed to information based on the reported speech of any other age grade. Whatever was not directly experienced must be explicitly noted. If not directly experienced,

¹⁰⁷ It was often accompanied by inferential markers, *mirō* (doubt) and *rōnde* (future possibility).

speakers assiduously qualified their accounts of events by saying *mechällã*, “I didn’t see it,” to avoid making strong claims for which they have an insufficient degree of access.¹⁰⁸ Any given narrator was expected to recount the sources that separated the narrated event from how he came to know about it, referencing the origins of the narrative and its history of circulation. Should an account correspond to the experiences of others, it would be met with approval. Listeners might quietly repeat significant words or phrases from the speaker’s preceding utterance to show their affirmation, or offer a generous endorsement, “*Go nonga!*” “It was like that!”¹⁰⁹

One man, after describing to me a jaguar attack that took place in his grandparent’s generation, concluded his account with the following metalinguistic disclaimer:

Byamari go wywy bya duwe.	The ancestors, all of those people, were different [from us].
Ure mechällã wywy.	We never saw them.
Cho eirõ mechãmbare wywy. Cho djamomari Peĩmbuwachugimari.	My mother saw all of them. My late grandfather Peĩmbuwachugi did too.
Ure irõndy ache tãrã ure mechällã.	Our people [we, the living] never saw it.
Cho ãpãrõ mechãmbare wywy.	But my father saw it all.
Ure mechãmbu ure kua gaturawe. Krebua ure ikõ pou ure.	If we see something, we really know it. But we have only lived in recent

¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, many mythic events are also described as *directly witnessed* by their grandfather’s generation (and not as hearsay, as is reported for many Amerindian groups.)

¹⁰⁹ This brings up the question of cases where the account does not correspond to the experience of others. Privately, one might scorn someone else’s ideas as lies. But the mutual deference that Ache egalitarianism required made public argument traumatic, exposing the speaker to ridicule and risked a quarrel. Thus, although everyone heard other people say things that conflicted with his or her own knowledge, there was no acceptable way to challenge what had been said. They rarely contradicted each other face to face. Publically at least – that is, in the face of one’s affines, knowledge remained socially unchallenged and thus idiosyncratic.

times.

Cho eirō mechāmbare cho āpā wywy. But my mother and father saw it all.

Kuategi, interview (3/17/16)

These provisos were not mere rhetorical flourishes. A person who makes an informative statement may be obliged to recount the precise circumstances in which he or she came by it. A person is expected to say whether there is any cause for uncertainty or imprecision about the information. Determining whether the information is derived from the speaker's firsthand or secondhand experience is part of this process. A person's diligence in doing all of this also is considered important evidence of their moral character. Failing to note the source of one's information invited the distressing allegation that one was "talking senselessly." The Ache refer to this idea of "senseless talk" with an epistemic modal adverb, *ka*.¹¹⁰ Unlike the English "lie," the Ache *ka* applies to utterances or actions based on deliberate deception, as well as those based on erroneous premises. Though at a purely denotational level, *ka* does not distinguish between intended and unintended falsehood, this by itself should not be taken to mean the Ache were or are indifferent to intentions. In addition to evaluating talk, mothers frequently apply *ka* to a host of verbs when scolding their children – directly their child's attention to behavior that should have been intentional.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ The corresponding term in Guarani is *rei*. Interestingly, the Kalapalo term "*auginda*" refers not only to mistaken or incorrect speech, but also to formal speech (found in affine speech, political speech, etc.), and the concealment of certain inappropriate feelings (shame, jealousy, anger) in the presence of one's affines (Basso 1988: 233; see Franchetto (2007) on *augu*.)

¹¹¹ Phrased somewhat more precisely, *ka* is applied to verbs to describe an attempted but unachieved objective (something "done in vain") as well as an action performed without a clear

To provide false information, knowingly or not, was an infringement on another's autonomy, for it meant that those who acted on that information were not in control of their actions (Williams 2002). The speaker, rather than acting as a transparent conduit of the original source, imposed his will on his interlocutor by providing him or her with unfounded reasons for further actions.¹¹²

One Ache man, for example, explained his past hostility to Paraguayans on the basis of the false descriptions he received of them by his senior kin – some of whom had actually lived previously with Paraguayans for years as captives. He recalled his astonishment when he saw a Paraguayan for the first time:

Ache inawe nonga bupi wachu pyta
nonga. Āpā kbeḡatu. Cho wechā gatuma
gobu cho maĩma go.

The Ache had told us the
Paraguayans had noses like a bat's
nose. But the Paraguayan was
beautiful. I saw him really well,
and I looked at him.

reason or cause in the first place (something “done senselessly”). *Ka* can be used to describe tricking another, often by coordinated group effort. Children and young men play out these scenes constantly among themselves, and older women seem to have been a favored target of these jokes: *Orerō ka bewāndy kadji āpā maĩ inandy. Ka paroty ore kadji achĩmba wāiwĩ purā achĩmba. Gobu wāiwĩ purā ka tata pachopyre pire wi wachupa djono gobu ka achĩmbyre. Gobu ka achĩmbyre djudjama. Ka paroty ka-dji.* “We liked to ‘deceive for nothing’ in the forest, father always said. We startled the old women for no reason (*ka paroty*) in the forest and made them scream. Then an old woman was burned by the fire she mistakenly thought had been smothered when she was screaming for nothing. Then having screamed for nothing, we laughed. In the forest, we liked to startle them for nothing.”

While persons are not directly responsible for the behavior of another, they frequently scold and give commands: Parents are upbraided when their children misbehave. Adults give orders to children. My observations of mothers' interaction with their children suggested that patterns of behavior may be instilled early by attempts to secure children's compliance. A woman wishes to silence her unruly child by telling him: *Buekā ka mani-dijpa?* “Why do you make noise for no reason?”

¹¹² The corresponding term in Guaraní is *rei*. Interestingly, the Kalapalo term “*auginda*” refers not only to mistaken or incorrect speech, but also to formal speech (found in affine speech, political speech, etc.), and the concealment of certain inappropriate feelings (shame, jealousy, anger) (Basso 1988: 233; Franchetto 2007).

For this man, the firsthand descriptions given to him by his senior kin had proven so contrary to his own visual experience that he questioned the basis of their epistemic authority:

Cho āpā ka. Ore djamo-rō ka ina bupi wachu pyta nonga. Ka ina āpā fware wywy ekombabu. Djamo Awagi maĩ ka inamba. Emi djarypurā Piradjugi maĩ chā buchā fwarami bupi wachu pyta nonga wywy āpā. Ka inamba djarypurāngi ekōwe āpā fware wywy. Go ware cho kowe cho djawu djeyma.

My father spoke falsely. Our grandfathers spoke falsely when they said the Paraguayans had noses like a large bat. The fathers that had lived with Paraguayans spoke falsely. Grandfather Awagi spoke completely falsely. The late Piradjugi talked about their ugly faces when she said all the Paraguayans had noses like a large bat. The grandmothers who lived with the Paraguayans spoke falsely.

Chachugi in Hauck, Roessler, and Thompson (2019)

The focus of the speaker's evaluation of his senior kin lies in the inaccuracy of their report, in confidently reporting what must have been otherwise. And if the description of Paraguayans was unfounded, the speaker concluded, so was his previous hatred of them.

Ka would assume systematic importance in the context of Ache conversion to Christianity and took on new epistemological valences in Ache conversion narratives. The term *ka* was widely employed by new converts to dismiss all knowledge that seemingly conflicted with a God that neither they nor the missionaries had ever seen. Above all, it came to distinguish all those ideas and actions in conflict with Christianity, defining the past in general and the knowledge of seniors in particular.

7.5 Time and Narrative: Conversion Narrative, Conversion Verse

The reliance on conversion narratives to gauge the sincerity of Ache conversion opened up new problems for the NTM missionaries. Yet conversion narratives had little in common with existing indigenous speech genres, and missionaries had to teach to the Ache and request from them forms of speech that ideally, were supposed to be monologic and given willingly and spontaneously (Keane 2007). Missionaries coached Ache in the telling of conversion narratives by asking them what they enjoyed about their newly settled lives at the reservation at Cerro Moroti, and what they feared or disliked about the past.

Here is one example, recorded by one of the NTM missionaries, of a missionary's attempt to elicit a conversion narrative from a young convert:

Torāngi: mba'eicha djawuta	How will I say it?
Sammons: puka chope puka chope	Call out to me. Call out to me.
Torāngi: urygatu	I am content.
Sammons: urygatuba pikopa kowebu go nonga kiu	Are you content now? Tell me like that.
Torāngi: cho kowebu cho urygatuma. Che kowebu urygatu. Che krỹmbagatu kowebu kowebu āpā wachu djawu wenduare. Che krỹmbagatuma.	Now I have become content. Now I am content. I have become composed now. Now I am a listener of God's speech. I have become composed.

NTM Field Recordings (1978)

Ache conversion narratives, as they appeared in the autumn of 1978, dealt directly with the effects of acquiring new knowledge from God's word. Near unvaryingly,

narratives began with an opening phrase describing how the speaker was affected by hearing or otherwise incorporating God's word, an effect typically described in terms of the speaker's emotional constitution.

In this particular interaction, one NTM missionary asks the Ache speaker to provide an account of herself as a converted Christian. When the Ache speaker replies, somewhat innocuously, that she is "content," the missionary directs the speaker to the reasons why she is content *now*—and not "previously content" or "habitually content" as some enduring character trait.

Ache conversion narratives took on their temporal dimension as a backward glance from this temporal ground. The structure of each of the eight recordings of conversion narratives from 1978 that I have transcribed and translated follows this same alternating sequence between the time when they heard God's speech and a positional past (a time "before" [*nonde*] they had heard this speech) defined by senseless knowledge and fear.

Jesu Kriorō kua' a gatu idja rayrādji.
Chorō wichakrāmbu membo chullā
wyche emi.

Jesus Christ knew those who would
become his sons. When I was small,
snakes hadn't bitten me yet.

Kowebu ore ury gatuma Jesu Kritope
apepe mudjāmbu. Cho āpā emi.

Now we (exclusive) are content
when we follow the path of Jesus
Christ. My father too.

Cho eigi membo chullā wywy. Warō
gatu Jesu Krito dja rayrādjiwā go o.

Snakes never bit my mother. Jesus
Christ cared for her because she was
to be his future "son."

Kowebu ore mudjā dja ape rupi. Ore
mudjā ore kuwēandygi Jesu Krito rupi
kowebu.

Now we follow his path. We follow
after the one who cared for us, Jesus
Christ, now.

Orerō kua'allāwe nonde āpā wachupe.

We [exclusive] didn't know God
before.

Kowebu ore kuaama Jesu Krito manowe wyrā wachapyredji.	Now we know that Jesus Christ died on a wooden cross.
Gorō ore wārōandy nonde kadji ore ekōmbu. Ore kuallā Jesupe āpā wachupe emi.	He cared for us before when we lived in the forest. But we didn't know Jesus; we didn't know God.
Gorō ore ka-dji ekōmbu membo chuwe djamogi wywy membo chuwe wedjapyre kuwēandy.	When we were in the forest, God healed all the grandfathers bitten by snakes when they were left behind.
Adjawe kuwēndy kura ore ka nache'e. Jesurō go kuwēandy.	We [exclusive] thought the spirits of the ancestors healed us, but we spoke falsely. Jesus healed them.
Djypybu waiwipurā chuepurāngi ka na'a adjawerō go kuwēandy. Idja āpā manowegi-rō go kuwēandy. Go nonga naba.	Long ago, the old women and old men wrongly said that the spirits of the ancestors healed them, that their dead fathers healed them. That's what they all said.
Kuallā go Jesupe. Ka djawu waiwi purā. Go nonga na'a idja eirō go kuwēandy. Ka djawu go djarypurāngi. Go kuallā āpā wachupe djarypurāngi.	They didn't know Jesus. The old women spoke falsely. That's what they said, that the spirits of their mothers healed them. The grandmothers spoke falsely. The grandmothers didn't know God.
Djarypurāngi-rō prāndjāngi buchā kadji. Go-rō ka kua'a krei.	The grandmothers were angry in the forest. They "knew senselessly" the spirits of the ancestors.
Koweburō kua'a reko Jesu Krito manowe wyrā wachapyredji. Go mema orepe idja krei djarypurāngi emi.	Now we know Jesus died on a wooden cross. He gave his spirit to us, to the grandmothers as well.
Orerō kuallā dedji āpā wachu.	We hadn't learned of God from you [the NTM missionaries].
Nondewa djarypurāngirō ka na'a kreirō nande kuwēandy. Kuallā gogi. Ka djawu djarypurāngi. Ka djawueche djarypurāngi.	Before the grandmothers said falsely that spirits of the ancestors healed us. They didn't know that one [God]. The grandmothers spoke falsely. The grandmothers really spoke falsely.

Three points deserve particular attention here: First, the speaker makes the more general claim that the knowledge of the Ache (whether young or old) does not have the same status as God's knowledge. What is distinctive about God's knowledge is that it bridges the speaker's past, present, and future, as it includes awareness of things that the Ache did not know in the forest and knowledge of things that will eventually come to pass. God knew "those who would become his sons," and protected them in the past so they would assume that role of "future listeners of his speech" (see time and predestination).

Second, as the speaker explains, it was not their dead relatives who had protected them from sickness and accidents in the forest but a God that they had not yet known. The speaker places responsibility for this misunderstanding on senior Ache, for it was their reports of ancestral spirits – their *ka kua*, or "senseless knowledge" – that had swayed the minds of his generation.

But here we face a problem alluded to in the opening of the chapter: On what grounds did younger Ache consider their elder's past statements about ancestral spirits to be "senseless talk?" After all, God's infinite knowledge was not something that could be empirically verified, like seeing the face of a Paraguayan. In fact, this infinite knowledge had only been told to them by missionaries who had not themselves seen God. How did Ache Christians establish the undisputed existence of an entity (and the unwavering truth of that entity's knowledge) that was outside

of experience and visually removed from the world? This brings us to the third point.

The visual capacities of God were attached to the idea of omnipotence.

Nande mechällā apā wachu djawu.
Nande mechällā nande djāwe tō rekoaty
djawu nande reko. Mechällā. Nande
mechällā apā wachu.

We don't see God's speech. We don't
see us have his speech as it goes
straight into our heads. We don't see it.
We don't see God.

Āpā wachu-rō idja ray etallā
kowepe ywype bue akua
pychowe manoma nande
prāndjāwe rapawā.

God's only son here on earth
was stabbed with a sharp point;
he died to take away all our
anger.

Go rupi kowebu nande watama ra.
Nande kuama āpā wachu rupi ra.

We [inclusive] are walking
along behind him now. We
[inclusive] know to follow God.

Go idja ray etallā mewe wyra
wachapypredji manowā.

He gave his only son to die on
pieces of crossed wood.

Kowebu idja āpā chupapema emi
ni.

Now he is at his father's camp
again.

Nande mechällā.

We [inclusive] haven't seen it.

Gorō emi edjowerā kowe ywype.

He will come back again to this
land.

Nande urygatu reko āpā wachu
chupape.

We [inclusive] will be content
when God has us at his camp.

Āpā wachu chupaperō bue rywo
gatu wyra o rywo gatu tārā go.
Goperō ury gatu emi gope. Āpā
wachu chuparō kybae gatu. Go
rywo gatu reko idja chupa ruchā
gatu.

In God's camp, things are cool;
there is cool shade under the
trees there. There is happiness
there. God's camp is wonderful.
It is cool; his camp is
refreshingly cool.

Nande mechällā āpā wachu chupa.

We [inclusive] have not seen God's
camp.

Apā wachu nandepē mechāmba

God sees all of us.

Nande mechällā nande apā
wachu echedji

We can't see God's body.

Go nande mechāmba nandedji ywadji	He sees all of us from the sky.
Nande kadji nande chāwāmbu bue buchā djapochi ikō. Mechāllā kura.	In the forest, we [inclusive] did lots of bad things in the darkness. We thought we were not seen.
Mechāmba apā wachu nandepē	God sees all of us.
Kadji nande urychi ikō nande.	[Living] in the forest, we really enjoyed living in sin.
Apā wachu mechāmba nande.	God sees all of us.
Nande mechāllā.	We don't see God.
Apā wachu mechā kreydji. "A la pinta* cho rady! Bue buchā djapo."	God sees us from the sun, "Gosh, my daughter! You did something ugly/wrong."
Nande bue buchā djapobu krāndo buāwerā apā wachudji.	When we do something ugly/wrong, we pray to God.

NTM Field Recordings (1978)

7.6 The Superstition of Missionary Christianity

From the beginning of the narrative, the speaker clearly states her evidential relation to the Christian message. Jesus' death and resurrection is clearly described as something lying outside of direct (visual) experience. No Ache had witnessed the events recounted in story; neither had the missionaries directly experienced it. Yet interestingly, the speaker's lack of visual experience does *not* seem to imply any sort of skepticism about the Biblical events of sacrifice and resurrection – demonstrating a dramatic departure from the previously described evidential strategies. This is evident through two related asymmetries pointed out by the speaker: First, there is

the idea that Ache can't see God, but God can see the Ache. The speaker's lack of visual confirmation of the central events of Christian doctrine, rather than indexing her reservations about its truth-value, is instead used to separate fallible human knowledge from the global survey of God's aerial point of view. God was able to see the Ache do "bad" things that the Ache can't see among each other. The use of the adverb *ka* marks a departure from previous evidential standards, one based not on the experience of individuals but on a reality imagined through the sense of *being seen* (see Vilaça 2016: 222).

The Ache owners of the past had been evaluated on the basis of their care, whether they had "owned well" their dependents. For them, Ownership was a gradual process made concrete by gifts of food. God was a different sort of owner. God was an owner independently of any gift, of any actual relationship with an Ache. All creating, God's ownership was a priori. How could God be evaluated? All seeing, God evaluated his "sons."

Conclusion

I devoted the early months of my fieldwork to collecting kinship terms and genealogies, a task that I believed my limited Ache could handle and one that would give me a sense of the shape of relations in the community and some idea of their past. In asking for the names of kin, I mostly received evaluations of kin and the networks of relations of which they were a part. Starting at the first line of my charts, I asked one of my informants, Krachogi, the name of his father. He responded,

Cho āpā mēgatu. Mēte karē kyra ray
djurupe pypy. Waichy wywy emi.
Gaiparallā dja djary. Mēgatu buchu
wywy. Mēgatu pichu. Tatu. Goperō
mēgatuetegi. Mē ury. Go lllēllāma mēbu.

Father “gave well.” He gave coati fat to his son, putting the food into his mouth. To all his godsons too. Neither were the grandmothers skinny; he gave them beetle larvae and armadillo. He was one who really gave well. He was happy to give. My father was always hungry because he was giving to others.

Krachogi, interview (07/20/2009)

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, my questions regarding relations were inevitably met with evaluations. Krachogi began his answer by mentioning his father’s generosity to his sons. Then, as further testament to the scope of his generosity, he gives to persons at successively wider social distance from these close relatives. Through his gifts of game to pregnant women, he had become a name-giver to many children, whom he continued to nourish and protect throughout their early years. He created new relations with his gifts of game, and he honored the obligations of care that those relations entailed. He even gave to grandmothers, who

were often neglected and received poor shares when meat was distributed.

Krachogi's depiction of his father does not end with the latter's generosity. An Ache hunter aimed not only to produce in abundance; he should also consume in moderation. As Krachogi describes, perhaps with some embellishment, his father's eagerness to give left him in constant hunger. The value of consuming little did not derive merely from the fact that it allowed for a greater amount of food to share. This self-restraint was *a value in itself*, a sign of control over one's appetite. His hunger did not result in jealousy, untrammelled desire and social strife, as commonly happened when the group was short of food. His hunger was a victory over these things. Krachogi's father "gave well" (*mēgatu*). The term *gatu* (well, good) not only implies that the act of giving is subject to evaluation; it draws attention to the act of giving by evaluating it.

Over the course of the preceding chapters, I have attempted to construct a portrait of relationality amid social change. In the first part of the dissertation, I examined Ache ownership in the context of everyday life among kin, showing that choices in residence (who one "follows") were normatively limited to those who "owned" them. It was they who had grown them in the past, and it was hoped, they would provide for them in the future. Ownership brings up the question of evaluation and moral criticism, and this too has political undertones. In chapter 3, I described that a specific verbal genre of scolding that happens within ownership relations. Yet, as I showed, the risks involved in scolding show how tenuous the ownership relation can be. Relations of ownership between individuals were subject to change.

Yet the idea of ownership itself remained quite durable over a period of tumultuous social change. Ownership traversed the boundaries between close kin and distant enemies, articulating external and internal relations (Fausto 2012; Costa 2017). Whether conceiving themselves as the “sons” or “pets” of Paraguayans or the “sons” or “followers” of God, ownership provided an elastic idiom to understand the asymmetries they experienced. Of course, the idea of ownership would also undergo important changes during the settlement period (1959-1978), particularly through the influences of evangelical Christianity. In some respects, these new forms of ownership were destructive of existing forms and evaluative standards of ownerships. This had less to do with the relations Ache cultivated with the missionaries. The missionaries’ fears that giving gifts would make the Ache dependent made them poor candidates for owners. God’s ownership of humans was not only based on care but on his omnipotent authority as well. God’s ownership turned the evaluative attention from the actions of the owner to the actions of the owned. As an essential aspect of ownership, evaluation had its own history.

That history continues in the way Ache still talk about lost kin. Of course Krachogi’s estimation of his father’s worth as an owner was prompted by my interest. It does not reflect the quotidian discourse the colors daily events for the Ache today. However, it happens often enough that past relations are recalled, not as a source of desperate longing of the kind Djakugi struggled with in the introduction, but as a way to remind oneself of the pleasures of the past, the generosity of lost kin, and that people lived well in the most unforgiving of historical

circumstances. Even if the past is orphaned, it might still be taken up again, nourished and adopted.

Appendix 1

A Note on Orthography and Transcription

Ache (pronounced ah-CHAY) is one of more than forty languages in the Tupi-Guarani family, the largest indigenous language family in South America as well as the most widely spread geographically. It is further grouped among indigenous Guaranian languages, alongside Ava Guarani, Mbya Guarani, Paĩ-Kaiowa, Xeta, and Tapiete/Chiriguano (Rodrigues 1985; Michael et al. 2015). There is considerable regional variation in the Ache language with two existent dialects – Northern Ache (spoken by the subgroup around the Jujui watershed) and Ñacunday Ache (spoken by the subgroup from the headwaters of the Ñacunday River to the Monday River) and two extinct dialects – Ypety Ache (from the subgroup between the Tebicuary River and the Caazapá Cordillera) and Southern Ache (from the subgroup around the middle course of the Jakui River). The Ypety and Jakui dialects have been described by Branislava Susnik (1961; 1962) and Friedrich C. Mayntzhusen (1920; 1948), respectively. Eva Maria Roessler (2019) has extensively studied the Northern and Ñacunday varieties.

Anthropologists León Cadogan, Branislava Susnik, and the linguist Ruth Sammons of the New Tribes Mission each developed competing orthographies of the Ache language during their research.¹¹³ In this dissertation, I use a modified version of Cadogan's orthography that Ache teachers selected in a meeting on

¹¹³ Susnik (1974), for example, erroneously posits the existence of long vowels, and Sammons ignored the existence of non-nasalized voiceless stops (Roessler, personal communication).

orthography in the Chupa Pou community in January of 2009 (see Roessler 2009), and for the purposes of clarity and parsimony, I have adjusted the Ache passages I cite from other published sources to fit this standard.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Several internally consistent orthographies were developed by the linguist Eva Maria Roessler as part of a language documentation project in which Roessler, Jan David Hauck, and I participated. Ache representatives chose the particular variant I use here because it highlights the differences between Ache and Guarani.

Table 8.1 Consonants

	Bilabial	Alveopalatal	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Voiceless Stop	p		t/nt		k	ʔ
Voiced Stop	b/mb		d/nd		g/ng	
Voiceless Fricative	f					
Voiced Fricative	w					
Voiceless Affricate		ch				
Voiced Affricate		dj				
Flap			r			
Nasal	m		n			
Semi-vowel				l		

As is common for the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family, the Ache language has six oral (a, e, i, o, u, y) and six nasal vowels (ã, ê, ï, õ, ù, ÿ). Nasal vowels may modify some consonants that follow them, a phenomenon that linguists call “nasal harmony.”

Thus, the sound [b] is pronounced when it follows an oral syllable, but becomes [mb] when it follows a nasal vowel. The same is true for <d> and <t> and <g>, which is pronounced [nd] and [nt] and [ng] when it appears next to a nasal vowel. Word final nasal vowels typically affect the initial consonant of the next word.

Because nasality in Ache only affects segments in immediate proximity to the nasal vowel segment, it is weaker than most other languages in the Tupi-Guarani family, where nasality spreads in both directions until it encounters a stressed oral syllable. For more on nasal harmony, see Roessler (2009; 2019).

Table 8.2 *Vowels*

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i, ĩ	y, ÿ	u, ũ
Mid	e, ě		o, õ
Open		a, ã	

Two immediate problems arise when writing Ache. The first involves how to transcribe differences among the three existing Ache dialects. I have included textual material from these dialects in the dissertation but have not standardized these variants, so pronounced dialectical differences such as [t/ch], [w/bw], [ky/∅] are retained throughout. The second involves multi-lingual transcription. Ache, as it is currently spoken, borrows liberally from the Paraguayan Guarani spoken in the country's rural areas, and owing to different sociolinguistic situation of each language community, different dialects of Ache borrow from Guarani and Spanish at different frequencies. When transcribing borrowings from Guarani or Spanish in cases where the orthographic representation of the same sound differs between the two languages, I have chosen the Ache grapheme. Thus, the Spanish term *Kristo* becomes *Krito*. Ache words are italicized.

All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. I have tried in my translations to stay as close to Ache as possible to address the source-oriented concerns I take up at various points in this dissertation. I use brackets in translated text to give the reader a sense for what is implied but not directly encoded in a

particular utterance.

Appendix 2 Glossary of Ache Terms

I have left some Ache terms untranslated in the text, both because of their importance and the difficulty of finding accurate equivalents in English. Though the English translations of the terms below are not exact, and the reader will gain a better sense of their meaning through a consideration of their context as described in the main text of the dissertation, I think it might be helpful for readers to have some basic reference to the meaning of these Ache terms.

Adjawe	The terrestrial specter of a deceased human or animal
Djuwy (or in another dialect baiwã)	A class of diseases caused by the terrestrial souls of adjawe
Ekõandy	From ekõ, “to live or exist,” ekõandy refers to the areas frequently visited by an Ache band
Ka	An adverb that describes false, senseless, or careless actions
Krei	The celestial soul of a dead person; a shadow or reflection
Kura	To scold; a jaguar’s growl
Mě’ẽ,	To give or give something up to another
Owe	The celestial soul, literally “what is separated from the body at death”
Prãndjã	Anger; an angry, irritable, or quarrelsome person

Tā'ā

Stinginess; one who withholds something
from circulation

Appendix 3 Account of September 1973 Contact by NTM

On August 30th of 1973 on the outskirts of the town of Laurel, a Paraguayan farmer named Hilarion Vera saw a small band of seven Ache cross a forest road a short distance from his house.¹¹⁵ At the sight of the band, he pointed the barrel of his rifle upward and fired twice into the air. At the sound of the rifle blasts, “They stopped in their tracks, threw away their bows and arrows, and held up their hands” (*Aqui*, 9/21/73). After subduing the group, Vera took the Ache back to his house and fed them.

What happened next is unclear. Vera took an infant from one of the Ache, and when he sold it to a neighbor, three of the Ache fled back into the forest. One Ache couple, Krypurañgi and Eiragi, and their young son stayed at Vera’s house. Vera took the three Ache to the mayor of Laurel, who, unsure of what to do with them himself, then turned them over to the police in the city of Puerto Presidente Stroessner.

The Ache couple was released to the NTM on September 13th. Krypurañgi and Eiragi wanted to be reunited with the other members of their band, so the missionaries (Jim and Steve Stolz, Paul Heckert, and Felipe Mendoza) set off with

¹¹⁵ As Vera recalled in a newspaper interview, “We stopped the tractor, but then we pushed forward another 50 meters and saw another completely naked man run past us in the same place. [...] I shot into the air with my rifle. When the Ache saw us they began to run. I stopped the tractor and shot again into the air. Then they stopped in their tracks, threw away their bows and arrows, and held up their hands” (*Aqui*, 9/21/73).

two Ache from the reservation (Julio [Betapagi?] and Deli) to look for them in the dense forests around Arroyo Guazú.

By noon the next day, they had located the Ache camp. The missionaries stayed behind a short distance outside the camp's perimeter, while Krypūrāngi and Julio stripped off their clothes and entered the camp, so that the others could look at their bodies. Seated in the camp were eight women with their children and two old men; the men of the band were away hunting. The women and girls greeted the two Ache visitors with the "welcome of tears." They cried and massaged the bodies of the visitors from head to toe in a ritualized greeting.

"After about half an hour, [Krypūrāngi and Julio] came and told us we could go in if we took off our clothes and left our guns. We obeyed and followed them. The men sat trembling and staring. Deli, Julio, Krypūrāngi began rubbing their backs and told us to do the same." An old woman (Brikugi's mother) greeted the missionaries with ritual wailing. She cut bitter oranges and with the juice, rubbed their bodies to make them "sweet-smelling."

Several young women were sent to tell the hunters about the whites who had arrived in their camp. When they heard of the visitors, the hunters were alarmed and unsure about the whites' motives, and they did not yet know that Krypūrāngi and Eiragi had led the whites to them. As one Ache hunter, Brikugi, would later remember the event, "The women called out to us, 'The whites have come to take us!' There were a number of men (*ache*) with me. The men were very frightened. They said, '[The whites] might kill us!' Then I went to where the frightened Ache were [in the camp.] When we walked out of the forest, I was going to shoot Jim [Stolz] with

an arrow. I thought about it. I went to where the children were. I took the other men with me. Then when the women called out [to us], we moved noisily along the path that had been cut in order to scare them.”

The hunter’s aggressive entrance had its intended effect on the missionaries. “They came charging up the path like a bunch of wild pigs,” one missionary recalled. “I thought they might be going to kill us, but they lined up with bows and arrows in hand and just stared” (Heckert 1974). Jim Stolz, who had nearly been shot by Brikugi, had this to say: “The band of hunters surrounded us and threatened us with their arrows, while forcefully hitting the ground with their bows, leaving a strong and unforgettable impression on us. But soon thereafter, the old woman talked to them and managed to convince them that we had arrived as friends with the intention of helping them” (Stolz 1973).

After the tensions had subsided between the hunters and missionaries, the hunters shared with them roasted game – a coati, agouti, armadillo, and several Amazona parrots – with a cake made from palm fiber. The Ache wanted to see if the whites ate the same things as they did. “We asked [the missionaries], ‘Will you eat parrots?’ Felipe [Mendoza], because he was Paraguayan, knew how to eat animals. He roasted the parrots on sticks. We roasted them and gave them to everyone (Brikugi in Sammons 1987: 21-22).

After they had eaten, the missionaries spoke with the beleaguered band through one of the Ache from the mission who understood by Ache and Guarani. Jim Stolz described the next few hours in the camp: “We spent that afternoon and evening there with them, during which time the young Guayaki that accompanied us told

them what life was like in the Colony, that we wished to help them – which we could do in the Colony – so that those who wanted could go with us, upon which all of them did” (Stolz 1973). In the early morning of the 16th, the group carried the sick Ache several kilometers from the camp through thick canebreaks to the road where the missionaries’ had left their truck.

While the newly contacted Ache were “content” with what the missionaries had told them, they were still mistrustful of the “strange” Ache the missionaries had brought with them from the reservation, some of whom had been their traditional enemies. The situation, as one newly contacted Ache man would recall, was tense, and at one point, nearly broke into violence. When the group flushed a covey of curassows, one of the (enemy) reservation Ache raised his shotgun to shoot one. Brikugi told one of the reservation Ache: “Don’t shoot your gun. We will shoot you with arrows if you do.” His threat had its intended effect on them. As Brikugi recalled, “He knew it. If he had shot the gun, I would have killed him with arrows by the road. I would have probably killed the man (*ache*), I would have shot him with arrows” (Brikugi in Sammons 1987: 22).

At the road, the Ache women climbed into the flatbed of the missionaries’ Dodge Power Wagon and rode several hours to the colony. It would be the next day before the missionaries could return for the men. The men would later recall their uneasiness as they waited for the truck to return. They wondered if the whites would take the women away, never to be seen again, just as the Paraguayan had taken the child four weeks earlier. Brikugi would later say: “We didn’t know the Ache’s place here [Cerro Moroti]. They might have been taking us somewhere else”

(interview 10/13/17). But by midnight on the 17th these concerns were allayed as they were reunited with the women. The group, which numbered 46 people, spent their first night at the mission.

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