

CONSTRUCTION OF GENDERS IN PILAGÁ MYTHOLOGY (CHACO CENTRAL)

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Introduction

Myth is a fertile arena for several disciplines, which focusing on different aspects, reveal the complexity and multiplicity of possible readings. I found this assertion in the comparative, phenomenological and symbolic outlooks made by historians of religions (Eliade 1972; van der Leeuw 1964; Sullivan, 1988), by philosophers (Cassirer 1971; Gusdorf, 1968, and others) and by anthropologists (Bórmida 1969/80; Geertz 1980; Jenen, 1966, Leenhardt 1961, among many others; also the structuralist contributions (Levi-Strauss, 1972 a and b, and 1976; Descola 1986; Magaña 1988, among others), and by the more modern productions aimed at revealing the relationship between myth and history (Bartolomé 1976; Gauss 1981; Hill 1988; Sahlins 1981; Turner 1988).

Among the Argentine Chaco Pilagá Indians there are many very well known and recurrent themes and cycles associated both with cultural heroes and saviours and with tricksters. In the present case I shall explore two narratives in which the apparition of women and the construction of the genders are the central episodes of the plot. I refer to the myth about the origin of women and their integration into the primeval society, and to the one that explains the ascribing of menstruation to the feminine ambit.

The Pilagá Indians are a **Guaycuran** speaking group, living in various independent villages settled in the of Bermejo and Patiño Departaments (Formosa Province, Argentine Republic) Traditionally they were organized into semi nomad bands, the social structure was -according to Murdock (1949)'s categories- that of matridemes. The main production activities used to be hunting and fishing and gathering of wild fruit and honey.

In terms of methodology, I follow a phenomenological approach that explores the meanings, the experiences, and the contents of consciousness (Husserl 1949) involved in the mythical themes analyzed. This method, at first, implies the reduction or put into brackets of theoretical knowledge, traditional ideas and representations, pragmatic dispositions, and emotional understandings (Husserl 1949; Merleau Ponty, 1969). It involves reducing what Schütz (1972) called the domain of common sense, meaning the sum of experiences, knowledge, practices and meanings that are familiar e immediate for the investigator, because are his culture, which is inter-subjectivity shared with the people of his society. The sense and need for locating brackets lies in accessing, without preconceived ideas, to the meanings the actions and phenomena from the point of view social actors as contents of consciousness. These contents are perceptions, representations, knowledge and emotions, in other words, the individual lived experiences. In methodological terms, the topic under analysis requires carrying out a careful phenomenalism of the meanings, actions and emotions that

the social actors live in relation to the myth, the differences between genders, possible unions, and the impracticable ones. The phenomenal description requires take into account all of the aspects structurally associated to the phenomenon under consideration, and therefore presupposes an ethnography of the native cultural consciousness, it means the inter subjective -individual- contents of consciousness. In a second moment, the phenomenological perspective, call for new to reduction -the eidetic reduction- in order to reach the essence of the phenomenon (Husserl 1949). It is necessary to place into brackets all those aspects of the phenomenon that are secondary or accessory, the essence refers those aspect that make the phenomenon what it is, its structure of meaning, which is independent from the concrete and historical manifestations structure.

I consider myth as a key of cultural meanings, as a referential model, an actual true narrative, and at same time, meta-temporal, a guide for action capable of incorporating historical events by mythifying them in accordance with the thought structures or the “received categories” of the native societies.

The present paper is based on original material collected during numerous fieldworks that I conducted between 1972 and 1995. On those occasions the mythographical information was tape-recorded from qualified informants; this material was literally transcribed. In the Appendix appear several versions of the narratives analyzed in this paper. At the foot of each one are the informants’ and translator’s names, in that order. The aboriginal voices’ graph has been adapted to Spanish; nevertheless, the following explanations are necessary: k) muffled velar occlusive, q) muffled uvular occlusive, G) fricative pharyngeal, y) semi-consonant or semi-vowel alveolar-palatal not rounded, w) semi-consonant or semi-vowel labiovelar rounded.

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Woman, myth and the origin of the genders

Broadly speaking, in the Pilagá society mythical episodes tell of the creation and setting up of the present world, of the introduction of rules, values and customs, of the breaking away from certain edenic aspects (such as immortality), of the trickster’s foibles -whose actions are the archetype of chance, of the ridiculous and of the limits between what is allowed and what is forbidden-, also of the elimination of terrifying beings carried out by the savior hero, and of topics dealing with contact with the white man. This type of narrative is conceived as contact mythology (Bartolomé 1976; Idoyaga Molina 1996 and 2000).

Regarding the feminine ambit, outstanding is the narrative of the integration of women into the primeval society¹. Indeed, initially women lived in the sky and only occasionally came down to the earth plane to steal food that men consumed which was the product of their hunting and fishing activities. To put an end to the stealing, the men left a guard; at first they left Rabbit² who would go to sleep and was incapable of providing any information as to the identity of who was doing the

¹ For the versions given by the natives among the Pilagá, see Idoyaga Molina, 1986/87: versions collected among the Mataco Indians (another native group from Great Chaco region) may be seen in Alvarsson, 1983 and Pérez Diez, 1983; many versions obtained among the different Argentine Chaco groups, and that have not been analyzed, may be seen in Wilbert and Simoneau, 1982 a and b, 1989.

² Primeval man’s image in the myth oscillates and is ambiguous. On the one had, the myth underlines that they are men, that they are people and as such carry out economically productive activities such as hunting and fishing which are characteristic of humans, while on the other, they have animal names and many details recall an animal morphology (Idoyaga Molina 1986/87: 170-71). On morphology and the human quality, see also Idoyaga Molina, 1988.

stealing. Later, Parrot is put on guard and sees the women who fed themselves through their vagina instead of their mouth, but when he tries to call his companions, one of the women throws a firebrand at him and this is why today, parrots have black mouths and have difficulty in speaking. Finally, men leave Sparrow Hawk on guard; he is a powerful man who identifies the women and cuts the rope by which they descended from the sky and thus, some women fell to earth and others fled to the heavenly vault where they are visible today under the appearance of stars.

The men take the women to themselves but are afraid to fornicate because of the vaginal teeth. At that moment, the cultural hero and trickster (*Wayayqaglachigi*) offers to carry out the first intent, and copulating loses his penis and testicles, organs which he replaces by making a phallus from *palo santo* (*Bulnesia Sarmientii*) -which, because of its hardness, is associated to the men erections- and testicles from the fruit of the *chañar* tree. The men, -sometimes a shaman- cause an intense cold so that the women come close to the fire and expose their vaginal teeth which are destroyed when the men throw stones on them. In other versions, *Wayayqaglachigi* takes upon himself the task and in order to break the vaginal teeth, has intercourse with all the women, resting the clitoris as a remain of the transformation process. Sex was too prolonged because men had dogs' penises and vice versa, therefore, they interchanged their sexual organs, conferring on coitus its present characteristics. Men and women are joined in marriage and begin to human reproduction. Since Sparrow Hawk takes two wives he establishes polygyny associated to the chieftaincy. Moreover, infantile mortality originates because the first to bear children was Dove (whose young die easily). This episode tells of how the matrilocal family is generated and also of the sexual division of work.

Furthermore, it is current to attribute to the cultural hero *Dapichi*' the contribution with the physiological changes that gave rise to present day humans. According to this other myth, in primeval times it was the men who menstruated; the cultural hero considered this inconvenient so he arranged that from then on periods were to be a feminine attribute (Idoyaga Molina 1990).

The first narrative -which I have summarized- explains how present society was conformed, integrating men and women. Myth also refers several motives dealing with the construction of the genders, going from body transformations to assigning behavior, values and activities.

Integration of women and definition of the genders may be described as a gradual and progressive humanization and socialization process. At the beginning, women are described as odd and dangerous: they are inhabitants of the celestial sphere, they possess vaginal teeth that prevent copulation and reproduction and they are unsociable since they steal the men's food instead of contributing to the productive activities and maintenance of the home. Although the men live in the correct plane -the terrestrial one- and perform activities incumbent to them -such as hunting and fishing- they also manifest themselves as odd and unsociable, since they live alone and perform feminine tasks such as cooking, carrying water and wood, and caring for the hut.

Morphological changes include assigning menstruation to woman and the transformation of toothed vaginas -what permits feeding by the mouth- and basically, having sexual relations and the consequent pregnancy. These physiological changes have a profound social significance since it allows for marriage and establishing a family. Regarding construction of masculinity, transformation involves erection of the penis, exchange of genital organs between men and dogs allowing for -in the view of the Pilagá- an adequate duration of the coitus.

With regard to behavior and values, in the myth the family is defined as the reproductive unit of the society, it is established the feminine condition of the pregnancy to, it is defined the roles of both sexes distinguishing and ascribing the task to maintain the home and care of the children. The extended uxorilocal family explains the prevalence of matri-focal kinship in the integration of the family wherein the mother-grandmother takes on the role of distributor of goods and food not only in the bosom of the family but also in connection with reciprocal rules in relation to other families and to the shamans of the village. Topics of minor relevancy are also mentioned such as the need to satisfy the sexual requirements of the spouses.

Taking into account etiological aspects, copulation and procreation are instituted in myth as well as the masculine and feminine roles in social life, the family and the raising of children. In the myth appears too the risks of infantile mortality, it is established both the polygynia in association with chieftaincy and the positive appraisal of conjugal fidelity. It should be made clear that the roles in raising the children are not more of a burden for the wife than for the husband; for example, in the case of separation the children remain in the custody and care of the father (Idoyaga Molina 1981). This is because the father is the real maker of the child, the Pilagá claims that pregnancy is originated only for the action of male sperm, what makes the fathers the *loGot* (owner) of the child. *LoGot* refers a social and power nexus inherent to all relation between beings and entities in the Pilagá world view (Idoyaga Molina 1995). It is for this nexus that the father is responsible for socialization and remains in charge of the offspring when separation occurs. On the other hand, the narrative explains the presence of certain stars in the skies: these are the women who could go back since they were positioned above the point where the rope was cut.

To summarize, the narrative referred to shows a primeval woman not altogether human as may be seen by her morphology, her customs and the ambit in which she lives, who becomes a sexual partner, wife, mother, the center of a kinship that joins nuclear families to conform an extended uxori-local family. Besides women become the distributors of goods and the performer of productive and social activities such as gathering wild fruits, carrying water and wood, cooking and caring for the children. Normally, women are wives and mothers in a monogamous family, although a woman can be part of a polygynical union if she marries the village chieftain.

In this sense, myth defines the practicable and possible unions, the ones between the beings that have humanized. The counterpoint of this message is clear in the myth of the Star-Woman referring the significances of impracticable unions and the meanings of possible nexuses with human and non human beings.

The last narrative reveals the attempt at a union between the Star-Woman and an ordinary man³. The differences that render the union impossible are evident at the corporal, social and cosmic levels (Idoyaga Molina 2004). On the morphological plane the condition of non human or, in other words, the otherness of Star-Woman is denoted in her extraordinary beauty, her white pigmentation, in the coldness of her hands and in her metamorphosis capacity that allows her to alternately assume the appearance of a light and of a woman. With regard to mastering social attitudes and evaluations, the Star-Woman is clean and powerful, the dirt among which humans usually live bothers her; she does not interact in daily life since during the daytime she takes on the appearance of a brilliant light and she is only a nocturnal lover who from time to time abandons her man and her own dwelling place to return to the sky which is a strange and inaccessible space for human beings (Idoyaga Molina 2004). It is clear that the Star Woman is the opposite of a real woman, who shares the daily situations and the social life with village's people, who goes out to collect wild fruit with the other women, carries water and wood daily to her home, who is the mother of children and forms a family, who remains in the house of her parents' in their village and integrates her husband to the extended family. Regarding the cosmic aspects, the myth of the Star-Woman indicates that the earth level is not adequate for the Star and that the firmament is especially harmful for humans. According to Pilaga believes the space of the village is a human and safe ambit, the sky is spatial-otherness, as may be thought by the cold prevailing there⁴, and in the absence of fire. Both of them causes of the death of the young man when he follows his wife to the heaven

³ Several versions (transcribed literally) and an analysis of this myth may be seen in Idoyaga Molina, 2004. On the etiological plane, the narrative tells of the introduction into the primeval society of certain plants that are suitable for cultivation. These are the plants grown by the natives who practice horticulture on cleared land, and which is of little value in their diet.

⁴ The Pilagá people maintain that the coldness of the heavenly vault may be proved empirically by the fact that dew, frost and hail which come from there, are cold (Idoyaga Molina 1989).

(Idoyaga Molina 2004). The alterity condition of the sky is obvious also if it is considered the non human nature of the beings living there⁵.

If fire is a symbol of culture, of controlling nature, its absence in the sky -as well as the extreme cold- connote the otherness of this cosmic space, and also the non human condition of the beings dwelling there. The lack of fire also prevents the appropriate treatment of corpses by incineration, a fact that underlines the dangerousness of that ambit. Contrariwise, in the myth of the integration of primeval women, the use of fire is the trick that allows the men to break the vaginal teeth, thus contributing to the humanization and socialization process of woman.

The Star-Woman myth strengthens the message of the myth referring to the origin of women because the episode of the Star-Woman shows and warns about the fascination caused by strangers, about the extraordinary loves, about the danger of the other beings, about the unions breaking the rules of marriage, it means between humans and *deme* exogamous, but within their own ethnic group. In the narrative of the Star Woman, the union is founded on passion love, on sexual desire, and the contents that make unions dominated by eroticism and emotional instability⁶ (Idoyaga Molina 2004). It is a case of attitudes and values that are opposed to those of marriage, which is supposed to be a stable and lasting union, in which sex and eroticism take second place in relation to having a family and caring for the children (*ibidem*).

The message of the narrative is to show the impossibility of unions between humans and deities, and the type of tie that it is feasible to have with mythical beings and with humans. In short, emotional unions and matrimony ascribing to the nexuses between men and women, while the nexus with mythical are limited to the culturally prescribed⁷.

The narrative of the Star-Woman through a negative archetype⁸ speaks of the practicable unions and marriages that are between humans, and more precisely between Pilagá natives, observing the *deme* exogamy. Thus, this myth's message strengthens the message transmitted by the narrative on the origin of women. The latter tells of a process of humanization and integration of men and women who constitute the key pieces in human society. The manner in which the episode of the Star-Woman backs this message is that of an inverted plot since it is centered on stressing the impossibility of unions and marriages of human beings with beings of another nature (Idoyaga Molina, 2004).

The Star-Woman is the opposite archetype of the indigenous woman in her daily living, her way of life and her appearance. In any case, The Star-Woman is the non woman, as also are the white women and, in general, women of other ethnic groups with whom it is not allowed neither

⁵ Native cosmology distinguishes between human spaces and non-human spaces or *payák* as they say in Pilagá (Idoyaga Molina 1985a). On the earth plane the village and the hut are human ambits while the non-human or *payák* are the forest, the countryside, the river, the marshes. Are also *payák* the beings and entities that dwell in non-human spaces. The heavenly vault and the sub world -the other two levels of the cosmos- are also non-human or *payák* as are the beings that inhabit them. In this sense, all the mythical characters are *payák*, otherness, not human and potentially dangerous; their quality or nature is opposed to the human quality of people (Idoyaga Molina 1995).

⁶ Among the Pilagá there is sexual freedom before marriage; it is usual for young people to carry on many unstable unions, to change partners continually, to go to dances at night, specially dressed up for the occasion and to spend a great deal of their time seducing. When men and women behave that way, it is called being *sanamañi*, an expression we could translate as being easily infatuated and emotionally unstable. It is understood that this type of behavior is only appropriate among young people who are as yet unmarried (Idoyaga Molina 1999b).

⁷ The tie between humans and mythical beings includes the deities cooperating with regard to the success of specific activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering, amorous magic, shamanism and, in general, everything that is important in the native life (Idoyaga Molina 1995).

⁸ A negative archetype is used in the sense of its expressing what it is not possible to do.

convenient to marry; on the contrary, the Pilagá woman is the physical and cultural archetype of the feminine being⁹.

Conclusions

To sum up, the myths speak of the constitution of the genders, of the humanization and socialization process that women and men had to go through to provide the basis and origin of the present order in relation to physical appearance, sex, reproductive capacity, preferred and prescribed matrimony, sexual division of work, constitution of the family, polygyny associated with chieftainship, infantile mortality and assigning tasks incumbent to each gender.

In the narrative on the origin of women, the account refers openly to the women, her humanization process and to the construction of the genders, while in the case of the Star-Woman, the myth speaks of woman through a mythical figure, through the otherness, the opposite of human, and lists why it is inappropriate and inconvenient to be joined to a being that is not a woman. Thus, real woman is restricted to the ethnic group, and the rules prescribing marriage.

From the perspective of gender, these myths speak of the position woman into indigenous society, which is not of subordination one but rather of power. As Leacock (1981) has noted in a large number of aboriginal societies, women position is of equilibrium one respect to the men.

Appendix

The Origin of Women (1st version)

“There were some fishermen and they collected a lot of fish but somebody was stealing it from them. So they decided to leave someone keeping watch and chose a hare. People went fishing because before they were all persons. Before, rabbit, pichi (armadillo), mulita (armadillo), quirquincho (armadillo), lechiguana (a kind of bee), were men. After keeping watch a while, the hare went to sleep. Because he’s a sleepy-head, no wonder the creature is asleep now. But when he wakes up he’s very fast. While Hare slept, the women came down from the sky and took away all the food. After a while the fishermen came back and asked the man who stayed behind, who had stolen the fish, but Hare said he didn’t know because he had been busy. He lied to them; he said he had been looking for things and that maybe it was stolen from him when he wasn’t there. The fishermen roasted some more fish and looked for another watchman, someone more reliable. They chose the Parrot. The men left immediately. The Parrot went up a tree. After a while a noise could be heard, coming nearer all the time. A gang of women appeared, coming down on a long chain. They came down and ate all the fish. They didn’t eat through their mouth but through their vagina because it had teeth. The parrot saw a woman and screamed and frightened the woman. But the women came and threw a firebrand at the parrot.

The last woman told him to open his mouth, which he did and she threw a firebrand inside it so that it turned black and that is why a parrot’s mouth is now black. After that, the parrot couldn’t speak well because his tongue had turned very hard. Before, he was a person. The men came back and asked him but he couldn’t talk, all he could do was make signs because his tongue had become hard so no one could understand what he was saying. Once more they brought fish and began to

⁹ The story of the Star Woman is a common theme among the indigenous groups of the Argentine Chaco. In one version of the Mataco Indians or *Wichi*, the unequalled beauty of the Star-Woman enabled the young mother when she saw her, to know that she wasn’t in the presence of a human but of a being of another nature, a deity (Idoyaga Molina 1988: 86).

roast it. The next day they looked for a person whom they could leave to watch it. It had to be a person who knew a lot, who had power. So the Sparrow-Hawk stayed to keep watch. When they were leaving the Sparrow-Hawk said to them: ‘When you hear me yelling it’s because I am about to catch those who steal our roast. After a while Sparrow-Hawk hears a laugh and it’s because the women are close by. When the women arrive, they see Sparrow Hawk and are frightened. One of them says: ‘Look there’s a person on the stick.’ Some women beat him but Sparrow-hawk covers himself well. The prettiest woman says she is cross because they are throwing things at him. While they are throwing things, Sparrow Hawk cuts the chain with a stick and tells the chain to fall straight, so that it breaks right in the middle. That’s why half the women escaped and went back up to the sky while the others fell to earth. Sparrow Hawk came down from the tree and started to yell. While the people were fishing, old quirquincho (armadillo) said: ‘I hear screams’. But the people take no notice of him because the water also makes a noise and the fishermen couldn’t hear. They don’t believe the old man. Afterwards, the people say: ‘Let’s see who can hear’. The iguana, who was also a male, hears the scream. But the people say: ‘no, he certainly can’t hear, he has little plugs in his ears. And they go back to fishing. Afterwards they stop working and hear the scream. So they all go rushing towards the camp. There was a piece of leather on a trunk, and the iguana goes in there, and *Wayayqaláchigi* (the trickster) who came last, also goes in. The iguana rushed out but *Wayayqaláchigi* stayed because he could see the leather of the iguana. There was a snake in the path, the people were frightened so then the quirquincho came and passed by the other side, the snake bit him but didn’t get through the leather and broke a number of his teeth. That’s why the *yarará* snake was left with only two teeth, the quirquincho broke his others, before he had a lot of teeth. When the people got there, there were a lot of women; some had been lassoed by Sparrow Hawk. They had got inside the ground, so then the quirquincho began to dig and brought one out, but they took her away from him, he digs again and brings out another woman and they also take her from him, he digs again and again, and they always take her from him. He wants a woman for himself, but they all take her away from him. He keeps on digging and strikes one in the eye with his finger and leaves her blind in one eye because the quirquincho’s nails are very sharp. That’s how the last woman he brought out for himself was blinded in one eye which is why there are one-eyed persons. Then they start thinking who will be the first to have relations with a woman, because they have teeth in their vagina. First *Wayayqaláchigi* offers to do so, but when he started fornicating with the woman she swallowed his penis and testicles. Since *Wayayqaláchigi* is powerful, he rushed off and took a piece of fruit from a *chañar* tree (*Geoffroea decorticans*) and a piece of wood of *palo santo* tree (*Bulnesia Sarmientii*) and made himself a penis with holy wood stick and testicles with the fruit. Daybreak came the following day and they made a big fire. The women came close and stood with their legs wide apart so their vagina was clearly visible, and *Wayayqaláchigi* came and threw stones at their vagina and broke the women’s teeth. After they removed the teeth, a man fornicated with a woman but took a long time and couldn’t remove his penis. But the men said this wasn’t a good thing because it took four hours to fornicate with the woman. So they decided to give the penis they had to the dogs and to take those of the dogs for themselves. That is the reason why dogs now are a long while copulating. Then they try again and now it takes only a little while which is good. After a bit, the next day, Dove’s wife gives birth to a child, but it is born dead which is why there are a lot of still infant mortality now. This is the story of the beginning, now there are woman and the people are content, men have wives, a woman has a husband, the wife has children, the whole family. That’s the story of the fishermen. There are women thanks to Sparrow Hawk”. (Sebastián Gómez, Laureano Gómez) Pozo de Navagán.

The Origin of Women (2nd version)

“Before, there were men who were hunters. There were only men. In the evening they would return to the camp and always bring a lot of food. Then they roasted the meat and left it stowed away in the camp. But someone came and stole it, so they chose a watchman. The rabbit, who was

like a youth at that time, offered to do the watching. So the men leave. At around twelve noon the rabbit lies down under the shade of a tree to sleep. At that time women didn't live in these parts, they came from the sky. They came, came down and ate the roasted meat. But they didn't eat through their mouth, they ate through their vagina. The women ate everything and went back to the sky while the rabbit slept. Afterwards the people came back and didn't find the roasted meat because the women had eaten it. Then they asked the watchmen if he had seen who ate all they had left. The rabbit didn't know who had eaten it. The people went to sleep that night and the next day they went away again. The Parrot said: "I'll stay". Parrot stays spying from the top of a tree. Around twelve, the women come once again. When the women see the parrot, they throw stones at him. One woman calls him and says: "Parrot, open your mouth". The Parrot opens his mouth and they throw a stone at him and break his jawbone. The parrot opened his mouth and it remained completely black. He couldn't speak, he spoke and one couldn't understand what he said. When the hunters asked him, the parrot put his hand in and said they came from the sky. Then the Chieftain knew they came from the sky. The next morning they left once more and Sparrow Hawk stayed. After a while the women came down again. And they started to eat. The women came down by a big chain. Then Sparrow Hawk flew to where the chain was and cut it with a stick. The women fell but didn't remain on the ground. They buried themselves under the earth; one could just see their hair. The men came back and one of them called quirquincho, whose nails were big and who was old, started to dig. He put his nail into the eye of one of them and that is why there are one-eyed persons today. The women didn't die because they sank. The quirquincho got them out from inside the ground and now all the young men are married. But they were afraid of copulating because women had teeth into the vagina. The chieftain asked who would like to try and *Wayayqaláchigi* offered to do so. When he starts to fornicate, the woman swallows *Wayayqaláchigi*'s penis and testicles. Then, there on the spot, he makes himself a penis from *palo santo* tree -holy wood. Afterwards there is a strong frost, they make a fire and the women sit down. At that moment, they throw stones at them and break their teeth. That night the chieftain calls everyone and asks who is going to be the first to try as now they have nothing. At night they are all happy because now they can copulate. After a month the women are pregnant. Some time later, the child is born and the people are happy. Now women eat only through their mouth, and the men did not cook the food anymore, the women started doing it. Sparrow Hawk who was the chieftain took two women because he was the Indian Chief, the chieftain. The first child was born dead because it was the child of the Dove. When a dove has its young many of them die. If the first to be born had been the child of *Wayayqaláchigi*, then it would have lasted. That is why sometimes children last and sometimes they don't last. They don't last because the first to copulate and give birth was the dove. (Saité, Orlando) Soledad.

The origin of women (3rd version)

"Before, there were no women here, just men. There were people who went fishing, and they had a lot of cooked fish in their house. Once, when they came back, there was no more fish where they had kept it. They started to follow the trail to see who had stolen it, but there were no trails to be found. When the people went to fish again, they left someone to keep watch. After about two hours, three hours, close on eleven o'clock, he heard a noise. It was a woman laughing, but the sound wasn't clear, not at all clear, he couldn't tell where the noise was coming from. It came from the sky. The man remained hidden, keeping very quiet, and only women came. They ate the roast fish and they took it up to the sky. The women went up and came down by a rope. The man hiding already knew that they came from the sky. When the women were going up with the roast fish, the man came out of his hiding place and pulled the rope with a stick and cut it. The women who were behind fell, the ones further up escaped. The women fell inside the ground as if it were a hole. The man who was being watchman told the other men. Before, *mulita*, *quirquincho*, eagle, were all like men, Sparrow Hawk cut the rope and the *quirquincho* came and started to dig the ground. He

brought out a woman and someone came and took her, then another and someone else came and took her and so on all the time. In that way, all of them had a woman, each one their own. But since those women had teeth in their vagina, the people wondered how they were going to manage to fornicate. Then along came *Wayayqaláchigi*. *Wayayqaláchigi* tried and the woman swallowed the penis and the testicles. So he started to look for some fruit to make himself testicles, and a piece of *palo santo* tree (holy stick) to make himself a penis. He chose *palo santo* wood because it is very hard, then he fornicated with some women he could break their teeth. There was an old man who was a *pi'yoGonáq*, (shaman), *oykyaGáyk*, (powerful) who made it rain very hard and made the weather very cold. So the women made a fire and came close to it with their legs wide apart, so that the teeth of the ones who still had them could be seen. Then the man who was the *pi'yoGonak* called a stone because it had secrets (shaman's helpers and power) and told it to get into the women's vaginas to cut their teeth. When all the teeth had been taken out the men said they must try the women¹⁰. One man tried and things worked out well. The next day his young came out, but it was born dead. Ringdove's offspring came out dead. Afterwards other offspring came out well. That is why there are infant mortality now". (Francisco Rubio, Laureano Gómez). Pozo de Navagán.

The origin of women (4th version)

"At the beginning there were only men on this earth, there were no women. They always went out hunting, they caught a lot of animals and they roasted them and kept them. But it happened that one day when they came back they realized that their roast had been stolen, the same thing happened the following day and this went on every day. They didn't know who was stealing it. They decided to leave a watchman to catch the person who was stealing the roast. So they leave the iguana. The men go out hunting again. Then suddenly the iguana shouts to warn the people about who was stealing the roast. But the men say they mustn't take any notice because the iguana can't hear well, and they go on hunting. When they get back, the iguana asks them why they took no notice of him, some women had been taking the roast. They came from the sky. But the men don't believe him. The next day they go out hunting again and leave the armadillo because they don't trust the iguana. The armadillo says that when he finds those who steal, he will shout. After a while the armadillo shouts, so the men return to the camp. The Sparrow Hawk who has more power than the others, cuts the rope that the women come down by, and the women fall to the ground, inside the ground. The armadillo begins to dig and grabs one, but his nail hits the woman's eye and breaks it so that she is left one-eyed. So that if it weren't for the armadillo, there wouldn't be any one-eyed person. The armadillo gets the women out and the young men can now marry, but they are afraid, because they have teeth in their vagina. So *Wayayqaláchigi* comes along and decides to try a woman, but the woman cuts his penis and testicles. Then *Wayayqaláchigi* looks for the fruit of a *chañar* tree and makes himself some new testicles. He makes the penis from wood of *palo santo* tree. Then he takes some stones and throws them at the women and breaks their teeth. Now they are ready to fornicate. And as *Wayayqaláchigi* made his penis from *palo santo* tree (holy stick), until today penises stay hard for fornicating". (Ramona, Alberto Yanciz) Pozo Molina.

The origin of women (5th version)

"At the beginning there were some men who lived alone without women. The men always went out hunting. They prepared the meat and left it roasted. One day, when they returned there was nothing, someone had stolen it. So they left a hare on guard so that he could see who stole the roast. When the women came down, the hare had started to have his nap so that he didn't see anything. When the men came and asked him, he didn't know a thing. The next day they went out again and the parrot kept watch. When the women see the parrot they start hitting him with a stick, one grabs a stone and hits him right on the mouth. When the hunters get back and ask the parrot who

had stolen the roast, the parrot could no longer speak clearly. Then the Sparrow Hawk was the watchman. The women came from the sky coming down by a rope. Then the Sparrow Hawk throws a stick at the rope and it breaks, so that the women fall and sink into the ground. If it hadn't been for that, no woman would die. The sparrow hawk started to shout to warn the men. The iguana hears put the people don't believe him because they say the iguana can't hear well and that another creature had shouted. Sparrow Hawk goes on shouting and now the rest of the men hear him and go rushing back to the camp. On the way they find a snake, then the armadillo comes because he has a thick shell. When the snake bites the armadillo, he breaks his teeth, so then they can all pass by. As they were buried, the armadillo begins to dig. He brings one out and someone comes and takes her, he gets another out and they take her away from him. As he is fed up with having them taken away from him, he brings out another and sticks his nail into her eye, so then they don't take that one away from him. When the frost starts, they light a fire and the women come near to get warm, so then they throw stones at their vagina and break the teeth. If it weren't for that, today it wouldn't be possible to fornicate with the women. At night the men are happy, now they can fornicate with the women. But the men's penis was like that of the dog, so that they took a long time to finish fornicating. But that wasn't suitable so then along comes *Wayayqaláchigi* and changes the men's penis for dogs'. Then man finishes in a little while, but dogs take a long time now, they stay hooked together". (Ceferino, Pucho González) Campo del Cielo.

Dapichi' is the one to cause menstruation and coitus

"We are men. Before were like women, blood came out of us (menstruation). First it came out of men, and now out of women who were changed. *Dapichi'* didn't like men to have it, and afterwards he changed it (transferred it) to woman. *Dapichi'* said: "Alright, you must touch bottoms (copulate) for a while". He left then as though they were a female dog and a dog, locked together; they spent an hour, afterwards they satisfied and stopped; that's what we were like before. Here is another of *Dapachi'*'s stories. *Dapachi'* said: "Now you are not animals, you are men, you are women. If the lady calls, go and fornicate a while, that is for men". So the man fornicated a little while, and left off, he was satisfied. Now things have changed, that being hooked together, they gave to the dog (*piók*), That is *Dapachi'*'s story; the way we were before, now they have transferred it to dogs, because man no longer gets hooked up". (Saité, Orlando) Soledad.

Payák

It is the condition or nature of non human beings, deities, and the deaths are *payák*. Sometimes it is said the shamans and witches also turn into *payák* during their initiation; animals and plants of the backwoods are also *payák* and finally, any object which appears strange, different or shows power are *payák*. *Payák* is the different powerful other, it means the otherness that is potentially dangerous (Idoyaga Molina, 1985a).

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