THE SISTER WHO MARRIED A PUMA. A MYTHIC STORY OF THE RANQUELES.

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Present research in the Mapuche language carried out in Colonia Emilio Mitre, Chalíteo department, Province of La Pampa, Argentina, has yielded a number of oral testimonies that enable us to obtain a closer look at that community's world view—the last Ranquel group remaining in Argentina. The text that we are going to consider in this paper is a contribution not only to Pampean oral literature but also to our understanding of Ranquel culture change throughout their history.

The elderly woman who told us the story, Juana Cabral de Carripilón, was born in the Colonia in 1915. She is a housewife, and weaves objects of folk arts and crafts. During her childhood and adolescence she had little contact with the whites. She never attended school, but she is bilingual.

The Colonia was founded in 1900 as Colonia Pastoril, and some Ranquel families who had survived the Conquest of the Desert were confined to it. Among those families were the parents and grandparents of Juana Cabral. Their original home was La Blanca, a place about 100 miles from the Colonia in the site of Leubucó, an old permanent settlement of the Ranqueles.

At Colonia Emilio Mitre the Ranquel community developed a new cultural identity based on resistance and strategies for survival. The Colonia is located in the arid zone of Central Argentina, by the River Chátillevuí, an area of dunes, scanty rainfall (12 inches per year) and shrubby xerophyte vegetation. The Colonia occupies nearly 200,000 acres, subdivided into farms of about 180 acres each, the economic unit being something less than 15,000 acres. The settlers devote themselves to an economy of subsistence, mainly to the raising of goats, with little modern technology and a constant impoverishment of the soil. Far from being attracted by this zone, the people feel rather expelled from it.

Houses and pens are built of materials found at the place. Water is obtained from wells or pits. Some laborers cultivate orchards that produce squash, corn, melons, and other vegetables. Everybody raises chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Hunting is practiced in order to procure meat, feathers, and hides, the principal game being foxes, ostriches, and armadillos. Wild fruit is gathered, and ostrich or duck eggs afford variation in everyday diet.

The people of the Colonia travel to the small town of Santa Isabel, about 10 miles from the Colonia, or to Victorica (90 miles), or to Santa Rosa, the provincial capital (about 180 miles) for business related to health, education and other matters.

1 The province of La Pampa occupies nearly 90,000 square miles and, according to the National Census of 1991, has just over 260,000 inhabitants. It occupies an intermediate position between the humid Pampa and the arid zone, in Central Argentina.

2 Ana Fernández Garay contributed the preparation and analysis of the linguistic text. María Inés Poduje provided ethnological information and the relation of the text to other American aboriginal texts.

3 That is the name given to the military onslaught led by Julio A. Roca against the aborigenes in 1878-79.

4 Leubucó was the seat of the Ranquel dynasty of the Güiro (foxes), from where they dominated the center and north of La Pampa.

5 Santa Rosa had a little over 75,000 inhabitants in 1991. Besides being the provincial capital, it is also an important regional center for finance, education, health, industry and commerce.
In 1988 there were 29 houses scattered over the Colonia, and 130 inhabitants, most of them descendants of old Ranqueles. Houses stand separated from one another by one or two miles. They are connected by foot paths and make up small hamlets where related families live. Juana Cabral lives in Puebloito Cabral—2 miles from Santa Isabel—and it is reached by passing through a gate a little more than one mile east of the hamlet, on paved road.

The aborigenes of the Colonia call themselves ‘ranquelinos’, a name that cannot be easily defined with accuracy. There are two theories: one says that they are the offspring of an Araucanian tribe that came from Chile to the area of the River Chalileo in successive migratory waves (L.V. Mansilla). Another theory holds that the ‘ranquelinos’ are western Querandies who were araucanized by Pehuenche tribes of northern Neuquén (R. Casamiquela).

Little is known with certainty about the ethnic background of the ‘ranquelinos’ before their araucanization, but light is being shed by recent archaeological, linguistic and related research. It must also be borne in mind that from the 18th century on the ethnic groups of Patagonia were more and more homogenized by the arrival of the Araucanians from Chile. For this reason the dwellers of the Pampas acquired a common tinge that had already begun when their life style changed from hunters to nomadic shepherds affiliated with the northern Tehuelches. All these transformations contributed to the loss of old ethnic characteristics and the acquisition of a new cultural identity, a process that naturally included the Ranqueles.

It is also difficult to give an accurate picture of the Ranqueles during historical times because the documents left by chroniclers, missionaries, travelers, and other occasional writers, that might be used as sources for the reconstruction of the periods that antecedent the so-called Conquest of the Desert, are heavily tinted by their prejudices. Their information is not only one-sided and incomplete but also contradictory and confusing.

We began the analysis of the following text, that we obtained in 1988, aware of those difficulties. Moreover, since change occurs in all cultures, we felt compelled to suppose that stories are also affected by the passing of time, and that probably the tales that circulate today in the Colonia are not the same that were told before or during the araucanization process. In any case, it is worth remembering that the Mapuches or Araucanians held speech in high esteem. The community encouraged the correct use of the language, a fact of great importance for social cohesion and the transmission of social values.

The Sister Who Married a Puma

We present the text divided into numbered sentences, each of which appears at five levels:

(a) Phonetic notation.
(b) Phonological notation. Here the sentence is segmented into monemes (minimal meaningful units).
(d) Translation of each moneme or set of monemes when they make up a word.

6 This process of cultural change was a common experience with the indians of the Pampas and Patagonia when they came into contact with the successive migratory waves of Araucanians or Mapuches who arrived from Chile.
(e) Translation of the complete sentence. The phonemes of the Ranquel language are: /p, t, tʃ, k, v, ʁ, s, r, l, ſ, m, n, ſ, w, y, a, e, i, o, u, ſ/. Accent is not phonological. Phonic accent is indicated by a tilde over the stressed syllable.

The free translation that follows the text is intended to give the reader a global view of the story. We have tried, however, to reproduce the original style as much as possible.

1. ñañûmmakõmû ñañûm
   ñañûmmakö̱m - iy - ò lamûn
   S. + M.R. + $3$
   la hermana
   was lost
   The sister was lost.

In the Ranquel—a variety of the Mapuche language spoken in the province of La Pampa, Argentina—tenses are of the retrospective type (Croese, 1984), characterized by opposing the future (marked by the moneme -a~ya) to the non-future (not marked) that indicates both present and past action. For this reason, when there is no moneme of future the sentence can be translated as past or as present.

2. kimjêla (i) n ñañûmû naña
   kimjê - la - y - ò i(i) ñañûm amu - n naña
   S. + M.R. + $3$
   Pos 3 Int.
   V. + Nom. borrowing
   no sabia
   did not know
   his where
   He did not know where she had gone, nothing.

The non-finite verbal forms that we have called ‘nominalization’ (infinitive) and the participle, express neither mood nor person and occur always in subordinate clauses beginning in some case with possessives that indicate the person who is the agent of the subordinate verb.

For the first and third persons the possessive has the same form iñ~ii. Confusion of both meanings is avoided by reference to the contextual situation or by placing the relevant personal possessive before the rest of the phrase: iñe iñ iñe (iñe ‘yo’): ‘mi perro’.

3. pita kimjêla (i) n ñañûmû naña
   pita kimjê - la - y - ò i(i) ñañûm amu - n naña
   V. + M.R. + $3$
   Pos. 3 Int.
   V. Nom. borrowing
   absolutamente no sabia
   absolutely did not know
   his where had gone nothing
   No sabia en absoluto se habia ido, nada.
   He did not know at all where she had gone, nothing.

Longstanding Ranquel-Spanish bilingualism, plus the gradual disappearance of Ranquel in areas where it has been replaced by the language of the Whites, has resulted in the adoption of many Spanish borrowings, as can be seen throughout this text. These borrowings have been incorporated into Ranquel by adapting them to the articulatory habits of the borrowers and, on the other hand, by conforming to Mapuche syntax. Thus we find verbal monemes borrowed from the Spanish to which Araucanian monemes of mood, tense, person and number have been added. For instance: eperymi ‘esperarlo’, sasam ‘saludar’, pante ‘saludarlo’, apuaraikan ‘estoy apurado’. Other borrowings that we find in this text are: naña ‘nada’, t’orí ‘tropilla’, l’ión ‘león (puma); kolo ‘kolo’ ‘caballo’.
4. jeñnameñi  kìñe  ñopiyá  kolú
je —ñima — me — ñ — i — ñ  kìñe  ñopiyá  kolú
V. + Ind. Mal. + go to +3 Sat.  +M.R. + 3 F. Num.  S.  S.
le llevaron
they took away
una tropilla caballo
a troop horse
Le llevaron una tropilla de caballos.
They took away his troop of horses.

It is not necessary to make the subject explicit because the verbs carry suffixes that indicate person. Salas (1978) distinguishes between 'focal person' and 'satellite' person. If the verb requires two participants (transitive), the focal person associates with a satellite person who expresses a person or entity that interacts with the focal person (Salas 1978, p. 173). Focal person and satellite person are independent from their function as agent or patient with reference to the verb. What matters is their rank in a hierarchy. If there is interaction between the first and the second person, the first will be focal; the second, satellite. If there is interaction between a determined third person and an undetermined third person, the determined third person will be focal; the undetermined, satellite. Thus, the first will always be focal while the second and determined third may be focal or satellite, and the undetermined third, always satellite.

In order to indicate indirectizers or targets of the action, other monemes are added to the verb as suffixes. They are: - lel--el— I, a beneficent indirectizer expressing the existence of a beneficiary in reference to the verbal action; -ma--fima, a neutral or maleficent indirectizer indicating that somebody or something is harmed by the verbal action, or that it is indifferent with regard to it.

5. kírnalà  nada
kim — la — y — ñ  nada
V. + Neg. +M.R. + 3 borrowing
no sabía nada
did not know nothing
No sabía nada.
He did not know anything.

6. meki (i)ñ kintún ti wentú nada
mek — i — ñ (i)ñ kintún ti wentú nada
V. + M.R. + 3 Pos. 3 V. + Nom. Dem. S. borrowing
se dedicó su buscar el hombre nada
devoted himself his look for the man nothing
El hombre se dedicó a buscarla, nada.
The man devoted himself to her search, nothing.

Here we have another subordinate clause made up by the third person possessive and the nominalization (kintún), in the sense of purpose.

7. péñ picí ñapí
pc — y — ñ  picí  rípí
V. +M.R. + 3 A.  S.
encuentró pequeño camino
found little path
Encontró una huella.
He found a track.
8. amúž ka pořaž
   amu – y ø ka por ay
   V. + M.R. 3 Adv. code switch
   pasaron sin embargo por ahí
   they passed however that way
   Sin embargo, pasaron por ahí.
   However, they passed that way.

9. amúž (i)n kawelu pořaž pasó
   amu – y – ø (i)n kawelu por ay pasó
   V. +M.R. + 3 Pos. 3 S. code switch
   pasaron su caballo por ahí pasó
   they passed his horse that way passed
   Pasaron sus caballos, por ahí pasaron.
   Their horses passed, that way they passed.

Besides borrowings owing to Ranquel-Spanish contact, Ranquel speakers often engage in code switching—the alternate use of both languages in the same discourse. In this case we have an intracorporal code change, that is to say, the speaker passes from Ranquel to Spanish within the same sentence.

The third person of Mapuche verbs lacks inflexion for number (see Salas, 1979). Moreover, sentence 4 has informed us that a troop of horses was taken away from the brother.

10. pōnón t'ewá kićil
    pínon t'ewa kićil – i – ø
    S. S. V. +M.R. + 3
    rastro perro parecía
    track dog seemed
    Rastro de perro parecía.
    It looked like a dog footprint.

11. amulekáž amulekáž amulekáž
    amu – le – ka – y – ø
    V. + Estat. + Cont. + M.R. + 3
    estuvo andando
    went on
    Estuvo andando, anduvo, anduvo.
    He went on, on and on.

12. ŭtat'ipáž (i)n lamjen
    ŭtat'ipa – y – ø (i)n lamjen
    V. + M.R. + 3 Pos. 3 S.
    Se levantó su hermana
    got up his sister
    Su hermana se levantó.
    His sister got up.
13. eglá akušni maž lamjén piño pi
   ewla aku y mi may lamjén pi e n o p(i) i φ

   Adv  V.  + M.R. + 2  Adv.  S.  V.  + 3  Sat.  + 1  F.  + 3  Sat.  V.  + M.R. + 3

   recién llegaste pues hermana me dijo dijo
   just arrived then sister me told said

   “Recién llegaste, pues”, me dijo (mi) hermana, dijo.
   “You just arrived, indeed”, my sister told me, he said.

14. nāgkəlìŋ̄i̱e
   nawkəli̱i̱ - ṅe

   V.  + 2  M. Vol.
   bajá del caballo
dismount

   “Bajá del caballo”.
   “Dismount.”

   In Mapuche there are three moods: real, volitive (imperative), and conditional. The personal forms vary
   according to the verbal mood.

15. naupón
   naw - po - n

   V.  + 'al llegar' + 1
   bajé on arriving
   I dismounted
   Bajé.
   I dismounted.

16. anamjén
   anım - ṅe - n

   V.  + 3  Sat.  + 1  F.
   Ag. Indet.  Pat.
   me dieron asiento
   they gave me seat.
   Me dieron asiento.
   They gave me a seat.

17. kəpajé ñava tami čokín
   kípa - ṅe ñava ta - mi čokin

   V.  + 2  M. Vol. Dem.  Expl. + Pos. 2  S.
   vení este tu sobrino
   come this your nephew
   “¡Vení! estos son tus sobrinos”.
   Come, these are your nephews.

18. ānujuljé piñí
   ānujul - ṅe pi - ŋ - i - φ

   V.  -2  M.Vol. V.  + 3  Sat.  + M.R. + 3
   Ag. Indet.
   saludá le dijeron
greet them they told him
   “¡Saludá!” le dijeron.
   Greet them, they told him.
19. pachi kẽ lõn akû
pãñi ke lion aku - y - õ
A. Pl. S. V. + M.R. + 3
pequeños leones llegaron
little pumas came
Los leoncitos llegaron.
The puma cubs came.

In Mapuche the plural is formed by placing the moneme pu before the noun. If the noun is preceded by an adjective the pluralizer becomes ke.
Affective style transforms pãñi into pãñi.

20. ànyãlín tûyûpûn
ànûl - in tûyûp - in
V. + 1 V. + 1
saludé hice cariños yo
I greeted them I showed my affection.
"Los saludé, les hice cariños".
I greeted them and showed them my affection.

21. mi ñilañ amû ñava ño ño ñava lo ñoyke
mi ñilañ amu - y - õ ñiva - lo ñoyke
Pos. 2 S. V. + M.R. + 3 V. + Part. S.
tu cuñado se fue a cazar avestruces
your brother-in-law went to hunt ostriches
"Tu cuñado se fue a cazar avestruces".
"Your brother-in-law went to hunt ostriches."

22. màcag razóno tãtï pîñ
màcay ako - to - y - õ tãtï pî - ñ - i - õ
en seguida vuelve le dijeron
right away he comes back they told him
"En seguida vuelve", le dijeron.
"He will be back soon", they told him.

23. espêrâmi piâno in lamjên
epéra - y - mi pi - e - n - o in lamjên
V. + M.R. + 2 V. + 3 Sat. + 1 Pac. + 3 Ag. Det. + 3 Ag. Det.
espérâlo me dijo mi hermana
wait for him told me my sister
"Espérâlo", me dijo mi hermana.
"Wait for him", told me my sister.

24. piêmamâo mûñen akûñ pàñë ñoyke
piêmamâo mîten akûl - õy - õ pûta ñoyke
al poco rato no más trajo gran avestruz
a short while just he brought big ostrich
Al poco rato no más trajo un gran avestruz, trajo.
Shortly after he indeed brought a big ostrich, he did.
25. eulá akí mi ṭiláñ píŋ pí
evila aku - y - Ø mi ṭiláñ pí - y - i - Ø p(i) - i - Ø
Adv. V. + M.R. + 3 Pos. 2 S. V. + 3 Sat. + M.R. + 3 F. V. + M.R. + 3
recién llega tu cuñado le dijeron dijo
just comes your brother-in-law they told him said
"Recién llega tu cuñado", le dijeron, dijo.
"Your brother-in-law has just come", they told him, he said.

26. saluāqe mi ṭiláñ
saluāa - ye mi ṭiláñ
borrowing + 2 M. Vol. Pos. 2 S.
saluda a tu cuñado
greet your brother-in-law
"Saluda a tu cuñado"
"Greet your brother-in-law."

27.  āikakélmi mi ṭiláñ
āika - kel - mi mi ṭiláñ
V. + Neg. + 2 Pos. 2 S.
no temas tu cuñado
Fear not your brother-in-law
"No temas a tu cuñado".
"Don't be afraid of your brother-in-law."

The negative form depends on the mood of the verb. For the real mood it is -la-, for the conditional it is -no--nu, and for the volitue (imperative), -kel--kil-.

28. āulpulye mi ṭiláñ
āulpul - ye mi ṭiláñ
V. + 2 M. Vol. Pos. 2 S.
saluda tu cuñado
greet your brother-in-law
"Saludá a tu cuñado".
Greet your brother-in-law.

29. āulpulín
āulpul - ín
V. + 1
saludé yo
I greeted him
"Lo saludé".
I greeted him.

30. palmeave piéno
palmea - ve pi - e - n - o
borrowing + 2 Sat. / V. + 3 Sat. + 1 F. + 3 Ag. Det. Pos. 2 F.
palmealo me dijo
pat him she told me
"Palmealo", me dijo.
"Pat him," she told me.

The form -ve combines the monemes -vi- (3 Sat. Pac.) and -e (2 F. Ag. M. Vol.)
31. tapatapain ṭīlān
   tapatapa - ū - n ṭīlān

   V. (onom.) + Reit. + I S.
   lo palmeé cuñado
   I tapped brother-in-law
   “Lo palmeé al cuñado”.
   I tapped my brother-in-law.

32. mānā ̀doamān
   mānā ̀doamá - ūn
   Adv. V. + 1
   mucho lo quiero
   much I love him
   “Lo quiero mucho”.
   “I love him very much.”

33. apuraokabéni taní ṭīlān piŋéí
   apurao - kile - n ta - ūn ṭīlān pi - ūqe - ūy - ū

   estoy apurado mi cuñado le dijeron
   I am in haste my brother-in-law he was told
   “Estoy apurado, mi cuñado”, le dijeron.
   “I’m in a hurry, my brother-in-law”, he was told.

34. lión jelmekatɔvé iñ ʧɔpiya
   lion jel - me - ka - ūf - vé iñ ʧɔpiya

   S. V. +’ir a’ + Cont. + Reit. +3 Sat. Pos. 3 S.
   león andá a traer su tropilla
   Puma go fetch his troop
   “León, andá a traer su tropilla”.
   “Puma, go and fetch his troop of horses.”

35. amuŋón piŋi
   amu - to - n pi - ū - ū - ū

   V. + Reit. + I V. +3 Ag., Indet. + M.R. + 3 F.
   me vuelvo le dijeron
   I return they hold her
   “Me vuelvo”, le dijeron.
   “I’m going back”, they told her.

36. ʧimpawuyekámi taŋí mi ṭīlān
   kim - pa - uye - ka - ū - mi tati mi ṭīlān pi - ne - ūy - ū

   has venido a conocer tu cuñado le dijeron
   have come to meet your brother-in-law they told him
   “Has venido a conocer a tu cuñado”, le dijeron.
   You came to meet your brother-in-law, they told him.
37. jelmeñcaj ropriyá
   jel  - me  - ne  - tí  - y  - ϕ  propriya
V.  + 'ir a' +3
   + Reit.  + M.R.  +3  F.  borrowing
   Ag. Indet.  + 3  Pat.
le vino a traer
came to bring him
tropilla
troop
Le vino a traer la tropilla.
He came to bring him his troop of horses.

38. gulpatá
   rulpa  - tí  - y  - ϕ
V.  + Reit.  + M.R.  + 3
pasó
passed
Pasó.
He passed.

39. ka amutón
   ka  amu  - to  - n
Adv.  V.  + Reit.  + 1
de nuevo  me vuelvo
again  I return
“Me vuelvo de nuevo”.
“I’m going back again.”

40. kápajmi pieno in lamñén
   kípa  - y  - mi  pi  - e  - n  - o  in  lamñén
V.  + M.R.  + 2  V.  +3
   + Reit.  + M.R.  + 3
vení  me dijo  mi  hermana
come  told me  my  sister
“Vení”, me dijo mi hermana.
“Come back”, my sister told me.

41. kápayán pitpovín
   kípa  - ya  - n  pi  - rpo  - vi  - n
V.  + Fut.  + 1  V.  +'irme' +3
   + Reit.  + M.R.  + 1  F.
voy a venir  le dije  al irme
I shall come  I said  as I was leaving
“Voy a venir”, le dije al irme.
“I shall come back”, I told her as I was leaving.

42. pata wiñowelaja kápayálo
   píta  wiño  - wa  - la  - y  - ϕ  kípa  - ya  - lo
en absoluto  ya  no volvió  a venir
at all  he did not  again  come
Ya no volvió a venir más.
He never came back.

In this sentence we find a subordinate clause in the participial form that does not include an initial possessive.
43. amuțiš
amu - ti - y - φ
V. + Reit. + M.R. + 3
se volvió
he returned
Se volvió.
He went back home.

44. jëliš (i)ñ ṭɔpiyá kòlú
je - te - y - φ (i)ñ ṭɔpiya kòlú
V. + Reit. + M.R. + 3 Pos 3 S. S.
se llevó su tropilla caballo
He took his troop horse
Se llevó su tropilla de caballos.
He took with him his troop of horses.

45. kečațiš amuțiš
keca - ti - ŋ amu - ti - y - φ
arreando se volvió
driving he returned
Se volvió arreando.
He went back home driving his horses.

Free Translation

The sister got lost. He did not know where she had gone; nothing. He did not know at all where she had gone; nothing. Moreover, they had taken the troop of horses. He did not know anything.

The man devoted himself to search for her; and nothing. Finally he found a track. “Yes; they passed that way.” That way their horses passed. They looked like dog foot prints. He kept going on, and on, and on.

When he arrived, his sister got up.
“You just arrived,” my sister told me. “Dismount.”
I dismounted. They offered me a seat.
“Come. These are your nephews. Greet them,” they told him. The cubs got nearer.
I greeted them and showed them my affection.
“Your brother-in-law went to hunt ostriches. He will soon be back,” he was told.
“Wait for him”, my sister told me.
In a short while the brother-in-law came back with a big ostrich.
Greet your brother-in-law,” he was told.
I greeted him.
“Pat him,” she told me.
“I am in a hurry, my brother-in-law,” the puma was told.
“Puma, go and fetch his troop of horses,” said the sister to the puma.
“I am going back,” said the brother to his sister.
“You came to meet your brother-in-law,” the brother was told.
The brother-in-law came and brought him the troop of horses.
"I am going back again," he told his sister.
"Come back," my sister told me.
"I shall," I said as I left.

He never went back. He returned home with his troop of horses. Driving them he returned home.

Commentary

The oral narrative titled "The sister who married a puma" can be classified as a mythic tale, according to Iván Carrasco who defines it as "an epew or artistic narration presenting an event that took place in the beginnings of time and in which the sacred breaks into everyday circumstances establishing a relationship between what happened in illo tempore and customary events" (Carrasco, p. 79-95).

The motifs of the marriage of a woman with a puma, the flight of the girl, her giving birth to puma cubs, and the chase, are also found in two stories gathered in the sixties by Marcelo Bórmita and Alejandra Siffredi among the Tehuelche of the Santa Cruz province, in Patagonía. The two versions of the Tehuelche story are similar to the story told by Juana Cabral, though they differ in some details; for instance: in the Tehuelche narratives the puma is killed by his human relatives.

Both the Tehuelche and the Ranquel stories are akin to the well-known South American Indian myths that include the motif of the marriage of a woman and a jaguar, and the birth of twins. Such myths depict a world where strange things happen that are believed to be real. For instance, there is the story of the Jívaro woman who married a jaguar and lived with him in the same house, a tale that had been gathered by Rafael Karsten among the Jívaro and analyzed by Alfred Métraux (Métraux, 1930). Moreover, the theme of the Jaguar and the twins has been studied by many authors, among them: Paul Ehrenreich (1905), Julio Tello (1923), Ricardo E. Latcham (1926), Heinz Kühne (1955, 1967), Heinz Walter (1956), Herbert Baldus (1958), Karin Hissik (1958), Martin Gusinde (1968), and Paul S. Powlison (1972).

Translated from the Spanish by The Editor.

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