

Es ist keine bloße Theorie, wenn mir südindische Baumeister wie Ganapati Sthapati und V. R. Sthapati sagen, sie würden kosmische Zeit und kosmischen Raum begrenzen, sie würden sakrale Bauwerke mit Zeit messen, jeder Tempel sei in allen seinen Teilen ein Abbild des Kosmos, sie würden Un-Begreifliches be-greifbar machen.

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#### Expressions of Alterity Among Some Ayoreo Mythical Beings

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In these pages we shall focus on an analysis of the expressions of alterity among the *amuanakó-de*, mythical beings found in the culture of the Ayoreo of Chaco Boreal. Therefore, on the basis of the knowledge these indigenes have of such beings, we propose to demonstrate their existential alterity in relation to such notions as space, time, morphology, power, intention, etc.

Together with the Chamacoco, the Ayoreo belong to the Zamuco linguistic family and live dispersed throughout an extensive area of the Chaco Boreal in Bolivian and Paraguayan territory. They are foragers with a very limited horticultural practice and constitute big uxorilocal families that form the bands which, during most part of the year, are nomadic. Their simple ergology and their not too complex socio-political organization stand in contrast to the abundant and manifold mythographic corpus that has remained almost unchanged because the intense contact with the Neo-Americans only started as from the 1940.<sup>1</sup>

Bórmida, in his study of the Ayoreo culture (1984), tried to look into the mechanisms through which a culture understands its own reality. He thus claimed that in the Ayoreo world knowledge relates to a content of an individual or a cultural conscience, that is a set of notions referring to entities and to the relations among entities that reveal themselves to someone. Hence he concludes that the world is the set of notions which through the facts are present in the individual's conscience, a set that is a part of all the notions the individual is potentially capable of learning from his culture (1984: 18).

He subsequently sustains that these notions making up the Ayoreo cosmovision are revealed to some individuals as long as they possess certain conditions that make them deserve a given status. Bórmida calls these statuses channels of

<sup>1</sup> The material we have used is based on the data gathered during our fieldwork among the Ayoreo of Misión La Paz (1977) and Tobité (1982) and on the data collected by Bórmida and Califano in 1970, 1971, and 1975. On general aspects of the Ayoreo culture, see Bórmida and Califano 1978, and Fischer 1988. With respect to ergology and the myth see Bórmida 1973–1979. Regarding other aspects of the Ayoreo cosmovision, see Mashnshnek 1983/84, 1986, 1986/87, 1988, 1988/89, 1990; Idoyaga Molina 1979/80, 1988, and 1990; Idoyaga Molina and Mashnshnek 1988 and 1989.