Chapter 18
When Monkeys Were Humans: Narratives of the Relationship Between Primates and the Qom (Toba) People of the Gran Chaco of Argentina

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18.1 Introduction

The Qom (previously known as Toba, an exonym used from the conquest and in gradual disuse due to indigenous reinvindicatory struggles) constitute an indigenous group whose subsistence practices originally consisted of hunting, fishing, and gathering crops. They currently reside in rural communities in northeastern Argentina or in settlements surrounding large urban areas such as Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Rosario, Resistencia, and Formosa, among others. Those who still dwell in the regions of their ancient territory do not live entirely off the forest and its resources since the plundering of the land, the sedentarization, and the colonization restricted the access to former territory to complement their subsistence. The Qom, who together with other Amerindians like the Pilagá and the Mocoví people integrates the Guaycuru linguistic family, constitutes the largest indigenous society in the Gran Chaco ecological region, accounting for around 65,000 people throughout Argentina (INDEC 2004–2005). In the communities located in the countryside, the Qom people live surrounded by relatives forming extended families (that is to say, the family composed of several generations and by the husbands of the children) usually live in the same land, in one or more houses (the new couples usually coexist in the field of the parents of the young wife) (López and Tola 2016). In these communities there are bilingual schools where young indigenous people attend and usually small health posts. People agree on the evangelic, the religion now more expanded, with some shamanic practices in reemergence.

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The Gran Chaco is the third greatest biogeographic and morphostructural region in Latin America after the Amazon and the South American Savannah System and the second in terms of area covered by forests after the Amazon and Pacific tropical rainforests of Colombia and Ecuador. Its more than 1,000,000 km^2 stretch along four countries (Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil), being the area in Argentina the largest (Morello et al. 2009).

This study contemplates relationships between the Qom people and their fauna. We can find the first information about these relationships in the legacy written by the Jesuits, who, like Florian Paucke or Martín Dobrizhoffer, were missionaries in the Chaco during the eighteenth century. In the works of these priests, the data related to subsistence prevailed. Although, there were also an introduction of the cosmological aspects, specifically the transformation of men into animals, in the texts of Paucke and Dobrizhoffer.

These references are followed by those of the first travelers who visited the territories of the Chaco at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly the Spanish military and naturalist, Azara (1998 [1809]), who mentions that the Guaycurues (name of the linguistic family which includes the Toba) were engaged in hunting activities, highlighting that none developed crops and some took care of small herds of cows, sheep, and rams or robbed the Spaniards. The French naturalist, d'Orbigny (1998 [1835–1847]), who also gives news about the life and customs of the Qom people, mentions the possession of some domestic animals such as cows that, according to the author, had been given by the governor of the province of Corrientes. An interesting story is the one that refers to the trade of leather of mammals that the natives maintained with the Spaniards.

Continuing with this historical development, we find at the beginning of the twentieth century the works of the first ethnographers. In those ones there is abundant data linked to hunting and fishing activities, especially the techniques and weapons used which are described (Karsten 1932; Palavecino 1936; Métraux 1996 [1946]; Chaparro 1947). With regard to indigenous cosmology, Karsten (1932), Palavecino (1936), and Métraux (1996 [1946]) refer that, for the Toba/Qom, animals possess a spirit that is both responsible for diseases and the auxiliary shaman. Also, Métraux (1996 [1946]) provides background on the role of animal owners. In addition, we find in his work some evidence about the property that shamans would have for transforming themselves into animals.

The investigations that followed those of these ethnographers focused on deepening specific sociocultural aspects. Specifically, when referring to the "worldview and religious beliefs" of the Guaycurús groups, Cordeu and Siffredi (1971: 14) argued that "the religious organization rested, respectively, in an animalistic complex… [Said] animalistic or hunter complex consisted of a highly developed hierarchical scheme of animal owners, closely linked with the cultural principles of space classification, with hunting regulations and with initiation and shamanic practice."

Later, the debate on the link between the Qom people, these owners of the animals and other non-humans was retaken to explain in depth aspects of indigenous sociocosmology. In this regard, Wright (2008: 142) described the power relationship between owners and other non-humans with shamans and gave some details on

"general criteria of animal classification," while describing the intervention of animals in the dream world.

It's from the decade of the 1980s that the first specific monographs on the link between animals and Qom people emerged. Specifically, Vuoto (1981a) and Balducci (1982) observed that these indigenous people gave the animals certain human characteristics that allowed them and others to communicate. Vuoto (1981a: 19) concluded that an "accurate frontier separating human nature from animal" cannot be established. These authors explored the ability of certain species to transmit messages to humans, the link that exists between shamans and their auxiliaries (non-humans in general and animals in particular) and the forms of "contagion" of animal properties to indigenous people.

Although these works were significant to understand the relationship between the Qom people and the animals, the theme was scarcely retaken in the following decades. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the works of Vuoto (1981b) and Martínez Crovetto (1995) on the *zoonomia* of the Toba, Cuneo, and Porta (2009) on the vocabulary of fish and birds and those of Arenas and Porini (2009) and Medrano et al. (2011) on Toba knowledge related to birds and mammals, respectively.

We have specifically focused on studying the zoology of different Qom groups settled in the eastern part of the Province of Formosa (Medrano 2013, 2014, 2016a) (see Fig. 18.1). However, this work will illuminate the relationship between

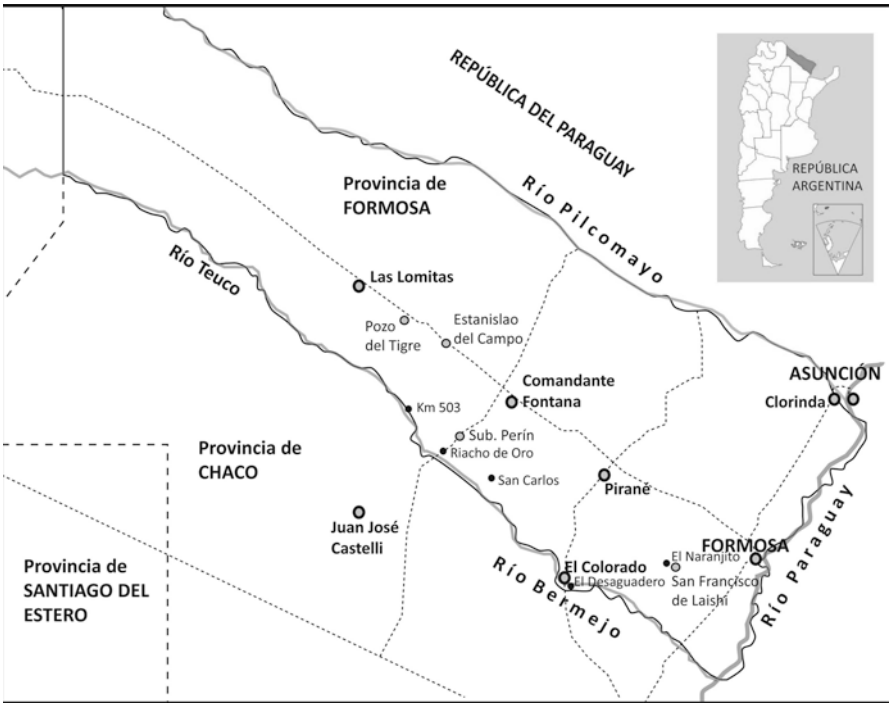

Fig. 18.1 Qom indigenous communities where the fieldwork was carried out (black dots)

indigenous people and monkeys. Two species of non-human primates are distributed in this area: the *carayá* or black-and-golden howler monkey (*Alouatta caraya*: Atelidae), and the *mirikina* (night monkey, *Aotus azarae*: Cebidae) (Zunino and Kowalewski 2008; Ojeda et al. 2012). The Qom relate mainly with the black-and-golden howler monkey (*A. caraya)*, who are refered to as *huoỹem* in Qom/Toba language (as a specific and generic taxa). The frequency of relationship with the night monkey (*A. azarae),* in turn, is very low, and which is called *huoỹem capio'olec*, meaning literally "small monkey" (Medrano et al. 2011). Our hypothesis is that this lack of animal names is related to the behavior of these primates. While the *carayá* (black-and-golden howler monkey) is a diurnal monkey, the habits of the *mirikina* (night monkey) are typically nocturnal (Canevari and Vaccaro 2007). We will concentrate on understanding the relationships between the Qom and the black-and-golden howler monkey.

The black-and-golden howler monkey, one of the largest American monkeys (adult male of *A. caraya* mean weight is 6.42 kg, adult female mean weight is 4.33 kg, cf. Rumiz 1990). This primate is a tree-dweller and lives in family groups made up of as many as ten individuals (Chebez et al. 2005; Canevari and Vaccaro 2007). In Argentina, it is distributed in the provinces of Misiones, Corrientes, eastern Chaco and Formosa, and the banks and islands of the Paraná River in northeastern Santa Fe. A great part of this population lives outside protected areas, where forests face changes in composition, fragmentation, and reduction due to human activity (Ojeda et al. 2012).

We will analyze the relationship between these monkeys and the indigenous peoples within the general framework of the Qom zoology, which has been studied by us (Medrano 2014). One of the most relevant aspects of these studies is the existence of continuities between humans and animals. On one hand, we identified a similarity with respect to the anatomy in that the Qom assign the animal body aptitudes and attributes which are similar to the ones they recognize for their own bodies. Human and animal physiology also shows certain equivalence we verified when analyzing the use of animal species (Medrano 2013, 2014). On the other hand, the analogy with respect to the *interiority* (Descola 2012) implies that humans, animals, and other non-human beings are similar in terms of their *lqui'i* (soul in a general sense).

The Qom zoology, at the same time, hints at the existence of equivocations, as postulated by the anthropologist Viveiros de Castro (2004). In his view, the approach to an *other* can be made through the method of "controlled equivocation." This idea consists of a controlled reading through two ontological perspectives which use homonymic terms: "equivocation appears here as the mode of communication par excellence between different perspectival positions –and therefore as both condition of possibility and limit of the anthropological enterprise" (2004: 3).

Thus, the aim of this essay is to ask: are howler monkeys in eastern Formosa Province perceived in the same way to both indigenous and nonindigenous people? To answer this question, we will first examine the Qom mythology which links monkeys to humans. At the end will be to track the origin of humanity, animality, and their convergences. Then, we will analyze current scenarios that reflect the relationships between human and non-human primates in order to understand those patterns in the context of the Qom indigenous sociocosmology.

18.2 Methodology

This essay was written in co-authorship with one of my Qom indigenous colleague, Valentín Suárez. Specifically, we collected mythological narratives published in well-known compilations (Wilbert and Simoneau 1983, 1989; Terán 2005) and read them together. Being not only a bilingual teacher, a Qom leader, and also a reflective thinker of his own society, Valentín became an authoritative voice to discuss ideas about politics, history, and other aspects from an indigenous perspective. Thus, the methodology allowed us to exchange interpretations about the narrative in these myths and to contrast the way in which indigenous and nonindigenous people relate with monkeys.

It must be made clear that to the Qom, as to many Amerindian societies, myths are not understood as a closed symbolic system (Hill 1988), as a corpus of fictitious time. On the contrary, just like historical discourses are conceived as the past, mythic discourses are conceived as the past of the past (Lima 1999). Particularly, Qom mythology comprises a body of tales "par excellence 'true' for knowledge itself" (Cordeu 1969–1970: 68). With this in mind, we will read the stories that follow.

18.3 When Monkeys Were Humans

Within the corpus of Qom mythology, there is a tale that refers to the origin of the black-and-golden howler monkey which Mr. Santo González told ethnographer Buenaventura Terán: "A long time ago when the world began, there was a great fire and everything was burned. The whole world was on fire, and everything that lived on it was consumed. People had hidden in a hole deep in the earth, and, when the fire had burned out, they were instructed how they were to emerge. They were not to look toward the front until they had walked so many meters. However, one man paid no attention. He looked straight ahead, and, as he did so, he was turned into the howler monkey. Howler monkeys used to be people, and they descend from the man" (*apud* Wilbert and Simoneau 1989: 93–94).

The previous narration refers not only to the origin of the monkey but of all animal species. According to what the elderly Qom say, people who emerged from the earth had to look ahead. Whoever looked back or sideways was turned into a bear, a monkey, or an iguana depending on the size of their bodies. "So the origin of all the animals is the human person," concludes Valentín Suárez (pers. comm., 2017).

In order to analyze the origin of the monkeys, we discussed the Western theory of evolution. A simplified image portrays human primates evolving from nonhuman primates. Valentín claimed that, for the Qom, the origin of the monkey is different. He draws conclusions from the systematization of observations: "I always compare with the monkeys, they live for ages in circuses but they never learn [to speak] a word, and how is it possible that they [humans] come from them [monkeys]? If [you tell me that] we come from the parrot, maybe. Because the parrot at least speaks, imitates people, makes gestures, hisses, shouts. It speaks, sings.

And the origin of the monkey is different for the Toba. To me it depends on each people, each tribe, the origin that each person, the human being, has" (Valentín Suárez, pers. inf., 2017).

Just like the Qom, many Amerindian societies believe monkeys – and all animals – share a human origin. Viveiros de Castro (2013) states that these explanations, rooted in the origin mythology, rest on a fundamental assumption according to which the common background of humanity and animality is humanity. This cultural ground on which the indigenous peoples place both humans and non-humans is the condition for the maintenance of social relationships between both classes of beings – understood, ultimately, as subjects. Inversely, learned science builds the whole chain of beings that inhabit the planet on a common animal origin. Thus, modern society is built by segregating the animals in order to construct the rational, educated group of speaking humans. It is in this context that we venture to suggest that the *carayá* (black-and-golden howler monkey) and the *huoỹem* are not the same thing. This is the first clue for establishing an equivocation.

For Valentín, a hypothetical ancestor of the humans could be the parrot. The bird would have been human first, then animal, then human, following a chain of completely feasible transformations for the Qom. These transformations are possible in an epistemological context where becoming in transformation is the norm (Medrano 2013). Far from intending to mark the "eccentricity of the indigenous evolutionary theory," we bring this up to show the internal coherence of the logic that defies the paradigms of modern science. By suggesting that the origin of the monkey is linked to "each people," Valentín is projecting the existence of other epistemologies. Hegemonic science mockingly refuses to accept other explanations and supports uncontrolled equivocations; by not going beyond its own conventions, "it remains more an ideology than a science" (Wagner 2010: 29).

18.4 Thou Shalt Not Kill

The reading of mythological narratives led us to examine stories that the Qom consider more contemporary. Among them there is one called "the monkeys protect a village from an epidemic" (Terán 2005: 57–58), which can be circumscribed to the context of the massive contagion of European illnesses suffered by the indigenous peoples as of the seventeenth century (Rosso 2011). The narrative accounts for the existence of a shaman who has as a non-human companion a *huoỹem lta'a* (literally meaning "the father of the monkeys"), an entity that has the tutelage of all the howler monkeys. These animals also have the capacity to communicate with clouds, lightning, rain, and wind. To the Qom, the plague "is like a cloud coming from the mountain" (Terán 2005: 58) so the father of the monkeys of the tale could prevent the arrival of such cloud and divert it with the help of the shaman.

Valentín reflected upon the connection between the clouds and the monkeys and added that to the Qom the *huoỹem* are in permanent communication with *Qasoxonaxa*, a non-human being who inhabits heaven and has the capacity to control weather events, mainly rain, thunder, and lightning (see Fig. 18.2). This non-human entity –

Fig. 18.2 Communication between the *huoỹem* and *Qasoxonaxa* (drawing Valentín Suárez). There are no closed hypotheses about why this non-human is represented as an elephant. However also *Qasoxonaxa* means "mountain" so that when Qom people met, the elephant could have put the same name in reference to the size of the animal. Then I had the analogy with regard to the image

one among the many that populate the Qom universe – has intentionality capable of performing actions which have profound implications for the indigenous social life. It is part of a series of entities that "far from being considered spirits, characters, or gods who live in the nontemporal dimension of myth, suspended in time, or pertaining to remote scopes of the universe, …coexist with past and present human beings" (Tola 2014: 71).

According to the academic information regarding the biology of the *A. caraya*, "the male produces its loud howls at dawn and at dusk but also when it is about to rain or when there is imminent danger" (Canevari and Vaccaro 2007: 79). To the Qom, the *huoỹem* (black-and-golden howler monkey) also announce weather events. As Valentín says, "[nowadays] anyone can hear the [black-and-golden howler] monkey sing early in the morning; a strong north wind will probably blow that day. Because it is not normal, if the monkey sings it is because a heavy north wind will blow and, after that, rain." So far, the ecology and the indigenous' data seem to coincide, but the Qom explanation goes beyond. The Qom consider that the monkey carries out its meteorological activities due to a bond – between subjects – with *Qasoxonaxa*, the non-human master of meteorological phenomena.

As we will explain later, this social network made up of humans, monkeys, and other non-humans accounts for the reason why hunting monkeys is permanently forbidden for the Qom. However, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Argentina went through a deep economic crisis which forced many indigenous peoples to look for alternative subsistence practices. By then, the black-and-golden howler monkey (*A. caraya*) was one of the species most traded as pets (Canevari and Vaccaro 2007) and was significantly represented in the illegal traffic routes of fauna (Bertonatti 1995; Chebez 2009). Chebez (2009) describes that in order to capture the offspring, the adults – especially the dominant male and the female bearer – were killed with firearms or by bringing down the trees were the troop sheltered. The *carayás* (black-and-golden howler monkey) were reduced of their distribution area and could also integrate a circuit of precarious transactions which offered the animals "on national routes with improvised signs" (Chebez 2009: 331). The Qom longed for joining this circuit, which coincided with the distribution area of the *A. caraya*.

Valentín explains that back then people went to the indigenous communities and bought monkeys. Given this economic possibility, the Qom started going to the forests to look for *huoỹem*: "The man wanted to have the monkey's offspring but it happened that out of tiredness he thought of killing the little monkey's mother and when he killed it the weather, the storm, immediately came into being, right there where he was. Lightning, all those things, because of that monkey which was killed. That's why it has a lot to do with that. With the relationship with nature, water, thunder, all those things. That is why it is strictly [prohibited for] the Qom to kill monkeys" (Valentín Suárez, 2017, pers. inf.).

The man of the preceding tale was a victim of *Qasoxonaxa*'s anger for having wrongfully attacked a monkey. The prohibition to kill determines then the modes of relationship among subjects – the Qom, the *huoỹem*, and other non-humans. The "nature" Valentín mentions in the narration is therefore reconstructed as the structure of social precepts and rules of etiquette which regulate the link between more-than-human beings. Thunder, rain, and wind may be simple weather events beyond human control or, also, transcendent messages which the subjects of the Qom universe use to communicate extralinguistically. This reinforces our question: Is the black-and-golden howler monkey (*A. caraya*) the same to both indigenous and non-indigenous people? So far, if we answered affirmatively, we would not be acknowledging an equivocation.

18.5 Thou Shalt Do No Harm

The Qom also keeps the offsprings of the black-and-golden howler monkey as pets (for the concept of "pet", see Medrano 2016a, b). When reflecting upon the precautions that should be observed if a *huoỹem* was raised, Valentín mentioned that "when there's no mistreatment there's no danger, when animals are mistreated, yes [there is danger], [therefore] a *nauaga* ['contagion' or 'influence'] can occur. That's why animal mistreatment is very much prevented. No mistreating [should happen to the nigh howler monkeys]." Within the domestic context, the monkey is integrated into the human social network without losing the attributes linked to his interiority. So we recalled together the piece of advice received by an elderly Qom: "Pregnant women must refrain from looking at the *huoỹem* in the face, and from feeding or striking it because it can infects their baby. Otherwise, the baby could come out with the howler monkey's face or with its same gestures and movements; and when adults speak [to the human baby], she/he will not understand and just laughs [like the monkey]. According to Qom tradition, mothers and grandmothers must offer their young daughter's advice for them to respect this prescription" (Mauricio Maidana in Medrano et al. 2011: 70).

This tales account for a phenomenon called *nauoga* in Toba, which has been broadly studied from diverse perspectives and translated as "contagion" or "influence." For classic readings on the process of *nauoga*, see Karsten (1932) and Métraux (1946). For more contemporary readings about the topic, see Vuoto (1981a), Balducci (1982), Wright (2008), Tola (2012), and Medrano (2013). Through this process, certain characteristics present in animals are likely to be assimilated by humans. Thus, formal or behavioral properties circulate between humans and non-humans given the porosity of their bodies (Tola 2012) and the possibility of permanent transformation that humans, animals, and other beings experience.

In this context, one of the aspects that transforms primates into the realm of pets link more complex is related to this continuity between humans and animals which is characteristic of a zoology that attributes analogies with respect to the interiority. In 1979, ethnographer Luis Vuoto was told by a Qom that when a monkey "enters a child's heart,… the monkey' vices enter the heart… [then] every day they [start] shouting [or howling] and so on, they can't keep calm, [and behaving] all just like the monkey" (A. A¢ilaj in Vuoto 1981a: 106).

This human-monkey combination that can only be undone by the shaman power is possible due to the resemblance that humans and animals have regarding their *lqui'i*. The *lqui'i*, commonly translated as soul, provides the capacity to feel, think, move, and walk around, therefore being linked to the idea of regimes of corporality (Tola 2012). When a contagion like the one described by A¢ilaj in Vuoto (1981a) takes place, the monkey enters the heart because this organ is the "instrument" of the *lqui'i* and since it is the site of emotions-thoughts, which it allows for the connection between human persons (Tola 2012) and between the latter, animals, and other non-human beings. Thus, the analogous *lqui'i* of the monkey and the child combines giving as a result a hybrid that embodies the illness.

If in the indigenous universe the possession of a *lqui'i* – and the subsequent condition of person – extends to non-humans, the relationships between the Qom and the monkeys become links between social subjects. This acquires its condition of possibility in the context of a cosmology that – like the Qom's – is inscribed in an animist ontology. We make use of Descola's definition of ontology, that is, "the different ways of expressing continuities and discontinuities between humans and nonhumans" (Descola 2014: 440). A cosmology, as the author suggests, "is simply the form of distribution in space of the components of an ontology and the kind of relations that conjoin them" (2014, 437). The animism is "the assumption that, under certain circumstances, non-humans of various kinds behave as if they had an intentionality analogous to the one humans believe they are endowed with" (Descola 2010: 338).

At the opposite end, we find the Western cosmologies that place humans and non-humans in two watertight ontological domains, thus laying the basis for naturalistic ontology. P. Descola (2010: 338) mentions that naturalism, opposed to animism, characterizes the modern world and "insists on the differences between humans and non-humans on the interiority axis: humans alone are supposed to have a meaningful selfhood whether individual (mind, capacity for symbolism) or collective (Volksgeist, cultures). In contrast, …humans and non-humans are linked by their shared physicality: they belong to a continuum where the same laws of physics, biology and chemistry apply." Based on the dualism that this ontology founds, modern thought segregates culture and nature fetishizing this last domain as a transcendental object, thus inaugurating the "modern Constitution" according to which the "human subjects" objectify their illusion of nature (Latour 2007).

At this point of our exposition, the equivocation becomes self-evidently ratified. The howler monkey – subject to the Qom, object to the modern imaginations – embodies at least two ontologies. The indigenous peoples consider it a member of a sociocosmological network which includes humans, the *huoỹem*, *huoỹem lta'a*, *Qasoxonaxa*, other non-humans and animals, the rain, thunder, lightning, shamans, etc. The imaginations of modern citizens keep to themselves an image of the monkey which raises scientific questions and awakens ecological sensitivities (Descola 1998). The latter are linked to the anthropocentric responsibility of the human primate, the arbiter of life and its continuity in the entire planet.

18.6 *Huoỹem/Carayá* Is Multiple

In 2009, anthropologist Mario Blaser began a substantial study about the indigenous Innu in collaboration with them. By 2013, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Canada), the two provinces where the Innu communities live, announced a 5-year hunting ban of the caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*). Blaser wrote that, "while for the wildlife managers in the provincial government hunting could mean the disappearance of the caribou, for the Innu hunters and elders being prevented from hunting according to protocol almost assuredly would mean the disappearance of

atîku [Innu word for the caribou]" (Blaser 2016: 546). For hunters and elders, the hunting ban would make it impossible to repair the relationship with *atîku* and its spirit master. Rethinking the concept of cosmopolitics – initially put forward by Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour – to analyze this case, Blaser concluded that the caribou and the *atîku* do not refer to different cultural perspectives of the same "thing" but to "different things": "*Atîku* emerges from an assemblage that involves *atanukan*, hunters, sharing of meat, generosity, a 'spirit master,' and so on; caribou emerges from an assemblage that involves the discipline of biology, wildlife managers, predictive modeling, calculations to balance environmental and economic concerns, and so on" (Blaser 2016: 558).

In this case, *atîku*/caribou is multiple, argues Blaser. In our case, *huoỹem*/*carayá* is also multiple. *Huoỹem* (black-and-golden howler monkey) emerges from an assemblage that involves *huoỹem lta'a*, *Qasoxonaxa*, the Qom who sell monkeys and those who make them into mascots, the shamans, and so on; the *carayá* (black-and-golden howler monkey) emerges from an assemblage made up of biologists and conservationists, wildlife managers, statistical models, genetic explorations, and governmental bureaucracies.

But these examples not only bring multiple ontologies into play but also multiple "worldings," "a form of enacting a reality" as Blaser (2013: 23) defined. And, as both cases show, forcing the reality toward a common world by hiding or suppressing other ways of enacting reality puts species, territories, humans, and non-humans inhabiting them in danger (cf. Povinelli 2001; Nadasdy 2007; Blaser 2009; Cayón 2012; Martínez Dueñas 2012; Di Giminiani 2013; among others). This is at the same time inscribed in a context where the dominant tendency in leading conservation research/action circles is to qualify indigenous environmental practices and [local ecological] knowledge as a supply "that can be integrated into the toolkit of conservation practitioners, often as mere informational inputs" (Blaser 2009: 15).

Huoỹem is not the same thing as *carayá*, and *atîku* is not the same thing as caribou, but how can the worlds in which both things enact be outlined? As we showed throughout the text, one of the ways is through the founding of equivocations. As suggested by Viveiros de Castro (2004), controlled equivocations are the conceptual places where the ontological differences are expressed, and they pose misunderstandings which make the anthropological question possible. But, more importantly, they allow striping modern science of its monopoly of nature representation and, by bringing the multiple worldings to the fore, to move toward a scenario of legitimate dialogues.

18.7 Final Words

Bacigallupo (2013: 77) claims that mythohistory "is a mixed genre that mediates among different memoralizations of the past to obliterate dominant… history and to create alternative indigenous histories". Similarly, Qom mythology constitutes the touchstone that allows us to reveal the foundations of an indigenous zoology and to object to the supremacy of academic epistemological discourses. However, our

intention is not to convince our contemporaries of the existence of the *huoỹem* nor persuade the Qom about the objectivity of the *carayá* (black-and-golden howler monkey). Our desire is to create zoologies – in plural – where the misunderstandings inaugurate different knowledge practices. We aspire to find a "pluriverse" where the condition of possibility of multiple worlds be guaranteed.

We finally wish to highlight an important aspect connected not only with the Qom zoology in the singular but with the indigenous zoologies in the plural and with the relationships with non-human primates in particular. In this respect, multiple contributions revealing the social relationship between human and non-human primates have been published (cf. Bruner and Cucina 2005; Urbani 2005; Cormier 2006; Fuentes 2006, 2010; Cormier and Urbani 2008; Sá 2013; Urbani and Cormier 2015). Moreover, in animist indigenous societies, monkeys are included in the human set and integrate parental networks (cf. Cormier 2003a, b). Rereading such investigations, we are concerned with highlighting the outcome that the dispossession of territory and the species decline has for the indigenous peoples. We conclude then by asserting that when the Qom and many other indigenous societies face the dilapidation of what we call "nature," they suffer a double dispossession: of the "resources" and of the social relationships established with them. These pillages are as intertwined in life sustenance as our conservation plans and fauna protection projects. Different but assembled: if the *huoỹem* becomes extinct, so does the *carayá* (black-and-golden howler monkey). Let's sail then, guided by the compass of the equivocations, toward the worlds where all worlds be possible.

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