

# CAMAHUETO

Every twenty five years on Chiloé Island, a Camahueto is born in the depths of the earth under a hill next to the ocean. It looks like a green calf with one little horn on its head. It resembles a unicorn. After birth, it goes down the hill towards the ocean with such strength and noise  
5 that it leaves a trench where a stream flows. The water washes away trees, stones and earth. In the ocean, the Camahueto grows and becomes an adult, living in the sea for the rest of its existence. People say that Camahuetos go to the sea because they are a marine species and that their short stay on earth represents a form of vengeance of Cai Cai Vilú to  
10 endlessly continue its destructive work on earth.

From the moment a Camahueto is born to the moment it gets to the sea, a shaman lurks\* on the beach waiting for it. He knows the exact day and time when a new Camahueto will come to the ocean. As soon as he sees it coming, he lassoes it, cuts off its horn and lets it continue on  
15 its way into the sea. A Camahueto's horn is the most valuable thing this creature possesses. The shamans of Chiloé sow small pieces of the horn in other hills and lands and, after twenty five years, other camahuetos are born. The Shamans take most of the horn home and sell the scrapings of it at a good price, either as a piece of paper or as ointment. These  
20 scrapings are the most powerful of all medications and constitute the earliest forms of medicine on the Island. They can cure all kinds of illnesses such as anaemia, skin infections, rheumatism, etc.

Before selling the horn scrapings, the shamans boil the substance to prevent people from breeding one of these creatures inside their bodies  
25 after absorbing it. There is also another benefit of this horn: the person who manages to have one of these marvellous horns has great fortune that ensures wealth for the future. All these wonderful properties make the horn an invaluable and highly desirable object.

30        However, if someone wants to take the horn to another land or province, he or she has to keep it in a container with toasted flour. In that way, a Camahueto cannot smell it and does not know that they are taking away its horn. If the creature suspects someone of doing this, it may result in a dangerous situation for the people.

35        According to a Chilote story, there was once a motorboat coming from Cucao to Puerto Montt and one of the passengers was secretly carrying a Camahueto horn when suddenly a storm started and the boat almost sank. A wise old man from the island on board warned: *“There is a person here who is carrying something magically dangerous for all of us. If so, you’d better throw it into the sea”*. The woman carrying the horn  
40        followed the man’s words and got rid of it. At that very moment, the storm stopped.

