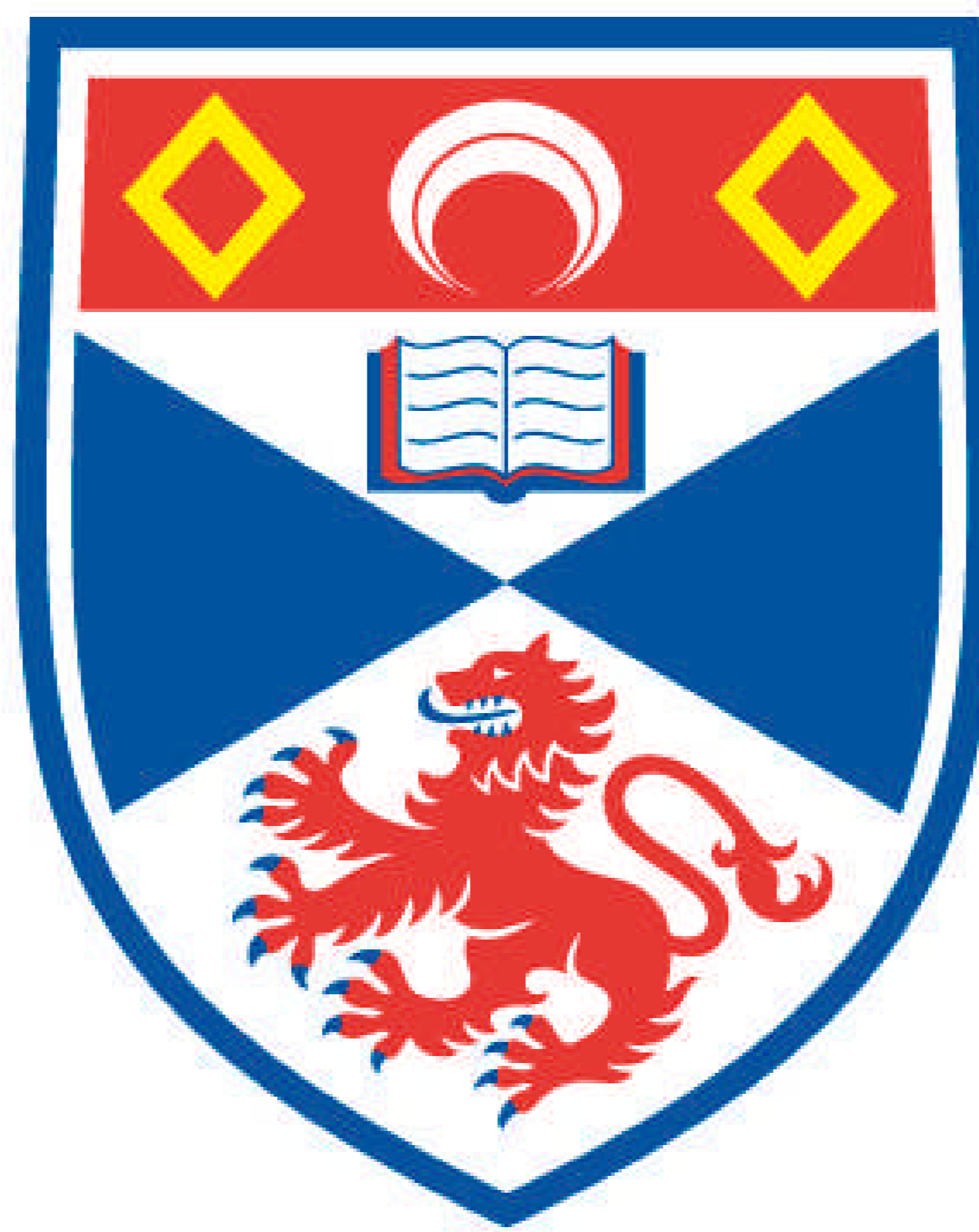


**LOVE AND HATE AMONG THE PEOPLE WITHOUT THINGS :
THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS OF THE ENXET
PEOPLE OF PARAGUAY**

Stephen William Kidd

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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LOVE AND HATE AMONG THE PEOPLE WITHOUT THINGS
the social and economic relations of the Enxet people of Paraguay

Stephen William Kidd

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews

October 1999



To Sandra, Sarina, Rebecca and Alexander

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the social and economic relations of the Enxet indigenous people of the Paraguayan Chaco region who place a high value on egalitarianism, generosity and personal autonomy. However, during the twentieth century their land has been colonized by cattle ranchers and they have been obliged to enter the market economy.

While anthropologists have proposed a range of theories to explain indigenous social and economic relations, the main concern of this thesis is to examine how the Enxet themselves explain their social behaviour. The Enxet make salient use of “emotion words” when discussing their social and economic practices. For instance, a fundamental dichotomy in Enxet thought is between “love” and “hate” and much of their discourse centres on these two concepts. The Enxet seek to create “good/beautiful” people who know how to act appropriately. In certain contexts they should practise “love” while in other contexts “hate” is acceptable.

Enxet social organization should not be understood as a structure but as a process, as something that is being continually created. I will consider different aspects of this process through an examination of kinship, co-residence, marital relations, “brideservice” and inter-community contact, and I will describe how economic transactions are key elements in the generation of “loving” social relations. However, self-centred practices create many challenges to a harmonious community life and I will consider how the Enxet strive to overcome them. Of particular interest will be demand sharing which responds, in part, to a strongly-held egalitarian ethic but can also provoke disharmony and discomfort in community life. I will also discuss commodity relations within Enxet communities and challenge the common assumption that money is necessarily destructive of indigenous social relations.

I will conclude that the overriding goal of the Enxet is the attainment of tranquillity in both their personal and social lives. For the Enxet, economic relations are not about gaining material wealth but about living well with other people. They recognize that personal affective comfort is dependent on engendering tranquillity in other people. Therefore, the “emotion words” they use to explain their social behaviour should not be regarded as merely referring to “feelings” but as encompassing an aesthetics of social behaviour.

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A NOTE ON ENXET ORTHOGRAPHY

In the thesis, I have used the Enxet orthography that was developed by the Anglican Church of Paraguay in the early 1990s.

The letters of the Enxet alphabet can be pronounced as follows:

<i>a</i>	“a” as in <u>ba</u> g
<i>á</i>	“ar” as in <u>a</u> r
<i>e</i>	either “e” as in <u>e</u> gg or “i” as in <u>i</u> nn
<i>é</i>	“ay” as in <u>sa</u> y
<i>ê</i>	nasalized “e”
<i>g</i>	“ng” as in <u>so</u> ng
<i>h</i>	“h” as in <u>hu</u> t
<i>k</i>	“k” as in <u>ke</u> pt
<i>l</i>	“l” as in <u>li</u> d
<i>m</i>	“m” as in <u>mu</u> d
<i>n</i>	“n” as in <u>nu</u> t
<i>o</i>	“o” as in <u>bo</u> ttle
<i>ó</i>	“oa” as in <u>bo</u> at
<i>p</i>	“p” as in <u>pe</u> n or “b” as in <u>ba</u> g
<i>s</i>	“s” as in <u>as</u> pect
<i>t</i>	“t” as in <u>ta</u> p
<i>w</i>	“w” as in <u>wa</u> sp
<i>x</i>	lateral fricative
<i>y</i>	“y” as in <u>ye</u> s
<i>’</i>	glottal stop

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1889, the Anglican missionary W. Barbrooke Grubb arrived in the Paraguayan Chaco to begin a sojourn of over thirty years among the Enxet indigenous people. He found them to be “thrifless, lazy and selfish” (Grubb 1911:189), victims of a “socialism” that had “dwarfed and stunted every characteristic” (1911:191). The aim of Grubb’s mission was to “reclaim the Chaco peoples for civilization and for Christ” (1914:282) so as to “elevate them spiritually and temporally” (1914:210). Consequently: “We found it absolutely necessary, if we were ever going to raise the people above the low level in which we found them, to oppose this social system” (1911:192). As Grubb (1914:212) explained to a young Enxet man:

“You are aware that your people will never advance so long as they remain like the deer, eating grass when and where he finds it, but saving none for times of scarcity; or like the wolf which eats all the eggs of the ostrich, leaving none to be hatched out, and thus secure a future and greater food-supply.”

Grubb (1911:193) concluded that the missionaries had been successful in their endeavour:

... a complete social revolution has taken place amongst this people within the last twenty years, we find them no longer communists, but self-reliant workers, accumulating property by their own efforts, and responding cheerfully and heartily to the claims which a Christian civilization makes upon them.

Ninety-five years after Grubb, I too arrived in the Chaco as an Anglican missionary with a similar aim of bringing about a transformation in the Enxet people. Before journeying to Paraguay I had read Grubb’s writings but, after a few weeks residence on the mission station of Makthlawaiya, I began to suspect that Grubb’s claim of having achieved a radical transformation was somewhat over-optimistic. True, Christianity had apparently taken hold, western clothing had replaced the feathers, deer skins and woollen blankets of the previous century, people gained their living as wage labourers, while football and volleyball were the major pastimes, yet the Enxet still remained stubbornly “egalitarian” or, as they describe it, as “people without things.” I was struck not just by their great poverty but, even more, by the fact that everyone was poor. After almost one hundred years of dedicated mission work, one could not help reaching the conclusion that little, if any, progress had been made. As missionaries, we were as convinced as Grubb that the cause of that poverty was the social system, particularly the all-pervading influence of sharing. We tried our

best to teach people the benefits of saving and investing their income but their attachment to an economy of immediate consumption appeared unbreakable.

Fortunately, though, this thesis is, in part, the product of a process of personal conversion. As my Christian faith withered away, I gradually developed a different perspective on Enxet culture and social life and my personal mission changed from one of transformation to a desire to share in the life of the Enxet. Rather than seeking to eradicate Enxet social practices I became increasingly committed to trying to understand - and experience - them. I began to wonder why certain economic practices had persisted for so long within a radically transformed social, economic and political context in which the expansion of the State and the market economy had apparently destroyed the independence of the Enxet, converting them into a source of cheap labour on the ranching and farming establishments of the settler population. And, why was it that so many years of missionary endeavour had resulted in ignominious failure?

However, since beginning my studies in anthropology, I have become aware that I am not alone in seeking answers to these questions. Indeed, one of the major issues to exercise the minds of those anthropologists engaged in research among hunter-gatherer and lowland South American peoples is how, despite an almost total absence of factors - such as “rules” and “laws” - that are usually considered indispensable to social cohesion and control, the essentially egalitarian social relations of these societies persist through time. As with the Enxet, this “adhesion to tradition” has continued despite their intimate contact with and, indeed, domination by a western capitalist society predicated on antithetical hierarchical principles.

At this point, I should clarify that, although my research was undertaken in Paraguay, I will draw on comparative theoretical and ethnographical material from both lowland South America and the field of hunter-gatherer studies. Interestingly, despite the remarkable comparisons that can be found between many hunter-gatherers and the indigenous peoples of lowland South America, it is rare for anthropologists from one field of study to refer to the work of those who have carried out their investigations in the other. Yet, similar terms have been utilized to classify both types of society. For instance, Viveiros de Castro’s (1992:6) description of the social organization of the Brazilian Arawaté as “minimalist” echoes Woodburn’s (1979) use of the term “minimal politics” to describe the social system of many hunter-gatherer

groups,¹ while the term “egalitarian” has been extensively used by anthropologists in both fields of study.²

One reason for this intra-disciplinary paucity of communication and intellectual cross-fertilization is suggested by Ingold’s (1986:198) observation that “societies” have traditionally been classified on technological grounds. He points out that this method of classification is derived from the evolutionary schema of the nineteenth century in which the simple tools of “foragers” placed them at the bottom of the scale, while the horticulture practised by most of the indigenous peoples of lowland South America located them some steps up the ladder. Within the field of hunter-gatherer studies Woodburn (1980; 1982) has been highly influential in maintaining a technologically-based distinction between types of social organization, suggesting that “egalitarian” societies are entirely incompatible with any form of agricultural production.

However, Woodburn’s claim is contradicted by the ethnographic evidence from lowland South America where “egalitarian” social organizations are widespread.³ In fact, if we were to exchange a classification of societies based on technology for one predicated, more logically, on social organization, it would be difficult to separate many hunter-gatherer and lowland South American peoples.⁴ Indeed, I am convinced that it is this confusion over classification that has given rise to the erroneous characterization of Chaco indigenous peoples as “foragers” despite their commitment to horticulture and stock-rearing.⁵

The relative insignificance of production and technology in determining social organization is highlighted by the changes that have taken place in the economies of hunter-gatherers as they have become incorporated into the market economy without this causing any parallel deep-seated transformations in their social organization. In fact, as will become clear, I am not particularly concerned in this thesis with examining production from a technological perspective but will place much more stress on social relations. For this reason, I will draw freely on the work of

¹ Cf. Overing (1993a:192).

² Cf. Thomas (1982:1), Rosengren (1987:75ff), Overing (1989a:88; 1989b; 1993b:46) and Woodburn (1980; 1982).

³ See Overing (1989b:161f) who claims that lowland South American societies are best understood as topological variations of an encompassing egalitarianism. Cf. Rosengren (1987:75ff) and McCallum (1989:281).

⁴ Cf. Thomas (1982:6).

⁵ See: Metraux (1946), Renshaw (1986; 1988), Kidd (1992), Gordillo (1992), Fritz (1994), Miller (1995), Braunstein and Miller (1999), and Mendoza (1998).

anthropologists who have undertaken research among both hunter-gatherers and the indigenous peoples of lowland South America.

The essential concern of this thesis is to gain an understanding of social relations among the Enxet - from the perspective of the Enxet themselves. However, the main focus of the thesis will be on one aspect of social relations, that of “economic relations,” a topic that has promoted much theoretical debate among anthropologists who have worked with hunter-gatherers and the indigenous peoples of lowland South America. Interest in this debate has mainly been on the practice of sharing and there have been many attempts to explain - as Ingold (1986:113) puts it - the ontological level at which sharing operates. However, before moving on to a discussion of the main theories that have been proposed by anthropologists, I will first of all attempt to define what is meant by the term “sharing.”

1.1. Explaining Sharing

As Overing (1992:180f) has pointed out, the anthropology of lowland South American indigenous peoples has been strongly influenced by Mauss’s (1990 [1950]) and Levi-Strauss’s (1969:61) characterization of the internal economic relations of indigenous communities as based on *exchange* and *reciprocity*. Both terms frequently appear in the literature to describe the daily transactions that take place within indigenous communities⁶ but, as Overing (1992:180f) explains, exchange and reciprocity are more likely to be characteristic of the type of relations that pertain between strangers.⁷ In fact, sharing, which is the dominant form of material transaction within lowland South American indigenous communities, is non-reciprocal in nature and implies a donation from a giver to a receiver with no

⁶ See, for example, Siskind (1973:83), Clastres (1987:95), Santos Granero (1986b:19; 1991:45), Renshaw (1988:340), Gordillo (1992:113), Campbell (1995:95) and Reed (1995:84f). A similar use of the terms “reciprocity” and “exchange” also appears in the literature on other “egalitarian” peoples world-wide as evidenced in the work of Marshall (1976:360, 368), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:299), Myers (1986:111) and Endicott (1988:118). At times, the use of these terms may be the result of a careless choice of vocabulary but, occasionally, “reciprocity” is presented as a specifically indigenous conception (see Renshaw 1988:340; Endicott 1988:118). However, I should clarify that, although I will argue that relations within the internal economy of indigenous peoples are usually non-reciprocal, occasionally reciprocity does occur. Cf. Overing (1992:195).

⁷ Cf. Renshaw (1986:202; 1988:340). Renshaw also states that exchange is characteristic of the way that Chaco indigenous people deal with outsiders such as missionaries and anthropologists. In fact, the relationship with such people is usually asymmetric since such powerful “outsiders” are expected to provide gifts for the indigenous people with no material return expected. Such a situation does not contradict the fact that exchange is more characteristic of relations with outsiders but, instead, necessitates a re-assessment of our conception of alterity among indigenous American peoples. As I have discussed elsewhere (Kidd 1997b), categories of both the missionary and the politician are conceived of, by indigenous people, as forms of leader and, as a result, are expected to be generous (cf. Overing 1996a; 1998).

calculation of returns.⁸ Frequently, though, anthropologists have replaced “sharing” by “generalized reciprocity,” a term that was first coined by Sahlins (1974:193f) but which, as Price (1975:5) points out, is somewhat confusing given that “reciprocity” is used to describe potentially asymmetrical flows of goods.⁹ Consequently, I will continue to employ the term “sharing” because it encapsulates transactions that are clearly asymmetrical in nature as well as those that appear to be characterized by a degree of mutuality.¹⁰

Anthropologists have proposed a variety of theories to explain sharing. The most basic is that it is a natural human behavioural trait yet, as Ingold (1986:114) points out, this reduces sharing to a thing that humans “have” and, “as much a part of our nature as standing on two feet.”¹¹ It removes intentionality, “the conscious control of self in dealing with other persons” (1986:115) and, as Ingold notes: “Sharing consists not in behavioural events whose consequence is the consumption of food by individuals other than the procurer, but in the wilful regulation of such events by the person or persons responsible” (1986:115). Indeed, this stress on intentionality underpins the other most common explanations of sharing:¹² the first views sharing as a form of *insurance policy*; the second stresses rules and *obligation*; while the third emphasizes a desire to create *sociality*.¹³

The *insurance policy* explanation is, according to Bird-David (1992:33), mainly associated with ecologically-minded scholars but, notwithstanding, it has frequently been invoked by a wide range of anthropologists from differing theoretical backgrounds.¹⁴ Its essential premise is that people share when they have surplus food so that, in times of shortage, they can make demands on those to whom they have given food in the past. While the explanation appears compelling, it may be faulted

⁸ Cf. Price (1975:4), Woodburn (1982:441), Thomas (1982:53), Fortes (1983:25) and Gow (1991:166). See also Gibson (1988:175) for a particularly idiosyncratic definition of sharing.

⁹ Cf. Belaunde (1992:20).

¹⁰ A number of anthropologists have begun to employ the term “mutuality” as an alternative to “reciprocity” since the former provides a more accurate reflection of the logic underlying indigenous thought and practice. See Viveiros de Castro (1992:107) and Belaunde (1992:20).

¹¹ See also Ingold (1988:282).

¹² Ingold (1986:113ff) also suggests three main explanations of sharing. Although his first differs from mine in that it stresses sharing as a *behaviour* (which I have already described) his second and third are very similar to mine: sharing as a *rule* and sharing as an *experience of total mutual involvement*.

¹³ Other explanations for sharing can also be found in the literature including: 1) sharing enables people to gain prestige (Dowling 1968:504; Lee 1979: 247f; Ingold 1986:210, 228; Testart 1987:288), although this is refuted by Goldman (1963:85) and Woodburn (1982:440f); and 2) people share to avoid the violence that could arise from accumulation (Collier and Rosaldo 1981:297f). I should also clarify that, while some anthropologists stress only one explanation, others, like myself, are rather more eclectic in their approach.

¹⁴ See, for example, Lee (1968), Woodburn (1972), Marshall (1976:357), Ingold (1980:144), Wiessner (1982), Rivière (1984:95), Cashdan (1985), Renshaw (1986:202f; 1988:340f), Endicott (1988:120), Smith (1988:233), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:15), Gordillo (1993:84) and Reed (1995:84f).

for ascribing to indigenous people a logic of long-term planning for which there is little evidence. Investigators rarely suggest that indigenous people themselves conceive of sharing in this way and it is likely that this theory reflects the anthropologist's own economic logic and presuppositions. In all probability, a consequence of sharing practices - that is, that people receive sustenance from others when they themselves have no food - has been mistaken for an explanation of sharing.

An alternative explanation views sharing as an *obligation* that is either enforced by a set of rules or by others to whom one is beholden,¹⁵ Two theories on the origin of this obligation have gained a certain credence among anthropologists: the first, associated with Fortes, postulates that it derives from putative rules of kinship while the second, which has been most clearly enunciated by Ingold, stresses the overriding rights of the community.

Fortes' (1983) "rules of kinship" explanation is encapsulated in the term "prescriptive altruism"¹⁶ which he defines as: "a rule of conduct that implies recognition of binding mutual interdependence and willingness to forego what we would regard as selfish gratification for the sake of others" (1983:23). By "binding mutual interdependence" he refers to putative rules of conduct that he believes are associated with kinship ties and which are continually generated through the relationships that exist between children and their parents (1983:24). Altruism, he contends, is learnt by children through their experience of freely receiving "life, love and nurture" from their mothers in, what Fortes describes as, "a relationship of pure gift and unconditional mutuality" (1983:24). However, it is in the father-child relationship that he insists, "the notion of obligation laid down by rules is ... made part of the enculturation process" (1983:25). Basing himself on Mauss (1990 [1950]), Fortes (1983:25) argues that all forms of paternal care are prestations, "which imply obligation to make returns [sic]." As a result, "the altruism generated in the relations of offspring with mothers is converted into rule-governed prescription and is, through the agency of father-figures, extended beyond the parental family to the widest range of the kinship structure" (1983:25). Although it is questionable whether many anthropologists would agree with Fortes' characterization of parent-child relations,¹⁷ the conviction that ties of kinship imply some form of binding economic obligation is

¹⁵ At times, the source of this sense of obligation is omitted as if it were self-evident. Cf. Kracke (1978:21), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:21), Endicott (1988:117) and Overing (1993b:54f).

¹⁶ The term "prescriptive altruism" replaces the term - the "axiom of amity" - which Fortes (1970) used in an earlier work.

¹⁷ Fortes universalizes ideas on parent-child relationships which are particular to certain situations. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that Fortes may have universalized his own childhood experiences. See Gibson (1985) and Ingold (1986:115ff; 1988:282) for other critiques of Fortes' ideas on prescriptive altruism.

widespread.¹⁸ It should be clarified that Fortes does not argue that the “rules” of sharing are backed up by legal or economic sanctions. Instead, he suggests that prescriptive altruism is successful, “by reason of the internalized sanctions of conscience” and that its breach can provoke “moral opprobrium” (1983:27). However, once kinship begins to be treated as a process rather than as a fixed structure of enduring relationships, and when it is taken into account that sharing often occurs between non-kin, Fortes theory begins to appear less compelling.

Other anthropologists have suggested the community rather than specific kin as an alternative source of the obligation to share.¹⁹ One of the most elaborated theories has been developed by Ingold (1986:222ff) who proposes that the right of the community to receive shared produce from individuals is predicated on the collective right to land. Unharvested natural resources are held in common by the collectivity and Ingold suggests that an individual’s appropriation of these resources should be understood as a form of “sharing *in*.” Once appropriated, food is held by individuals *on behalf* of the collectivity and is then returned to the community through a process of “sharing *out*.”²⁰ He concludes that, “all sharing *out* - all generalized reciprocity - *must be underwritten by the positive principle of sharing in*”²¹ (1986:234). In effect, Ingold suggests that individuals never attain full property rights to food which remain, ultimately, with the community. Individuals, therefore, have no right of decision over whether or not to share food with other members of the community since, as custodians, their only rights are to perform the distribution.²²

Not all anthropologists are as adamant as Fortes and Ingold in identifying either kinship or the community as the source of obligation in sharing. Others talk in relatively vague terms of a *moral obligation* to share or else describe how individuals

¹⁸ Cf. Siffredi (1977:53), Thomas (1982:59), Myers (1988:58), Santos Granero (1991:236) and Campbell (1995:144, 149).

¹⁹ See, for example, Woodburn (1982:397), Gibson (1985:397; 1988), Ingold (1986:227ff) and Renshaw (1986:201). Fortes (1983) himself recognizes that the community rather than kin can be the source of obligation among certain hunter-gatherer peoples but continues to interpret it within the paradigm of kinship rules. He suggests that, since a community is recognized as being conceptually comprised of kinspeople, the obligation to share applies to all members of the camp (1983:26).

²⁰ In echoes of Fortes (1983), Ingold (1986) relates sharing to the practice of nurturing children. However, rather than concentrating on the roles of mothers and fathers, he states that: “Real people come into the world as helpless infants, and for a very long period they are wholly or partially nourished by food procured through the labour of others. Do they not, then, ‘belong’ to these others by the very same token that their labour and its products ‘belongs’ to them? If that is so, the chain of property can neither begin with individuals nor end in the resources they procure; rather it must end where it began, in the community of nurture from which spring the producers and in which the food is consumed” (1986:227).

²¹ The emphasis is in the original. Similar ideas regarding the overriding importance of rights to land in the question of individual sharing have been expressed by other authors such as Santos Granero (1991:245) and Fritz (1994:103).

²² Cf. Dowling (1968:505).

are required to follow the moral values of the society which include, among others, an ethic of generosity.²³ Indeed, Santos Granero (1991:45) even refers to “love” and “generosity” as *rules*. Yet, an explanation predicated on references to a diffuse *moral obligation* seems unsatisfactory, especially in the face of frequently reported violations of these rules. If people can avoid fulfilling a moral obligation on some occasions, why follow it at all? How, therefore, have anthropologists explained the efficacy of this moral obligation? Some would appear to follow Fortes by stressing some form of “internalized sanctions of the conscience” while Santos Granero (1991:246) refers to the Amuesha belief that unrestricted generosity is an ethical principle that is underpinned by religious considerations. The Amuesha believe that everything belongs to the supreme creator and, consequently, regard themselves as mere beneficiaries of the gods. Although Santos Granero does not clarify whether the Amuesha believe that the violation of the rule of generosity leads to supernatural sanctions, Gordillo (1992:111, 140f) has described how ungenerous people among the Tobas are liable to witchcraft attacks. He, therefore, locates the source of the sense of obligation to share within the realm of the supernatural, although the architects of any sanctions are, in the eyes of the Toba, other human beings. In effect, Gordillo suggests that people share because of the fear they have of the mystical power of others.

In recent years, a third explanation of the intentionality behind sharing has become popular in the anthropology of lowland South America. Associated with authors such as Overing (1989b; 1996b), McCallum (1989), Gow (1991), Santos Granero (1991), Belaunde (1992) and Ellis (1996), it has focused on the symbolic value of sharing in creating sociality and social relationships.²⁴ Parallel to this development, a similar approach has arisen in the field of hunter-gatherer studies as evidenced in the work of Myers (1979; 1986; 1988), Wiessner (1982), Gibson (1985), Altman (1987), Testart (1987) and Bird-David (1994). However, it is in the work on lowland South America that this approach has been most fruitful.

Overing (1996b) focuses her discussion around Sahlin’s (1987:xiff) distinction between two types of social emphases: the “prescriptive” and the “performative.” As she points out: “Peoples who stress the former are attached to social form and institutional rule, while those appreciative of the performative place priority upon practice.” Overing suggests that it would be preferable to replace the term

²³ See, for example, Renshaw (1986:176f), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:11 ff), Smith (1988:233) and Endicott (1988:112).

²⁴ Overing (1989b) has pointed out that Goldman’s (1963) work on the Cubeo was a forerunner in the study of the social meaning of sharing in lowland South America.

“performative” with “generative,” arguing that the latter encapsulates better the Amazonian stress upon modes of fecundity. She claims that, for the indigenous people of the region, “the appropriate act creates the relation, and not the other way round” and her approach is diametrically opposed to that of Fortes (1983) for whom it is kinship that provokes the act of sharing. Indeed, Overing proposes that it is sharing that creates kinship, a process that has been observed among a number of indigenous American peoples including the Cashinahua (McCallum 1989), the Piro (Gow 1991) and the Airo-Pai (Belaunde 1992).²⁵ As I will discuss in Chapter 4, kinship needs to be conceived, not as a structure of fixed relationships, but as a process, in effect a set of relationships that are continually being generated and transformed.

Acts of giving and receiving are, therefore, said to create, maintain and play out sociality between adults.²⁶ People make choices about whom to relate to and consciously create these relationships through the sharing of food and other goods. Certain authors, such as McCallum (1989), Gow (1991) and Belaunde (1992), have stressed the creation of sociality within the community and Overing (1989b:162ff) has noted how it must be achieved daily. Members of the same community, therefore, are said to continually share food with each other and any refusal to give is a denial of kinship (McCallum 1989:206). However, Ellis (1996) contends that the stress on the creation of community is not universal and describes how the Tsimane are much more interested in developing relations with those kin who are resident in other communities. Although, these approaches seem to contain quite different emphases, in Chapter 11 I will suggest that they are more similar than they initially appear.

The three explanatory theories of sharing described above are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, it has been a somewhat artificial device to create clear-cut distinctions between them. Nevertheless, the essential ideas encapsulated by them continually reappear in the literature in one form or the other. However, throughout this thesis I will try to follow Overing’s (1992:181) advice and start from the indigenous perspective on sharing so that priority is given to their theories rather than those of the anthropologist. My aim is to present an Enxet explanation of sharing which I will compare with the theoretical arguments summarized above. I will attempt to show that sharing cannot be conceived of as a unitary category but as comprising a variety of diverse practices. For example, at times it may be purely voluntary while at other times it may be a response to the demands of others. Consequently, any attempt to reduce sharing to one unique explanatory factor is

²⁵ Cf. Renshaw (1986:204) for a similar statement regarding the Chaco region.

²⁶ Barnard and Woodburn (1988:16) appear to be uncomfortable with the idea that sharing creates ties since they claim that durable property, at least, cannot be used to build ties.

doomed to failure and, as I will demonstrate, Enxet theory is eclectic in nature, offering differing explanations for distinct types of sharing. Indeed, given that individual Enxet vary in their understanding of sharing and specific sharing acts, their discourse necessarily contains a variety of contradictions and ambiguities. Nevertheless, it is still possible to distinguish some relatively common shared ideas and processes, and it is on these that I will concentrate.

However, in my consideration of Enxet economic relations I will not restrict myself to sharing since a variety of other forms of economic transactions are found in Enxet communities. For instance, within the household food is “pooled” rather than shared which provides a quite distinct dynamic to economic relations and, while gambling, drinking and borrowing may be considered forms of distribution, they are certainly different in character to our more conventional conception of sharing.²⁷ And, rather than imagining the Enxet as some form of pristine culture, I will take into account that they are part of a market economy that has undoubtedly transformed their economic relations. Therefore, I will also examine commoditization and intra-community employment and will treat money as an integral part of their culture.

1.2 A Discourse on Affects

As will become apparent, the Enxet discourse(s) on economic relations makes salient use of a series of terms that we would recognize as affective in nature. Actions are explained by words that we would classify as referring to “emotions” or “feelings” rather than concepts such as rights, duties and rules. Therefore, when explaining one’s own actions, or those of others, people frequently have recourse to words such as “love,” “hate,” “anger,” “compassion,” “shame,” “timidity,” “fear,” “sadness” and “tranquillity” among others. Of course, since I will be presenting an essentially inside view of Enxet social life, I have no intention of creating an overarching, all-encompassing theory that purports to explain indigenous behaviour throughout lowland South America, but it is noticeable how an emphasis on the affective life has been reported in the discourse of a number of peoples of the region.²⁸ Despite receiving relatively little explicit attention within lowland South American ethnographies, the indigenous discourse on emotions seems frequently to bubble to the surface. Indeed, it has been especially prominent in Overing’s work on the Piaroa²⁹ although perhaps the most systematic study has been Ellis’s (1996) exposition of the

²⁷ I will explain the distinction between *pooling* and *sharing* in Chapter 7.

²⁸ I make no apology for not attempting to create a “big” theory since attempts to fit all indigenous peoples into specific models, such as that attempted by Viveiros de Castro (1996), tend to collapse when brought face-to-face with the diversity of indigenous cultures.

²⁹ See, for example, Overing (1985c; 1988; 1989a; 1997).

Bolivian Tsimane's discourse on anger.³⁰ In other regions, the indigenous discourse on emotions has figured prominently in a number of major ethnographies, with outstanding examples being works by Rosaldo (1980) among the Ilongot of the Philippines, Myers (1979; 1986) among the Pintupi of Central Australia, and Lutz (1988) among the Ifaluk of Micronesia.

The traditional approach to affects in anthropology has been to regard them as natural, as arising from psychobiological processes and, therefore, as universal, implying that the "feelings" of an individual in one culture are the same as those "felt" by other people in other cultures.³¹ As both private and irrational, they were considered to be almost inaccessible to sociocultural analysis and, as a result, were usually ignored (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990:1). Yet, within the last two decades, this naturalist paradigm has been challenged by a number of investigators who have suggested that emotions should not be seen as purely internal states but, instead, as socially constructed.³² Rather than being universally and homogeneously experienced, emotions are increasingly regarded as being learnt through interaction with others (cf. Myers 1986:106). Overing (1985a:12f; 1985c:252f), for example, has described how the Piaroa of Venezuela give lessons to their children on how to express emotions. Therefore, the manner in which emotions are experienced and expressed is understood to vary between cultures. Consequently, Overing's (1985a:10) challenge to anthropologists to "capture both the sense and sensibility of behaviour in general" so that the affective aspects of life are included within their field of enquiries cannot be ignored.³³ To do otherwise would imply the omission of a key area of human social existence.

As well as questioning the universality of emotions - and possibly because of a degree of uncomfortableness with the idea that it is possible to identify, objectively and accurately, the emotions experienced by others³⁴ - a number of anthropologists have challenged the assumption that affects should be understood as bodily "feelings."³⁵ Instead, they propose that anthropologists should stress the realm of social life as the domain of emotions and concentrate on how emotion words are used

³⁰ Other studies in lowland South America have discussed the indigenous discourse on emotions without, though, giving it such a prominent place. See, for example Kracke (1978), Brown (1986), Santos Granero (1991), Gow (1991), Belaunde (1992) and Viveiros de Castro (1992).

³¹ Cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990:2ff), Armon-Jones (1986:81) and Leavitt (1996). One major exception to this trend has been Bateson (1958).

³² See Harré (1986).

³³ Cf. Myers (1979:348).

³⁴ Cf. Leavitt (1996:521).

³⁵ See, for example, Armon-Jones (1986:61), Myers (1986:106), Lutz (1988:7) and Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990:1f).

within the field of social relationships.³⁶ As Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990:11) state, “we must understand emotional discourses as pragmatic acts and communicative performances,” and, “as an operator in a contentious field of social activity.” Essentially, emotion is considered to be an aspect of cognition and, therefore, as intentional in nature³⁷ (Rosaldo 1984:141).

The aspect of discourse that has been most stressed by investigators is “emotion talk,” that is the use of words with an affective content or meaning during social interactions (cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990:10). “Emotion talk” is regarded as closely linked to the pervading moral values of a society and its use is understood as one means of expressing these values in direct and intimate relation to social activity and relationships. According to Myers (1986:105f), “emotions represent forms of judgement: means of evaluating the relationship between an individual and his or her set of circumstances.”³⁸ By commenting on human actions and moral values in affective terms, it is possible to transform the world and social relationships by evoking a response in oneself and in others (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990:12; White 1990:63).

The emotional discourse approach can provide very fruitful results³⁹ but a number of anthropologists have expressed their preoccupation with its lack of emphasis on and, indeed, denial of internal feelings (cf. Lyon 1995; Leavitt 1996). In fact, even the proponents of “emotion talk” do not seem to be totally comfortable with their position and often appear to enter into contradictions. For example, Lutz (1986), despite asserting that emotions are not “statements about introspections on one’s internal states,” tends to employ the verb “to feel” when referring to emotion words (Leavitt 1996: 523). Similarly, Myers (1986) frequently has recourse to the word “feeling” and also admits, albeit in an endnote, that Pintupi emotional concepts do describe “internal states” which the Pintupi themselves refer to as “conditions of the spirit” (1986: 302).

However, this disjunction between *emotions* and *feelings* has recently been challenged by some anthropologists who point out that “an emotion, by definition, implies something ‘felt’” (Desjarlais 1992:101⁴⁰). Consequently, a new approach has

³⁶ Cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990:1f).

³⁷ Cf. Leavitt (1996:522f).

³⁸ Similarly, Lutz (1986:267) suggests that “emotion words are seen as statements about the relationship between a person and an event (particularly those involving another person) rather than as statements about introspection on one’s internal states.”

³⁹ See, for example, Myers (1986), Lutz (1988) and White (1990).

⁴⁰ In Leavitt (1996:523). Cf. Lyon (1995).

been developed - known as the “socio-relational” - which attempts to re-incorporate “feelings” into social analysis. Its roots are probably found in attempts to reinterpret the relationship between emotion and cognition in such a way as to move beyond the mere subsuming of emotion to cognition as proposed by the emotional discourse analysts. This reinterpretation has engaged the interest of a number of anthropologists including Overing (1985a:15), who has described the distinction between thought and affect as “wrongheaded,” and Rosaldo (1984:143), who has proposed that: “Emotions are thoughts somehow ‘felt’ in flushes, pulses, ‘movements’ of our livers, minds, hearts, stomachs, skin. They are *embodied* thoughts, thoughts seeped with the apprehension that ‘I am involved’.”⁴¹ Even Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) who, by their own admission are working “to pry emotion free of psychobiology” (1990:12), admit the “possibility” that emotions are also framed in most contexts and experiences in terms that involve the whole person, including the body. They approvingly cite Bourdieu’s (1977:87ff) concept of body *hexis* which they describe as a set of body techniques and postures that are learned habits or deeply ingrained dispositions that both reflect and reproduce the social relations that surround and constitute them. Indeed, Bourdieu himself (1977:93), in terms that echo Rosaldo, has described bodily *hexis* as, “political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*.”⁴²

Lyon (1995) and Leavitt (1996) are two of the leading theoreticians of this approach⁴³ and they suggest that emotions are “activated,” that is “felt,” by specific social situations. Emotions arise through people relating to one another so that, “emotional behaviour is always relative to an other” and must be seen in reference to its social context (Lyon 1995:257). Leavitt (1996:527) further suggests that:

...emotional experience.....appears to be highly stereotypical in nature, corresponding, as constructionists have maintained, to recurrent social situations and shared cultural definitions. To recognize this is not necessarily to assimilate emotions to cultural definitions or appraisals of situations - an emotion is neither definition nor appraisal, even if it necessarily involves these - but to recognize that the body, too, is social and cultural.

⁴¹ Cf. Lyon’s (1995:257) clarification that, “from the perspective of neuroanatomy, the neocortex and the limbic system, which are both involved in the experience and expression of emotion and the assessment of cognitive input, are also centrally associated with social behaviour.”

⁴² The stress is in the original.

⁴³ Leavitt (1996:525f) states that this approach has its roots in the work of Spinoza (1985 [1677]) and Vygotsky (1972 [1933]).

Leavitt continues by proposing that, if the transindividual nature of culturally marked emotions is accepted, “it should be possible to map associations that are predominantly affective in nature and that centrally involve bodily feeling” leading to the possibility of, “locating situations in which these recur, and identifying feeling-tones typically associated with these situations.”

However, despite its packaging as an innovative perspective on the study of emotions, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the socio-relational approach is little more than a re-stating of commonly occurring assumptions in anthropology which, predicated on a folk model of emotions, consider social events as giving rise to emotional responses which then lead to action responses (cf. White 1990:47). For example, the traditional anthropological study of “shame” and “guilt” appears to use this model, viewing these emotions as operating to check the asocial strivings of the self (Rosaldo 1984:148). Nevertheless, the socio-relational approach does recognize that the experience of emotions varies between cultures.

My approach in this thesis includes elements from both the “emotion talk” and socio-relational approaches but differs in that my main emphasis is on describing and reproducing Enxet discourse. I am not just interested in seeing how individuals use emotion words in social interaction but, at a deeper level, I am concerned to see how the Enxet explain their social behaviour. The reason for my stressing concepts of personhood and affective discourse is because this is how the Enxet talk when reflecting on the dynamics of social life. And, in contrast to writers such as Myers (1986), Lutz (1986; 1988) and those in the Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) volume, my concern is not to fit an Enxet use of emotion words into my own theory but, instead, to represent their discourse as a valid philosophy and theory on social life, recognizing, nevertheless, that it is, by definition, specific to the Enxet people themselves. However, this recognition will not impede me from comparing Enxet philosophy on social life with more encompassing theories suggested by anthropologists to explain social relations among similar peoples, such as those described above for sharing (both of which are local views).

In common with the socio-relational approach, the Enxet view emotion words as reflecting internal “feelings” and often explain their actions as responses to these emotions. Yet, such words cannot just be reduced to “feelings” as illustrated by two Enxet terms that I will translate as “love” and “hate.” Although these words undoubtedly express something that is felt, they can also be used as evaluations and judgements on social relations - in fact, “love” is mutually implicated with kinship - and, in addition, they are also practices, in other words, ways of relating to others.

Indeed, as I will demonstrate, “love” and “hate” is a fundamental dichotomy in Enxet thought and plays a key role in explaining and orienting social behaviour. Only by understanding these terms can Enxet social life be fully comprehended. In fact, this thesis can be seen as an attempt to provide a rich and deep understanding of “love” and “hate” as expressed and practised by Enxet.

Presenting an indigenous philosophy is, though, not without its difficulties and traditional ethnographies that depict indigenous philosophies as coherent, collective texts are increasingly being questioned. Such flawless representations of extremely complex world views do not capture the true flavour of indigenous thought which is often characterized, not only by coherences, but also by logical incoherencies, contradictions, ambiguities and idiosyncratic beliefs.⁴⁴ Yet, even though we recognize this variability, anthropologists are still left with the challenging task of representing complex and contested philosophies within a limited space and in a written format. One suggested solution to this problem is Taylor’s (1996:211f) proposal that we present indigenous philosophies as types of metatexts that aim to spell out and explicate the large part of culture that escapes indigenous conceptualization. Yet, worryingly, she admits that, “the version of culture that we are thus led to produce does not in any sense mirror our informants’ experiential and mental universe.” Consequently, the possibility exists that the anthropologist will produce an account of indigenous thought and culture that is not recognized by any individual member of that culture. Such a strategy, while conforming to certain western academic modes of representation by presenting, “the net of often inexplicit and unelaborate assumptions that is constitutive of culture *as if* it were a metaphysics”⁴⁵ (1996:212), may also, in the process, grossly distort the indigenous people’s own conceptions. It necessarily implies that anthropologists place themselves in a superior position *vis-à-vis* the people they study as if they were the only holders of the truth.

Taylor (1996:203), following Bloch (1992), recognizes that indigenous culture rests, to a great extent, on “that which goes without saying,” those areas of indigenous thought that remain unelaborated by the people themselves and which appear as voids between the areas of their culture which they seem willing and able to share with us. To many anthropologists such empty spaces seem to require bridging or filling in, or, as Taylor (1996:211) puts it, the anthropologist’s task is, “spelling out and explicating the large part of culture that ‘goes without saying’.” Yet, such a position may reflect a misunderstanding of the nature of indigenous philosophies. Rather than being conceptualized as if they were a form of western metaphysics, they should be viewed

⁴⁴ Cf. Overing (1990).

⁴⁵ The stress is Taylor’s.

as pragmatic sets of ideas and, indeed, as tied to practice.⁴⁶ They exist to allow individuals to situate themselves in the world and, above all, to be able to understand their relations to other people and the wider cosmos. Indigenous philosophies are, pre-eminently, social philosophies and their importance lies, not in their coherence, but, rather, in their workability and pragmatic value. If, for example, someone is ill, what is important is the attaining of an understanding of both the nature of the illness and its cure. Indeed, indigenous people are more concerned with finding a cure rather than any abstract logic pertaining to the cure. It is irrelevant that, by gaining this understanding, certain ideas may be expressed that do not logically fit in with others that may be articulated in another context and time. Nor is it significant that people in neighbouring houses or communities may explain things quite differently. Among the Enxet, for instance, I have heard at least five different and contradictory explanations of the source of western diseases yet each one, within its own context, made sense.⁴⁷

Instead of, as Taylor (1996:203) suggests, describing and explaining ideas that, “no one actually thinks and expresses,” perhaps we should take the position that, “that which goes without saying” is, perhaps, better left unsaid. Unelaborated ideas are absent for the simple reason that they are neither relevant nor needed. Indeed, the pragmatic requirements of indigenous cultures are well-served by the non-elaboration of certain ideas since this allows greater freedom for the expression of any necessary incoherencies, inconsistencies and contradictions. In this way, pragmatic understanding and explanation are enhanced rather than diminished, since, in the absence of a complete overarching “text,” contradictions can remain both unperceived and unchallenged.

Yet, clearly, there is something distinctive about the philosophies expressed by those Enxet with whom I had contact. Although individuals possessed their own unique versions, each exhibited many similarities with others and clearly differed from those of other indigenous peoples. Furthermore, each version was expressed within the confines of a unique and common language system which both restricts and perpetuates conceptions of the world, thereby enhancing the potential for shared conceptualizations. Therefore, whilst I am reluctant to elaborate an apparently collective and coherent text, I will, in this thesis, aim to present a “flavour” of Enxet philosophy, a text that both recognizes shared cultural understandings yet preserves contradictions and ambiguities. I trust that, at least at the level of description, what I write will be recognizable to most of the Enxet with whom I came into contact.

⁴⁶ Cf. Meloe (1983a; 1983b) and Overing (1990).

⁴⁷ Cf. Belaunde (1992:72), Overing (1993a:199) and Brown (1995:56).

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

In Chapters 2 and 3 I will describe Enxet concepts of personhood and introduce the reader to the fundamentals of Enxet discourse on thought and emotions. These chapters will provide a necessary background to the rest of the thesis since many of the terms and notions that I introduce will continually re-appear in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 will concentrate on the concept of the *wanmagko* - the “soul/dream” - which encapsulates the twin ideas of dreaming and vitality, and I will examine how the practice of shamanism is intertwined with the journeys of the *wanmagko* in the “invisible world.” Chapter 3 will focus on another aspect of the person - the *wáxok* - which is a physical and metaphysical organ of the body located in the region of the stomach. Not only is the *wáxok* the cognitive and affective centre of the person, it is also the social centre and I will discuss how the Enxet employ the concept of the *wáxok* to explain their social behaviour. I will describe how the Enxet are concerned to create “knowledgeable” people who know how to “love” and “hate” appropriately. The dichotomy between “love” and “hate” is a key paradigm in Enxet thought and practice and I will discuss how the terms imply not only something felt and thought but how they also relate to moral principles, and thus serve as guides to appropriate behaviour. I will also describe how the Enxet place a high value on attaining personal and interpersonal tranquillity.

Chapter 4 will focus on Enxet notions of kinship and I will argue that, rather than being understood as a structure predicated on consanguinity, kinship needs to be conceptualized as a process. I will describe how, within Enxet philosophy, kinship and “love” are mutually implicated and are generated by the practice of nurturing. Consequently, kinship terms are imbued with affective and social meaning and their use indicates how people view their current relations with others. This will lead on, in Chapter 5, to a consideration of patterns of residence within Enxet communities and I will show that, while kinship and marriage are significant factors in orienting the spatial organization of Enxet communities, they do not *determine* residential patterns. Instead, I will suggest that the somewhat disorderly pattern of Enxet communities indicates that a key factor underlying residential choice is “love.”

In Chapter 6 I will describe the contemporary economy of Enxet people and discuss the extent to which they have become part of the market economy. I will show how they have been forced to live on overpopulated areas of land and, as a result, a large proportion of their population must seek employment on the white-owned ranches and farms of the region. This chapter will also provide a basis for an

understanding of interpersonal economic relations among the Enxet, as will Chapter 7 in which I will discuss the Enxet concept of property rights. I will argue that the Enxet understand property to be held privately so that a clear distinction can be constructed between “givers” and “receivers.” An appreciation of this distinction is essential if we are to fully understand the character of Enxet social and economic relations.

The next two chapters will be concerned with two key relationships within the household. Chapter 8 will focus on marital relations and I will describe how relations between Enxet spouses are predicated on a philosophy of companionship. Nevertheless, I will also discuss how, in practice, many marriages fail to live up to this ideal and can be characterized by relations of demand. Chapter 9 will consider the relationship between the Enxet son-in-law and his parents-in-law which, I will argue, needs to be understood within a paradigm of mutuality. I will suggest that the concept of “brideservice” - which has traditionally been regarded as widely practised throughout lowland South America - is inapplicable to the Enxet son-in-law/parents-in-law relationship. Furthermore, I will question its usefulness as an analytical category among many other indigenous peoples of the continent.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 will focus on the practice of sharing which, as I will show, is not a unitary category but, instead, encompasses a range of practices. In Chapter 10 I will examine the practice of voluntary sharing, describing how it is fundamental to the generation of kinship and “love” and arguing against certain theorists who believe that sharing is only undertaken out of a sense of obligation. By practising voluntary sharing, each individual creates his or her own unique field of social relations within the community. I will also discuss whether men or women are responsible for the construction of social relations and will describe how leaders are expected to use their “power” to obtain goods from the outside which should be distributed within the community. While such a distribution should generate “love” it also causes friction and “anger” and can be destructive of community harmony. In Chapter 11 I will argue that voluntary sharing not only generates social relations within the local community but is also actively undertaken by people from different communities. People are concerned to maintain social relations with their wider kindred and I will describe how, in times of conflict, this provides a refuge for people whose personal tranquillity has been disturbed. Within this context, I will re-evaluate indigenous conceptions of the “inside” and “outside.”

Chapter 12 focuses on the practice of demand sharing and I will suggest that this is related to a strongly held egalitarian ethic. Demand sharing and borrowing are both examples of levelling mechanisms which are essential if incipient hierarchies are

to be continually destabilised. However, while voluntary sharing generates “love,” demand sharing can provoke discomfort and exacerbate divisions within communities. Consequently, I will argue that, for a tranquil social life to be feasible, it is necessary for indigenous people to learn how to lie and deceive others convincingly.

Finally, in Chapter 13, I will consider commodity relations within Enxet communities. While many anthropologists argue that the entry of money and commodity relations into indigenous communities leads to the destruction of their egalitarian social organization, I will suggest that, despite the widespread practice of intracommunity commerce and employment, the Enxet have managed to integrate money into their internal economy without it being fatally undermined. Although they face many challenges as a result of their insertion into the market economy, the Enxet continue to maintain, as their overriding goal in life, the attainment of tranquillity and affective comfort.

1.4 The Ethnographic and Historical Setting

The Chaco - the second largest ecosystem of lowland South America - lies to the west of the River Paraguay and is almost entirely flat for hundreds of kilometres. For a distance of approximately 130 kilometres from the River Paraguay, 70% of the land is liable to flooding for up to six months of the year, although the extent of flooding varies from year to year and the water rarely rises to more than fifty centimetres in depth. The flooded areas comprise three main ecological zones: treeless land where the flooding is deepest and most prolonged; palm forest; and low-lying woodland. The non-flooding land is at an almost imperceptibly higher elevation and is, again, divided into three main ecological zones: small areas of savanna grassland - known as *espartillares* in Spanish - which are rarely more than 2,000 metres across; high forest (ie. tall trees); and low forest (ie. short trees). Across the whole area, a large number of streams meander their way to the River Paraguay. During flooding, these streams can become almost impassable but, once the floods have receded, only stagnant pools remain. However, in the many former river beds that are found, water does not escape so easily and so they can take longer to dry out, with some of the deeper ones giving the appearance of small lakes.

To the west of a north-south line 130 kilometres from the River Paraguay the land becomes less susceptible to flooding and, for most of the year, water is restricted to the streams, the former water-courses or small extensions of swamp. Areas of savanna grassland are more extensive but the majority of the land is either high or low

forest. Further west, dense scrub and bush becomes dominant but this only begins on the western edge of the Enxet territory.

The area is located on the Tropic of Capricorn and has a seasonal climate. Winter is relatively dry and cool with day-time temperatures varying between 15°C and 25°C. In contrast, the summer is hot and humid and day-time temperatures vary between 30°C and 45°C. Annual precipitation varies between 1,100mm. near the River Paraguay to 750mm. about 200 kilometres to the west. However, rainfall is highly unpredictable and, even during the wet season, it is not uncommon to experience droughts of up to four weeks. If rainfall is caused by the arrival of weather fronts from the south it usually falls over the whole area but, during the summer, thunderstorms are common, often falling over areas no more than ten kilometres wide.

The Chaco is still a relatively unknown region within anthropology, despite the existence of at least sixteen different indigenous peoples that are grouped into five linguistic families.⁴⁸ The Enxet belong to the Maskoy linguistic family and have been traditionally - and pejoratively - referred to as the Lengua-Maskoy.⁴⁹ Linguistically, they can be divided into two major dialects: the northern Enxet who reside in the area of the Mennonite colonies, and the southern Enxet who can be found in the Anglican zone of influence and are the people among whom I worked. At the end of the nineteenth century, neighbouring peoples to the Enxet included: to the north, the Angaité, Sanapaná,⁵⁰ Enenxet⁵¹ and Ayoreo; to the west the Nivaklé; and to the south and south-west the Toba and the Maká.⁵² (See Map 1.1).

⁴⁸ The linguistic families in the Chaco, with their respective peoples, are: 1) Mataco-Mataguayo, including the Wichí, Nivaklé, Manjuy (Chorote) and Maká; 2) Guaycurú, comprising the Toba, Pilagá and Mocoví; 3) Maskoy, consisting of Enxet (Lengua), Sanapaná, Angaité, Enenxet (Toba-Maskoy) and Kaskihá; 4) Zamuco, with the Ayoreo and Chamacoco; and 5) Guaraní, comprising the Chiriguano and the Guaraní-Ñandeva. See Braunstein and Miller (1999) who also include a linguistic family known as the Lule-Vilela.

⁴⁹ Within the Maskoy linguistic family, the Sanapaná and Angaité also refer to themselves as Enxet.

⁵⁰ Although, in the literature, the Sanapaná are classified as one people, the Enxet recognize two distinct peoples: the *Sápag* and the *Kelyakmok* (as well as the *Yagkelyakmok* which means, literally, "similar to the *Kelyakmok*). The Sanapaná themselves appear to make the same distinction.

⁵¹ When the Anglican missionaries began their work, they reported that the Enenxet were the most northerly group of Enxet. Their appearance as a separate people appears to be relatively recent. Cf. Metraux (1946:226).

⁵² The Maká are, nowadays, mainly settled in Asunción where they subsist from the tourist trade. Because of the disruption caused by colonialism, the Enxet are also now in contact with a range of other groups including the Guaraní-Ñandeva and the Chiriguano. There is also an unconfirmed rumour that a small group of Enxet live in Bolivia, having apparently accompanied the Bolivian army when they retreated during the Chaco War of 1932-36.

Map 1.1. Location of Enxet Territory and Neighbouring Peoples



According to Metraux (1946), in the eighteenth century the easternmost Enxet communities were located approximately one hundred kilometres to the west of the River Paraguay.⁵³ Between them and the river were a number of equestrian peoples known as the Mbayá, the Enimagá and the Lengua-Juiadge (Susnik 1981; 1983). However, as these peoples were decimated by disease or migrated elsewhere,⁵⁴ the Enxet - known at the time as the Machicui - began to move eastwards and, in 1786 a number took up residence in the Roman Catholic mission of Melodía, opposite Asunción⁵⁵ (Susnik 1981:142ff). They intermarried with the remaining Lengua-Juiadge and it is probably for this reason that they became known as the Lengua (Susnik 1981:143).

In 1841, the Enxet were first reported opposite Concepción (Susnik 1981:146) and it would appear that during the nineteenth century they occupied the region inland from the River Paraguay so that, by 1880, their territory stretched from the river westwards for approximately 200 kilometres, with the northern boundary - in the east of their territory - somewhere between the Rio Verde and the Riacho San Carlos, reaching to the south beyond the Rio Montelindo, and, in the west, their territory stretched to the north beyond present-day Loma Plata, a total area of 30,000 square kilometres. They began trading with Paraguayans by, at least, 1853 (Susnik 1981:146) and a trading-post was later established in Carayá Vuelta, on the banks of the River Paraguay.

In 1885, the Enxet were still completely independent but, in that year, the Paraguayan government began to sell off its portion of the Chaco on the London Stock Market⁵⁶ (Pastore 1972:223). Within two years, all the Enxet territory had been sold despite the fact that the Paraguayan state's control over it was non-existent. Most of the land was bought by British entrepreneurs who, in 1888, persuaded the Anglican "South American Missionary Society" to begin a mission among the Enxet with the aim of pacifying them.⁵⁷ The mission was successful in that a peaceful colonization of Enxet territory was made possible, although the Anglicans were helped by the fact that, between 1884 and 1920, the Enxet were also decimated by a series of epidemics which reduced their population by, approximately, 75% so that it reached, perhaps, as low as 2,000.⁵⁸

⁵³ See also Grubb (1911).

⁵⁴ The Mbayá moved to the Mato Grosso where they are now known as the Caduveo.

⁵⁵ Cf. Blujaki (1972).

⁵⁶ See Kidd (1992:57ff) for more information.

⁵⁷ Cf. Stirling (1889:195), Grubb (1911:293f) and Hunt (1933).

⁵⁸ See Kidd (1992:69ff) for more information.

However, Grubb (1911:105) observed that the Enxet were still “practically” independent” in 1910 and, apart from the mission stations, the white-owned settlement furthest inland was Maroma which was only 50 miles from the River Paraguay⁵⁹ (Grubb 1908/9:45). Consequently, the pre-colonial period in the Chaco should be considered to have lasted until at least the beginning of the twentieth century. However, in 1913 a ranch was established 130 kilometres to the west of the River Paraguay⁶⁰ and, by 1921 ranches were springing up even further west.⁶¹ By 1944, cattle ranches had been established over the entire territory of the Enxet except in the north-west which was settled by Mennonites, the first wave arriving in 1928 (Plett 1979:72).

There are, nowadays, over 11,000 Mennonites in the Chaco. They are one of the most prosperous sectors in Paraguay - having built their economy on the back of cheap indigenous labour - and are the owners of more than one million hectares. Their landholdings are, therefore, small - often between 25 and 200 hectares - when compared to the ranches in the rest of the region which are usually between 3,000 and 100,000 hectares in size. Indeed, in 1991, 93% of the department of Presidente Hayes - where the land of the southern Enxet is located - was held in properties of over 1,000 hectares, with 58% in properties of over 10,000 hectares.⁶²

This colonization of their land has caused a radical transformation in the situation of the Enxet. Their internal economy was been enveloped by a market economy which, paradoxically, imposed on the Enxet an almost feudal system, since those who were resident on the ranches became subjected to the power and patronage of the ranch owners. Although the Enxet continued to practise some of their traditional subsistence activities, they, in turn, supplied the landowners with a source of extremely cheap labour. While some of the Enxet were given posts as permanent ranch employees, the majority were used as readily available short-term, seasonal labour. The mission stations of the Anglican Church did not offer a significant alternative to this system. They were essentially cattle ranches run for profit and, although they provided a greater number of jobs than ranches of comparable size, working conditions were not significantly better than on the more benevolent ranches.⁶³ From 1965 to 1980, the only mission station in the area was Makthlawaiya

⁵⁹ See Kidd (1992:57ff; 1995a:45ff) for more information on the colonization of Enxet territory.

⁶⁰ Pride (1932:75).

⁶¹ Thomas (1922:5).

⁶² Source: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería (1991). In the last five years, the process of subdividing these large land-holdings has accelerated.

⁶³ The mission stations could offer more jobs because they had a greater range of activities than a normal ranch. For instance, they had carpentries and employed indigenous people in their stores,

which, by 1978, had become severely overpopulated with a population of 894⁶⁴ on its 3,769 hectares.⁶⁵ The only other land available for settlement by the southern Enxet were 1,000 hectares that had been acquired by a Mennonite missionary to serve as a work-camp for the Mennonite town of Lolita. It was known as Nueva Vida and had approximately 830 residents (Hack 1978:243). Within the Anglican zone of influence another 1,979 southern Enxet lived in a total of 61 communities - which ranged in population from three people up to 170⁶⁶ - and which were scattered throughout the ranches of the area,

Since 1979, the situation has changed radically. Between 1979 and 1989 the Anglicans, Mennonites and Roman Catholics purchased 45,000 hectares for the settlement of the southern Enxet⁶⁷ while, in late 1995, the Paraguayan government acquired a further 35,000 hectares,⁶⁸ bringing the total available to almost 80,800 hectares. As a result, there was a mass exodus from the ranch communities to these new colonies. In addition, the majority of the population of Makthlawaiya moved to the colony of El Estribo while most of the residents of Nueva Vida re-located to Paz del Chaco. By 1996, 85% of the southern Enxet claimed residence on the 80,800 hectares which were divided into nine colonies.⁶⁹ Many ranches were emptied of their indigenous residents and began to employ increased numbers of Paraguayans or attracted in Enxet as temporary employees.

El Estribo is the colony in which I undertook most of my fieldwork and was purchased by the Anglican Church in 1985. It is located to the south-east of the Mennonite colony Menno Sur, next to the Mennonite town of Lolita and the Mennonite-run colonies of Nueva Vida, Paz del Chaco and Armonia (see Map 1.2). It has an area of 9,474 hectares and is a rectangular block of land stretching some 21.65 kilometres in an east-west orientation but is only 4.33 kilometres wide, north to south. In the eastern half, there are a number of areas of savanna-like *espartilla* grass, some as much as 1,500 metres across, and these were identified by the indigenous people as

schools and clinics. They also received subsidies from abroad which allowed them to undertake "development projects."

⁶⁴ Of the 894 people resident on Makthlawaiya in 1978, 810 were Enxet, 62 were Sanapaná and 22 were Angaité.

⁶⁵ Source: Census undertaken by the Anglican Church in 1978.

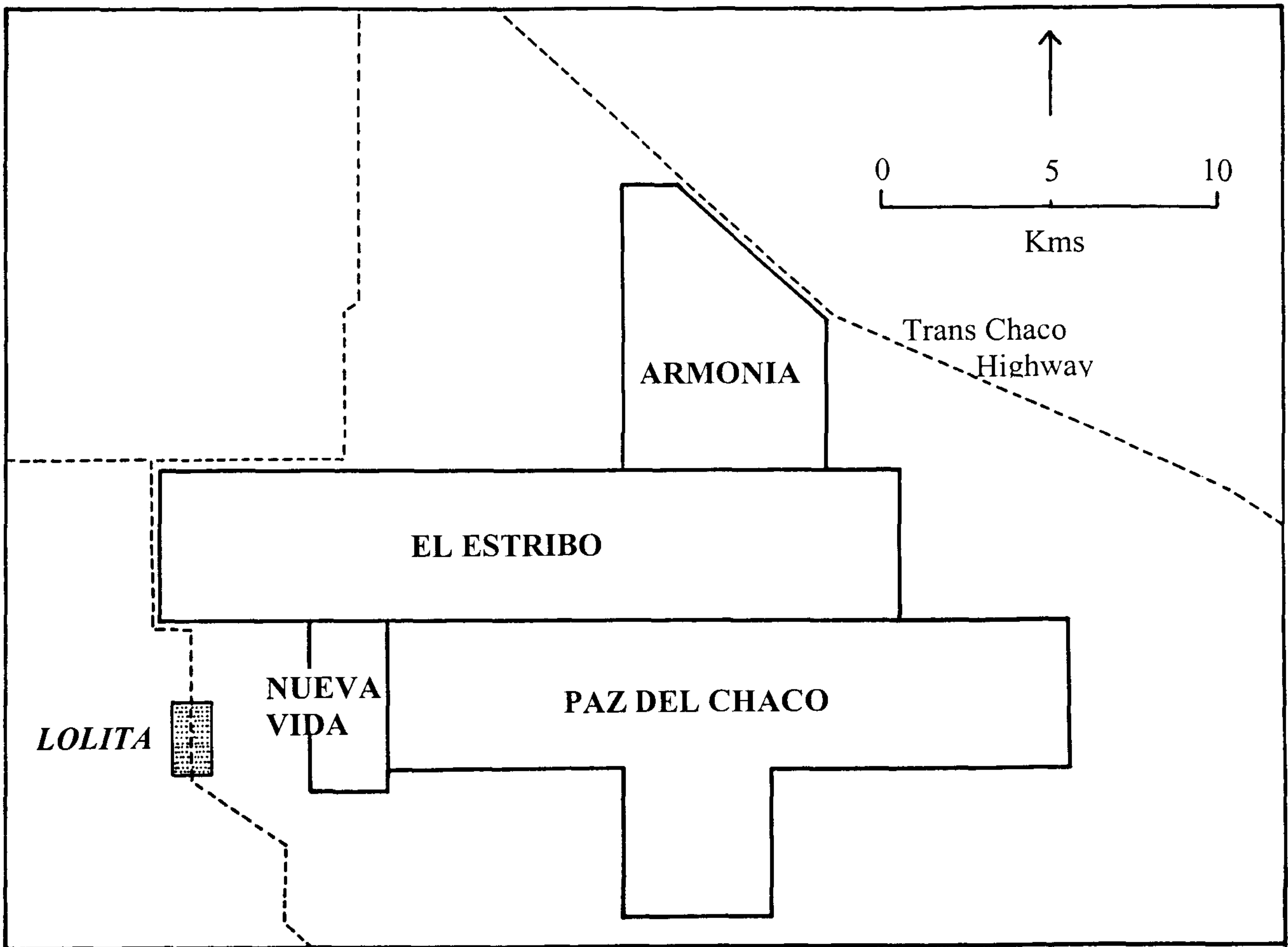
⁶⁶ These figures are taken from a census carried out by the Anglican Church in 1978.

⁶⁷ The Mennonites acquired the present-day colonies of Paz del Chaco (10,909 hectares) and Armonía (4,700 hectares), the Anglicans purchased Sombrero Piri (9,500 hectares) and El Estribo (9,474 hectares) while the Roman Catholics bought Nueva Esperanza (10,500 hectares). See Chase-Sardi et al. (1990) for more details.

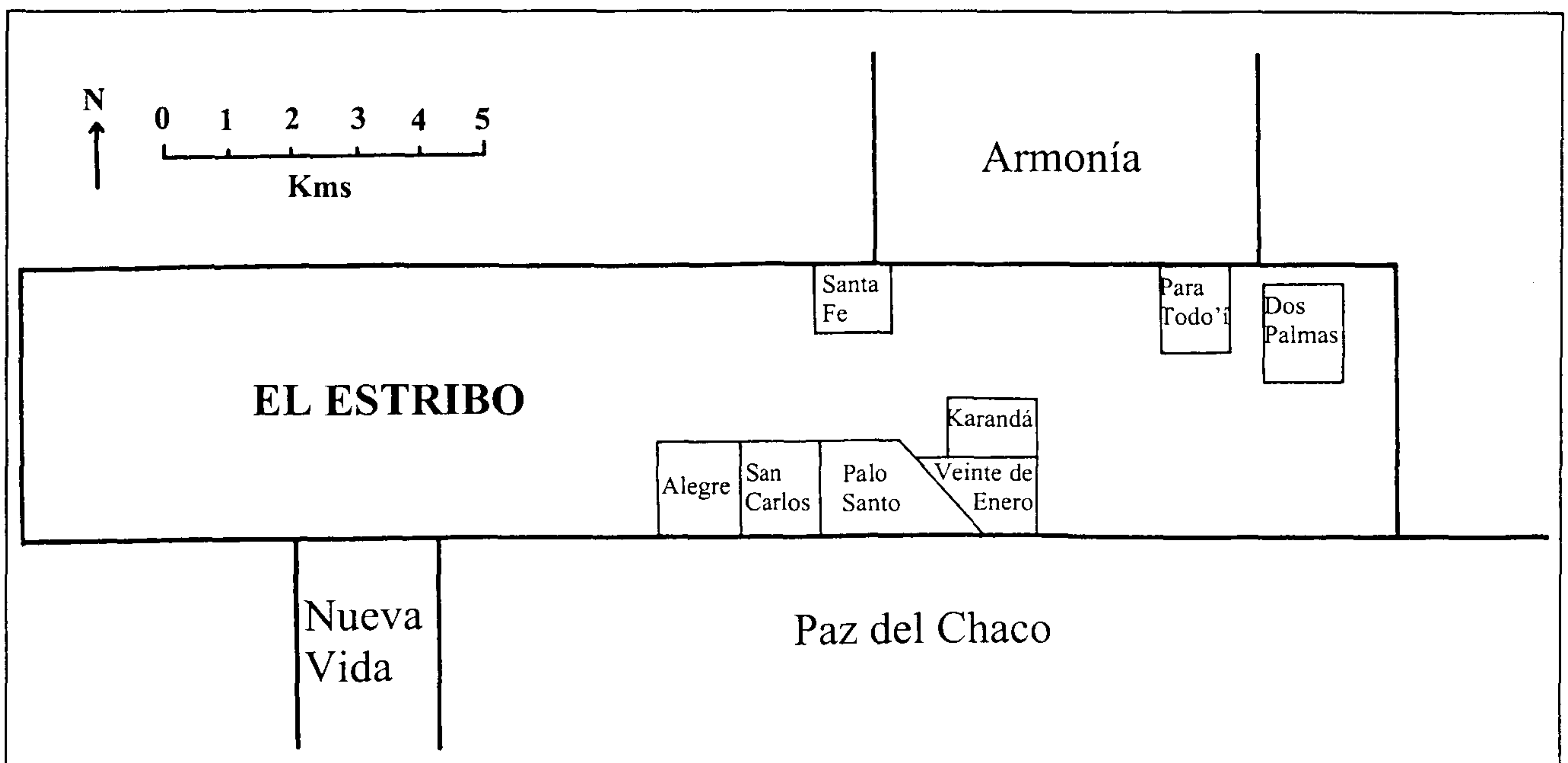
⁶⁸ The two areas acquired by the Paraguayan government in late 1995 were Buena Vista (25,000 hectares) and Espinillo (10,000 hectares). Both areas were obtained only after many years of struggle by the communities involved.

⁶⁹ In other words, 5,700 people out of a total population of 6,700.

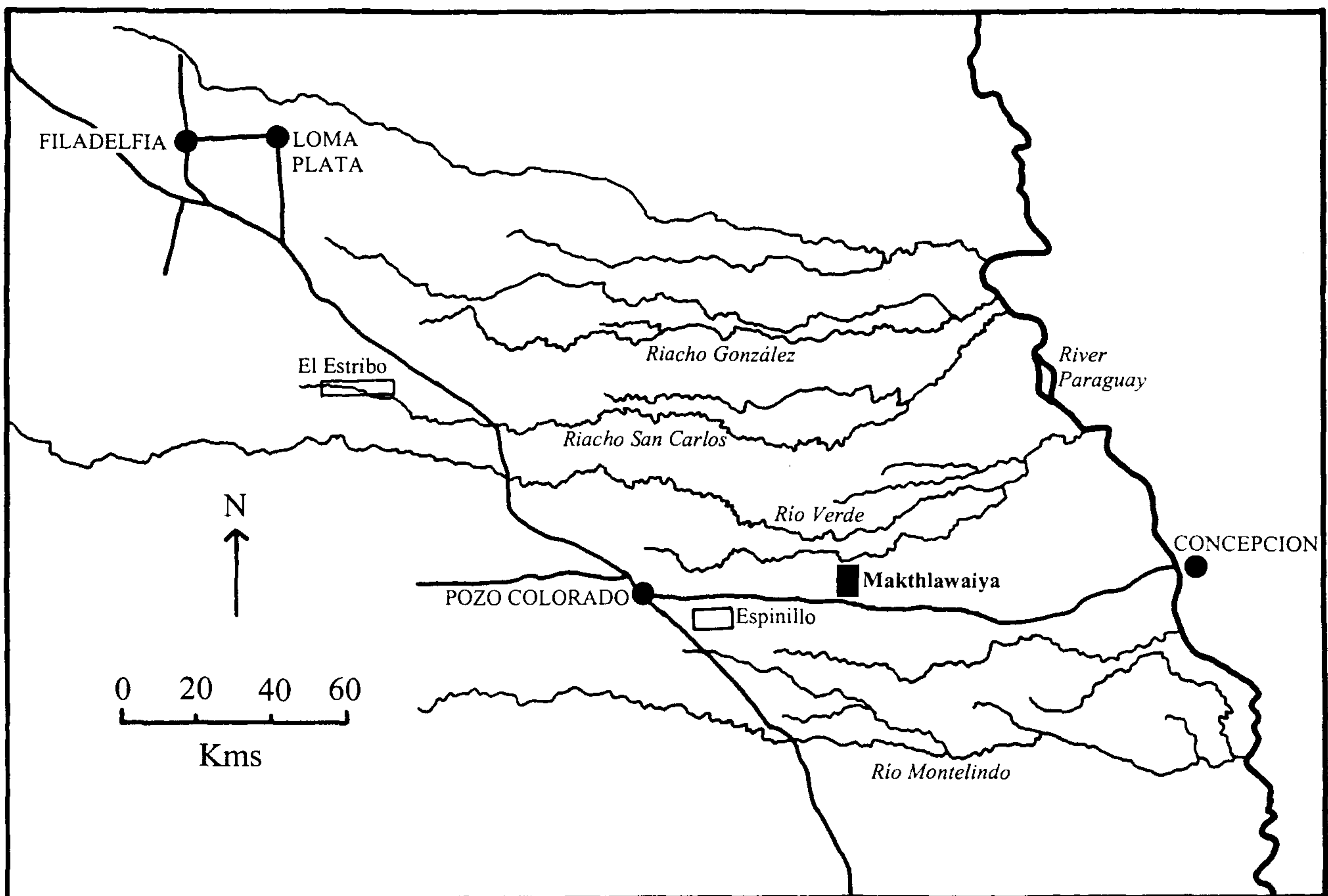
Map 1.2. Location of El Estribo



Map 1.3. Location of Communities within El Estribo



Map 1.4. Location of Makthlawaiya



the areas on which they would like to settle. The Enxet are attracted to areas of *espartilla* grass since they are not prone to flooding and are relatively easily cleared for cultivation. During the initial colonization of the land, which took place between November 1985 and January 1986, eight communities were formed. Four of the communities - Alegre, San Carlos, Palo Santo and Dos Palmas - were made up almost entirely of people from Makthlawaiya, three - Santa Fe, Karandá and Veinte de Enero - were combinations of Makthlawaiya people and those from ranches, while one - Para Todo'í - was almost exclusively made up of people from ranch communities near the River Paraguay. The location of each of the communities can be seen in Map 1.3.

El Estribo was initially settled by approximately 850 people but, by the time I undertook my fieldwork in 1986, there were 1,520 residents, still divided into eight villages. Following the colonization of El Estribo, Makthlawaiya was initially denuded of population, falling to around 250 in early 1986. However, by June 1996, the population had recovered to 545, in part because of the return of some people from El Estribo but also because of in-migration from the surrounding ranches. (See Map 1.4. for the location of Makthlawaiya).

1.5 Anthropological Research among the Enxet

To date, little serious anthropological work has been undertaken in the Paraguayan Chaco and, prior to my own research, I am unaware of any studies that have been based on a period of long-term residence in an indigenous community. Most anthropological investigations have either been visits of a few short weeks or have been carried out by people who have lived in the region and have had cause to visit indigenous communities as part of their work. Both approaches have serious shortcomings and, in reading such works, it is clear that the authors, despite attaining some understanding of indigenous life, have failed to reach a more profound level of knowledge and, crucially, empathy.⁷⁰

The best and most comprehensive study of the indigenous people of the Paraguayan Chaco has been undertaken by Renshaw⁷¹ (1986; 1996). His doctoral thesis includes a good and extensive section on indigenous production but, because he did not focus on one specific people but dealt, instead, with all the indigenous peoples of the region, his work suffers from too broad a focus. Since it is not based on an extended period of residence in an indigenous community it is, at times, somewhat superficial and makes occasional assumptions that are not backed up by ethnographic evidence.⁷²

Ethnographic studies of the Enxet are, again, few in number. Useful information on the pre-colonial and early colonial periods can be gleaned from the works of the first Anglican missionaries especially Hawtrey (1901), Grubb (1904; 1911; 1914; 1919) and Hunt (1933) as well as from the magazine and the annual reports of the South American Missionary Society.⁷³ Supplementary information can also be found in the works of travellers such as Coryn (1922), Alarcon et al. (1925), Gibson (1934), Kamprad (1935), Craig (1935; 1954) and Gibson (1948).

The first anthropologist to undertake research among the Enxet was Susnik (1958; 1977) in the 1950s and 1970s and her work presents a strong linguistic focus. Indeed, her writing style is such that a non-speaker of Enxet would find it very

⁷⁰ See, for example, Loewen (1966; 1967; 1969), Redekop (1980), Chase-Sardi (1970), Susnik (1977; 1995), von Bremen (1987) and Fritz (1994) among many others.

⁷¹ Another good study but one that is more historical in its focus is Regehr (1979).

⁷² Recent in-depth studies in the Argentinean and Bolivian Chaco include Alvarsson (1988), Hirsch (1991), Palmer (1997), Wright (1997), Mendoza (1998) and Gordillo (1999). See also a volume edited by Miller (1999).

⁷³ Earlier references to the Enxet - or Machicui - can be found in Aguirre (1949/50 [1793]) and in the diary of the priest Juan Francisco Amancio González (Blujaki 1972).

difficult to understand her. Unfortunately, her research took place over only a few short months and, as a result, presents numerous, basic linguistic errors which leave a large question mark over the accuracy of her work. The only other anthropological study of any significance was by Loewen (1966; 1967; 1969), a Mennonite anthropologist who undertook research in the area of the Mennonite colonies. However, it appears that he had little direct contact with the Enxet and obtained most of his information from Mennonite missionaries. Consequently, his works is also riddled with errors.

An excellent ethnobotanical study was undertaken by Arenas (1981) and includes a large body of myths as well as substantial transcripts of dialogue from his informants on such topics as shamanism and food production. There have also been a number of small-scale studies undertaken by Hack and Bolland (1961), Lind (1981), Stahl et. al. (1982), Wallis (1986) and Stunnenberg (1993) as well as my own earlier works, the most detailed being an investigation of religious change among the Enxet⁷⁴ (Kidd 1992). Further to the north, Redekop (1980) has examined relations between the Mennonites and the Enxet, but looked at the topic from an essentially Mennonite perspective.

1.6 Locating my Research

This thesis is the fruit of over ten years close contact with the Enxet people, including over six years residence on their communities. I first arrived in Paraguay in March 1984 as an employee of the South American Missionary Society (SAMS) to work as an agriculturalist on an integrated rural development project - known as *La Herencia* - that had been begun by the Anglican Church of Paraguay in 1980 to facilitate the settlement of the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná peoples on their own colonies. I took up residence on the mission station of Makthlawaiya which, at the time, was staffed by two British families, two single British nurses, six Paraguayan families and an unmarried Paraguayan teacher. Most of the staff lived in the centre of the community around a plaza which was surrounded by the houses of the indigenous population which, at the time, numbered over 1,000. I was the exception in that I lived in a room at one end of the clinic, which was located at the southern edge of the community although, given the compact nature of the community, it was only one hundred and fifty metres from the plaza.

⁷⁴ See also Kidd (1995a; 1995b; 1997a; 1997b; 1997d; 1999a; 1999b).

As soon as I arrived in Makthlawaiya I began to learn the Enxet language while my work entailed the supervision of a small number of agricultural projects and occasional visits to isolated ranch communities. However, in 1985 I became responsible for co-ordinating the settlement of El Estribo and, from November of that year, I spent my time alternating between my home in Makthlawaiya and the new colony. Whenever I was in El Estribo I stayed with six different indigenous families from distinct communities, trying to spend more or less equal amounts of time with each one. In Makthlawaiya, the indigenous population had dropped to less than three hundred since most people had moved to El Estribo. In 1986, we took the decision to hand over titles of the colonies to their residents - although this turned out to be a long-drawn out experience - and, with this in mind, we began to reduce the number of non-indigenous residents on Makthlawaiya.

In March 1987, I returned to Britain to be married and it was only in August 1988 that my wife and I arrived back in Paraguay, once again taking up residence in Makthlawaiya. By that time there were only two other non-indigenous families on the mission station - both Paraguayan - and one of them was expelled by the community in April 1989. The last Paraguayan family left in July 1990 and during the next year my wife and I - and newly born daughter - were the only non-indigenous residents on Makthlawaiya. I refused to have any responsibility for running the colony and told the indigenous population that they had to treat the land as if it was already theirs, although it was only in June 1991 that the land title was eventually handed over. The houses of the former expatriate and Paraguayan staff had all been occupied by indigenous community members and during our three years on Makthlawaiya we developed close relations with a number of indigenous families, especially with our neighbours.

From November 1989 my work also underwent a dramatic change as I became responsible for running a programme to provide indigenous communities with legal support in their land claims. I began to travel extensively throughout the area - mainly by horse - reaching most of the Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité communities in the Anglican zone of influence. In each community I stayed in the houses of the indigenous residents, enhancing my understanding of life on the ranch communities.

On leaving Paraguay in August 1991, my wife and I decided not to renew our contract with the SAMS and, instead, I began to study Social Anthropology at the University of Durham. In October 1992, I began my doctoral studies at the London School of Economics but, in May 1993, I put my doctoral studies on hold to return to Paraguay to continue to support the indigenous people in their land claims, this time

backed by a German organization *Dienste in Übersee*. Much of my work was legal and political and, since it demanded my presence in the capital, we decided to live in Asunción. Nevertheless, I continued to travel frequently to those communities that were claiming land, including Makthlawaiya and El Estribo. We also had a steady stream of Enxet visitors to our house and were rarely without at least two or three overnight guests.

However, between September 1994 and October 1995 my visits to the Chaco were somewhat curtailed as I concentrated my efforts on setting up and running a new organization - called *Tierraviva* - which was to take over the responsibility of providing support for the land claims. My family returned to Britain in June 1995 and, once my contract with *Dienste in Übersee* finished at the beginning of November, I took up residence in El Estribo to begin an eight month period of concentrated fieldwork. For the first two months I lived with a family in the community of San Carlos before building my own hut some ten metres from their house. This arrangement enabled me to remain as part of their household - and I ate and spent much of my leisure time there - but also gave me the freedom to entertain my own guests with whom I could have private conversations.

During this time I shared in the life of the community, cultivating my own garden, visiting and being visited, playing football every afternoon, attending church services and other community meetings and participating in shamanic healing ceremonies. Most of my time was spent in the communities of San Carlos and Palo Santo although I was also a regular visitor to Karandá, Veinte de Enero and Santa Fe. I also made three journeys to Makthlawaiya for about a week each time and spent a further week in the colony of Yánekyáha which had only recently been settled. Within El Estribo I travelled by bicycle and journeyed between the different colonies by bus.

During my time in Paraguay I had continually to re-invent myself to fit in with a specific status and role at any particular time. Having arrived in Paraguay as a somewhat naive evangelical Christian - although one who was inspired by liberation theology - I remember believing that the shamans were in league with Satan and that indigenous dancing was both morally corrupting and spiritually dangerous! However, due to a personal refusal to preach or teach Christianity to the Enxet (I was convinced that that was the task of the indigenous church) my relations with the Enxet became closer and this, combined with an increasing disillusionment with the corrupt and racist practices of the Anglican Church, led to my Christian faith becoming undermined. This process of re-conversion continued in Britain in 1987/88 when the SAMS sent me to the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham where I attended a series of

courses by liberal theologians and, on returning to Paraguay, I began to participate in shamanic ceremonies and to encourage the indigenous community of Makthlawaiya to re-commence their traditional dances which the missionaries had banned forty years earlier.⁷⁵ As my Christian faith faded away, I decided to convince the Enxet of my transformation by drinking alcohol, occasionally smoking a pipe and participating in their dances. As these activities were regarded as profoundly un-Christian, the Enxet quickly understood that, despite being employed by the Anglican Church, I was not of the Anglican Church. Consequently, I was able to enter into a much deeper relationship with them, becoming close friends with a number of people. Although the other missionaries were aware that I was changing, they did not understand the extent of my betrayal. If I had admitted my loss of faith, I would almost certainly have been sent back to Britain.

On returning to Paraguay in 1993, I became much more involved in national politics and, without realizing it, the Enxet began to regard me as a powerful leader in their struggle to regain their land.⁷⁶ Over a two year period, the Enxet were transformed from an unknown indigenous group to significant actors within national politics, featuring prominently in the national media. I was perceived by the Enxet as the leading force behind this movement and they were willing to back whichever political action I suggested. When I came under attack from politicians and landowners - which included a couple of death threats - this only enhanced my status in the eyes of the Enxet.

However, on beginning my fieldwork in El Estribo I withdrew from any political role - which was transferred to *Tierraviva* - and reinvented myself as a member of the community. I eschewed any leadership role on the colony, acting instead, despite my advancing years, like a young man. Despite some attempts to turn me into an “adviser” of the colony, I became, after a couple of months, an accepted part of daily life. Those who knew me better became more interested in my goal-scoring potential on the football field than in any power I could exert in the political arena, although they were always aware that it was held in reserve.⁷⁷

I have, therefore, undertaken research under a variety of guises and have kept systematic notes of my experiences since 1986. A prolonged residence among the Enxet has given me a good knowledge of their language and, since few of them speak

⁷⁵ Some dances had been banned since the foundation of Makthlawaiya in 1907.

⁷⁶ See Kidd (1997d).

⁷⁷ See Chapter 14 for an account of my one incursion - during my fieldwork - into the problematic field of indigenous/Mennonite relations.

Spanish,⁷⁸ most communication between us took place in Enxet. This influenced my research methodology in that I obtained most of my data from everyday conversation rather than by using set-piece interviews that would be translated at a later date. My decision to focus on “emotion words” meant that I made a mental note whenever one was used in conversation and, as soon as possible, it was recorded in writing in context. Having thus collected hundreds of examples of emotion words, by examining how they were used in daily discourse as explanations of behaviour, I have tried to construct a picture of an indigenous philosophy of social and economic relations. Although certain concepts and ideas were discussed with different people, it is hoped that this has added to rather than been the basis of my understanding.

My focus on daily conversation has, I believed, facilitated my aim of studying normal, everyday life rather than concentrating on the “exotic” rituals and cosmovisions that have been the staple of much lowland South American ethnography - although, as will become clear, this aspect has not been ignored. This approach has been greatly influenced by the work of Joanna Overing (1989b; 1996b) who has described the high evaluation placed by the Piaroa upon matters of everyday existence. She notes that, “we need to pay attention to our *lack* of consideration for the ‘ordinary’ skills of everyday life; because of our tendency to denigrate the everyday, the anthropologist may not see it as important” (1996b). In this thesis, therefore, it is the familiar that has been stressed and an attempt has been made to understand the practical skills of daily social living exhibited by the Enxet and to which they continually refer in their everyday discourse. Consequently, it is *social* anthropology that is my concern and not some abstract notion of “exotic” culture or structures which, perhaps through their unfamiliarity with the native language, may have waylaid other anthropologists. My work should, therefore, be seen as inspired by such classics of the social anthropology of lowland South America as Overing Kaplan’s work on the Piaroa (1975), Rivière’s (1969) investigation of the Trio, and, before them, Goldman’s (1963) treatise on the social life of the Cubeo.

⁷⁸ In Paraguay, Guaraní is the main spoken language and so it, rather than Spanish, is learnt by indigenous people as a second language.

2. THE *WANMAGKO*: THE SOURCE OF VITALITY

In this chapter and the next, I will describe the Enxet concept of personhood as a basis for understanding how the Enxet use emotion words to explain their social and economic relations. In this chapter, I will concentrate on the concept of the *wanmagko*, which could be translated as the “soul/dream,” and which encapsulates the twin notions of dreaming and vitality. I will describe how the *wanmagko* is central to the practice of shamanism, an activity that, despite over one hundred years of missionary activity, is still widely practised. I will also examine the Enxet notions of illness, insanity and death before, in the next chapter, moving on to a consideration of the *wáxok*, the social, cognitive and affective centre of the person.

Enxet ideas about life and vitality are encapsulated, essentially, within the concept of the [-]*wanmagko*,¹ a problematic term that incorporates elements of the western notions of both dream and soul. The root of the word tells us something about its nature as it is derived from the verb [-]*wanmake* which can be translated as “to be quiet” or “to be silent.” However, the *wanmagko* must be understood in terms of a more all-encompassing silence, one that goes beyond the audible to include all the bodily senses. It is, in essence, associated with an aspect of the universe that, under normal waking conditions, cannot be sensed by normal human beings and which, in effect, is invisible.

2.1 The Universe of Invisible Beings

Although the Enxet conceive of one universe and one reality, how it is perceived by human beings can vary greatly. One restricted perspective is that which people sense with normal sight and hearing, but beyond exists a universe that is much more complete yet only visible under abnormal conditions or to people with special powers. As Langdon (1992:13) notes, the concept of an undivided universe composed of two different realities is common in lowland South America,² and it is important to stress that, for the Enxet, both perspectives of the cosmos - the visible and the invisible - are equally true and contiguous. The Enxet conceive of a multilayered universe - again another common feature of lowland South American cosmologies (Langdon 1992:13) - although people disagree on the exact number of layers. A world below our world is said to exist which is relatively unelaborated, while above the

¹ [-]*wanmagko* is always used with a possessive prefix such as *sekwanmagko* - “my *wanmagko*” - *ekwanmagko* - “her/your *wanmagko*” - etc. However, to facilitate reading, in the rest of the text I will omit the prefix and write simply *wanmagko*.

² Cf. Belaunde (1992:68).

earth most people talk of two worlds, each of which must be entered through a door. The highest level is said to be the home of God (*Dios*), while the world immediately above us is inhabited by a number of beings including the *kelyekhama*, skeleton-like creatures that are the most antagonistic and malevolent class of spirits in the Enxet cosmos³ while, to one side, is an area of light inhabited by the *egyá pam* - “our father” - spirits that seem to have appeared in the Enxet cosmos with the development of the “Our Father” cult in the early twentieth century.⁴

On the level inhabited by the Enxet, there are a vast range of beings that are invisible to the normal eye. Some are classified as *aksok* (“things”) - as are the *kelyekhama* - and include: the *méke apkátek* (“without heads”), which, as their name suggests, have the form of headless human beings; the *yamweyke* (“similar to a cow”) and *yamyátayem* (“similar to an alligator”) which live in water;⁵ tremendously long snakes, almost a metre wide, which are often the pets of shamans; *tamayawhan*, a hairy, honey-eating beast into which menstruating women are transformed if they eat honey or other sweet things;⁶ and a host of others. Many spirits, though, are classified as “people” and include:⁷ the *chóneygmen* (“from the water”), who are said to be short people who dress like Paraguayan soldiers and live in small towns in the swamps; in the drier areas of Enxet territory, further to the west, are found the *walé apyepmeyk* (“the fathers of Paraguayans”) who also look like Paraguayan soldiers and are said by some to be the ghosts of those Paraguayans who died in the 1932-36 Chaco War with Bolivia; *yamegkelána* (“similar to a woman”) is described by some as an attractive white woman with long sharp teeth and is known to be particularly fierce; the *énxet ná pawhak* (“wild men”) and *kelána nawhak* (“wild women”) which were, contrary to expectations, once described to me as driving around in their own vehicles, although they do also tend to indulge in strong drink and parties and are more fun-loving than dangerous; the *hémopey*, which are like small, blond children who indulge in mischievous acts, such as pulling people out from under their mosquito nets at night; and a number of others. Plants and animals also have their “owners” - [-]yókxa - and,

³ Cf. Grubb (1911:115) and Pages Larraya (1982:66) for versions of a myth describing the origin of the *kelyekhama*.

⁴ As I describe elsewhere (Kidd 1992; 1999a), the *Egyá pam* (“Our Father”) cult was a response to Anglican teaching which emphasizes the use of the Lord’s Prayer beginning with the words “Our father” or, in Enxet, “*Egyá pam*.”

⁵ The Enxet are convinced that the hippopotami in Asunción Zoo are *yamweyke* and many Enxet, when visiting the zoo, are reticent to go too near them.

⁶ I was once driving in Asunción with a couple of Enxet men behind a circus lorry with a bear in the back. They both explained to me that it was a *tamayawhan* that the Paraguayans had captured.

⁷ I would maintain that there is a significant difference between the Enxet classification of certain spirits as “people” (ie. *énxet*) and the vision of the neighbouring Toba who believe all spirits are non-human but that some can present themselves in human form (Wright 1992). Indeed, it could be argued that my use of the word “spirit” to describe certain “people” - *énxet* - from the invisible world contributes to a distortion of the Enxet world view.

while some are similar in appearance to the animals themselves, many of the spirits described above are also the “owners” of different plants. For instance, the *chóneygmen* are the “owners” of many of the plants in the swamps.⁸

The Enxet differ from many South American indigenous peoples in that they do not conceive of animals as people.⁹ They understand animals to be nothing more than animals -literally “wild things” (*aksok nawhak*) - even though the animals of mythic time are described as if they were human. Ghosts of certain dead animals can, though, be dangerous to humans, although rarely is mention made of animals other than the rhea and the jaguar. For this reason, hunters must take care not to waste any parts of the rhea they kill and need to take precautions to ensure that the rhea’s ghost does not pursue them.

The invisibility of the invisible world is expressed by the Enxet in terms of darkness and people who enter it are effectively blind and liable to lose their bearings. Consequently, shamans,¹⁰ who, as we shall see, have access to the invisible world, use a light - *éseyexma* - to illuminate the darkness/invisibility which is described as similar to the light of a full moon or the beam of a car’s headlights.¹¹ Shamans who have only recently started their training do not possess a light and, although they can consciously enter the invisible world, they are unable to see. The more powerful a shaman becomes, the stronger his light.¹²

While dreaming, a person’s *wanmagko* leaves the physical body and enters the invisible world.¹³ Indeed, the verb “to dream” is *[-]wanméso* and, since it is constructed from the root *[-]wanm[-]* - “silence” - with the addition of the causative suffix *[-]éso*, it could be translated as “to become invisible.”¹⁴ However, this notion is not without its ambiguities and contradictions. Ordinary people rarely dream of meeting spirits, although this may be explained by their not possessing a light (*éseyexma*). Instead dreams are usually conceived of as experiences of the visible

⁸ It needs to be recognized that the body of spirits I have described is both flexible and prone to innovations.

⁹ See, for example, Descola (1994; 1996), Arhem (1996) and Viveiros de Castro (1996).

¹⁰ Shamans are called *yohóxma*.

¹¹ Christian pastors can also have a light - *éseyexma* - which comes from God.

¹² Similarly, although without referring to something as specific as a light, Palmer (1997:160) describes how the Wichí shaman has the power of vision and can see things that others cannot. Also, see Gow (1991:238) and Belaunde (1992:70) on the vision of Piro and Airo-Pai shamans.

¹³ The Toba, a neighbouring people to the Enxet, use a similar unitary concept to describe the soul and the dream which Wright (1992:159) translates as “image-soul.” The idea that the dream is an exteriorization of the soul is common in lowland South America. See, for example: Descola (1989:440), Belaunde (1992:69), Townsley (1993:453), Taylor (1996:206), Ellis (1996:176) and Palmer (1997:157). Cf. Myers (1986:51) for a similar idea among the Pintupi of Australia.

¹⁴ The literal translation of “I dream” - *éwanmese* - is “to cause me to be invisible.”

world but with the dimensions of space and time radically transformed. When dreaming, it is possible to see what is happening elsewhere or in the near future so that, for example, whenever people died, I was often told by their relatives in other communities that they had already realized what had happened because they had dreamt of the person.¹⁵

Although dreams can also be regarded as misleading or untrue,¹⁶ shamans talk about their dreams as if they were conscious experiences and the wanderings of their *wanmagko* are deemed to be of great relevance. For example, a shaman told me that he slept without any worries whenever he stayed in our house in Asunción because every night, in his dreams, two of his auxiliary spirits visited him to tell him how his family were. Shamans also claim to see in their dreams where to hunt and can discover whether it will rain or discern the cause of a person's illness.

Indeed, dreaming is a key element in the training - *[-]expogwayam* - of shamans.¹⁷ If a person - almost invariably a man - wants to become a shaman he takes the roots of a plant, places them in a receptacle with water, and leaves them for a few days.¹⁸ Once the potion has rotted, it is drunk by the trainee who begins a fast during which he avoids sleeping with his wife. The length of the fast varies for each plant - although it rarely lasts more than two or three days - and, at the end of the period, the trainee, when dreaming, should meet with the "owner" of the plant who teaches him its song. These songs, known as *[-]eltagko*, are in the language of the spirit and unintelligible to ordinary human beings.¹⁹ It is essential that new trainees are always helped and accompanied by experienced shamans since, in the darkness of the invisible world, their *wanmagko* could become lost and never return to the body. The experienced shaman's own *wanmagko* accompanies the trainee's to ensure that it is not harmed or stolen by the spirit and to guide it safely home.

Shamans can repeat their training as many times as they desire using different plants or a range of other objects which are also believed to possess a spiritual "owner." Eating the raw, rotten brains of dead animals is another possibility and, by consuming a dog, the shaman gains the "ability" to track missing *wanmagko* in the invisible world. Objects that we may describe as inanimate are also popular. By training with a cable, a shaman will obtain a fearsome weapon, a whip which, when

¹⁵ Cf. Descola (1989:440), Kracke (1992:137), Miller (1995) and Palmer (1997:158f).

¹⁶ Cf. Wright (1992:158) and Myers (1986:51f). See Descola (1989) for a discussion on the interpretation of dreams among the Achuar.

¹⁷ See also Lind (1981) and Arenas (1981:28ff).

¹⁸ The process of preparing a potion for shamanic training is known as *[-]elyetmeykha*.

¹⁹ Cf. Wright (1992:165).

cracked, sends out an electric current. Another important weapon is the *yátapelten* (“like a moon”) which, as its name suggests, is similar in appearance to the crescent of a moon and can be obtained, according to some shamans, by training with small stones while others insist that one must use one’s own nail cuttings. The sharp ends of the crescent act as pincers which squeeze and puncture objects held between them. Drinking the contents of a bullet protects the shaman from being shot, while paper is seen as particularly powerful and requires a long fast. The use, for example, of cartoon characters will give the shaman access to the *walé apyepmeyk*, one of the spirits that resemble Paraguayans.

Trainees are also taken by experienced shamans to a brightly lit store in the west where they can obtain a selection of shirts (*[-]taxno*) which their *wanmagko* use as armour when fighting in the invisible world. New shamans can only obtain brittle shirts of low-quality material which easily crack if hit by a spirit but, as they progress with their training, they can return to the store to obtain ever more effective shirts. The strongest are made of an unbreakable, soft, wax-like material and some extremely powerful shamans have shirts that are over ten metres long.²⁰

Although the shaman obtains his “powers” when dreaming, he acquires the ability to enter the invisible world consciously and at will. Whenever he chants a song, the spirit to which it corresponds comes to him to do his bidding. Indeed, a shaman can refer to his auxiliary spirits as his *[-]ásenneykha*, a term derived from the verb “to tell someone to do something” and which means, literally, “those one tells what to do.” Nonetheless, auxiliary spirits do not lose their ability to act independently when not “on call,” and there is always the danger that they may act on behalf of their shaman without his authorization. For example, a person with whom a shaman becomes angry may be spontaneously attacked by his auxiliary spirits even though this was never the shaman’s intention.

Auxiliary spirits are also referred to as *[-]mowána*,²¹ a word derived from the verb *[-]wanche* - “to be able” - and which can, therefore, be translated as “my ability.” Literally, therefore, auxiliary spirits are the abilities of the shaman to

²⁰ The use of shirts provides an interesting variation on the animal clothes that Viveiros de Castro (1996) mentions are used by many shamans in Amazonia. Rather than taking on the appearance of animals, Enxet shamans remain distinctively human and so Viveiros de Castro’s generalized assertion that, in lowland South America, “clothing is a body” would not seem to pertain to the Enxet shaman whose shirt is nothing more than clothing, albeit with special power. Nevertheless, Viveiros de Castro’s stress on the function rather than the form of animal clothing is paralleled by the protective function of the Enxet shamans’ shirts.

²¹ The first person singular of *[-]mowána* is *sekmowána*, the second and third (masculine) person is *apmopwána*, and the second and third (feminine) person singular is *ekmowána*.

function in the invisible world and, without them, he is incapable. [-]mowána is the Enxet word that comes nearest to expressing our concept of “power.”²² Indeed, an object - whether animal, vegetable or putatively inanimate - which has the ability to overcome our “laws of nature,” is said “to have power/ability.” Therefore, the *apmopwána* of a shaman can also be understood as “his power/ability,” although it is a concept of power that is personalized and specific rather than abstract.

When discussing their journeys in the invisible world, shamans do not usually distinguish between conscious and oneiric experiences since, for them, both contexts are real and in both they act consciously. They should, therefore, be regarded as the same type of experience and they are certainly described in this way to non-shamans. Interestingly, though, Enxet shamans enter the invisible world without any apparent assistance from hallucinogens, a feature of shamanic practice which, I believe, is widespread in the Chaco.²³ When observing shamans, it is clear that they consciously control the sojourns of their *wanmagko* in the invisible world which they can enter and leave at will. A shaman, when healing a patient, may, one minute, be singing heartily, apparently engaged in a violent struggle with dangerous spirits, while the next he can stand up, greet a visitor, converse normally or crack a joke. He gives no indication of being “under the influence.”

2.2 Multiple *Wanmagko* and the Aetiology of Illness

I obtained no information on the origin of the *wanmagko* although Loewen (1967:140) has suggested that the “seed” for the *wanmagko* is derived from the father.²⁴ Each person, though, possesses a number of *wanmagko*, with some shamans insisting on twelve while others mention as few as five.²⁵ They are of different sizes and were pictorially represented by one shaman in a gradated manner, from biggest to smallest, as shown in Figure 2.1.

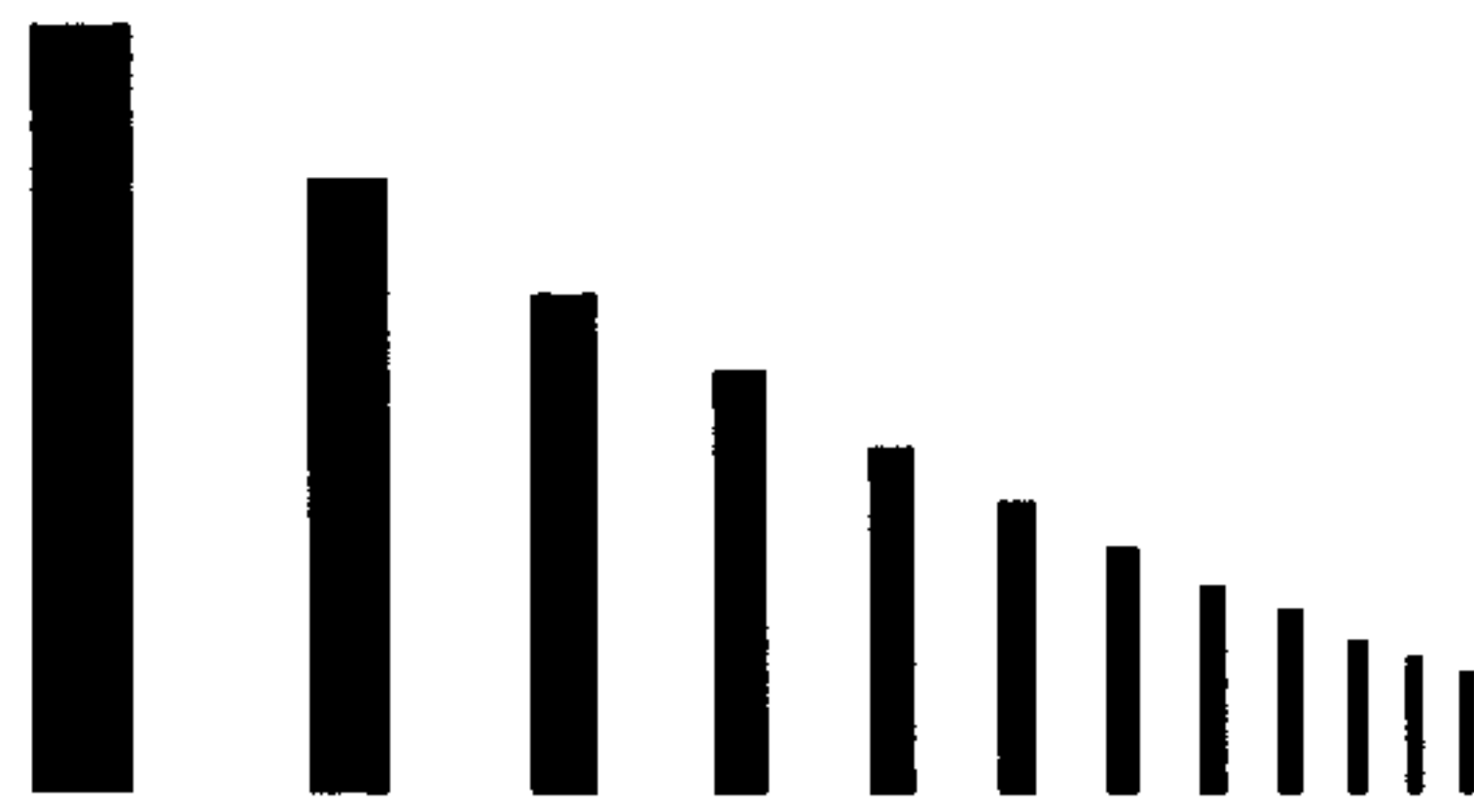
²² Cf. Miller (1975:478).

²³ See, for example, Wright (1992:158) on the Toba. I also found no references to hallucinogens among the Wichí by Palmer (1997:159f) who stresses, instead, the shaman’s ability to dream. Wright, though, does quote Buckwalter (1980:209) as reporting the use of a hallucinogen among the Toba. Elsewhere in South America, the non-utilization of hallucinogens is rarely reported (cf. Langdon 1992:18). Examples include the Airo-Pai whose shamans of renown can fly to the “other side” without the need of hallucinogens (Belaunde 1992:71) and the Piaroa (Overing - personal communication).

²⁴ The Wichí also view the soul as entering an infant-to-be through the blood of the father (Palmer 1997:157).

²⁵ Writers on the Enxet have rarely discerned the existence of multiple *wanmagko* - although Lind (1981:121) is an exception - but there are indications that the concept was expressed by informants without it being recognized. See, for example, Grubb (1911:134f), Loewen (1966) and Arenas (1981:32ff).

Figure 2.1: Shamanic representation of a person's twelve *wanmagko*.



The *wanmagko* are said to have the appearance of a person's photograph but it seems that, while the largest *wanmagko* is exactly like the image in a photograph, the others become progressively less sharp and identifiable.²⁶ If the largest *wanmagko* is permanently displaced from the person it will result in death, a danger that does not occur with the other *wanmagko*. Indeed, there is a correlation between the vitality of a *wanmagko* and its size, so that the loss of the smallest *wanmagko* is the least serious. Some people call the biggest *wanmagko* the [-]hag'ak - "ghost" - which suggests that, on death, the biggest *wanmagko* is transformed into a ghost.²⁷

One of the main explanations of illness is the capture of the *wanmagko* by spirits of the invisible world who either act of their own accord or are sent by malevolent shamans.²⁸ The origin of the spirit is an important question to resolve since if it has an *eñamakxa*, that is a "source" - in other words a shaman - the condition of the patient is usually much more serious since a shaman is a potentially implacable enemy. A number of *wanmagko* can be captured at once and the nature of their places of imprisonment can often explain particular symptoms experienced by the patient. For instance, a fever can be caused by the imprisonment of a *wanmagko* in a hot place, such as near a fire, while dizziness may be the result of a *wanmagko*'s capture by a herd of wild, spiritual horses or, alternatively, by a whirlwind spirit. Victims of spider bites frequently lie in a semi-paralyzed fashion with their legs pulled up to their chest, a condition that is explained by a *wanmagko* having been tied up in the same manner by the web of a spider. The dispersal of the *wanmagko* suggests that illness should be understood as a literal "fragmentation of the person" (Gow 1991:188).

²⁶ In the past, the Enxet disliked having their photograph taken because they believed that their *wanmagko* were being captured. Cf. Grubb (1898:29) and Cachemaille (1901:11).

²⁷ An alternative term for the *wanmagko* is "shadow" (*pesese*).

²⁸ Soul-loss and its capture by spirits is a common explanation for illness in lowland South America, although rarely is the idea as elaborated as it is among the Enxet. See, for example, Gow (1991:180), Townsley (1993:452), Ellis (1996:176) and Palmer (1997:154).

However, illness is also explained by the intrusion of extraneous objects into the person, usually into the *wáxok*. Shamans, for example, are able to shoot “darts” into people or may order their auxiliary spirits to do so. Other objects can be inserted including, cats, jaguars, toads, dolls, needles and rubber balls, and particularly dangerous are the *yátapelten* - “like a moon” - which can squash organs such as the heart, liver or kidney; but almost anything can be made to enter a person. Spirits can also penetrate a person, either of their own volition or at the behest of a shaman. If someone bleeds through the anus, this may be because he or she is being eaten by the sharp teeth of the *yamegkelána* and painful, swollen stomachs can be caused by the presence of a range of spirits.

Insanity is explained in terms very similar to those of illness and is usually caused by the appearance of a being of the invisible world to a non-shaman. A man can meet a *kelána nawhak* (“wild woman”) who, I am reliably informed, has the appearance of an incredibly attractive white woman. She effectively seduces him, making him desire her so intensely that he begins to sweat, his heart beats rapidly and, every so often, he weeps uncontrollably. His *wanmagko* will want to follow the *kelána nawhak* and, when it eventually does, its departure will be marked by the man removing his clothes to wander about naked. Similarly, women can meet a range of male spirits - such as the *chóneygmen* and *walé apyepmeyk* - all of whom will want to remove her *wanmagko*. Such encounters are said to cause a woman to be emotionally disturbed and to experience both fear and an uncontrollable desire. The women begin to weep and, if they are not saved by a shaman or pastor, their *wanmagko* will accompany the spirit and they will remove their clothes to become “wild women.”

Mad people - who are known as *[-]yenne* - tend to wander around without taking part in normal human relationships. Conversation with them is difficult and they can usually be observed talking or laughing to themselves, although, in reality, they are chatting with their companion spirit. Some can abandon human company entirely to live in the forest and one man, soon after becoming insane, tried to kill himself with a knife, screaming that he wanted to follow his *wanmagko* up to the next world. Mad people easily become angry, a practice that is frowned upon by the Enxet, yet, in their case it is tolerated as they are said to be without “knowledge.”²⁹

Like illness, madness, is a further example of a fragmented person but the two ailments are regarded as quite distinct.³⁰ Perhaps the key difference between them is the manner in which the *wanmagko* is alienated from the person. While a sick

²⁹ See Chapter 3.

³⁰ Cf. Overing (1988:189f).

person's loss is totally involuntary, the insane succumb to their desires, a distinction that manifests itself in their respective behaviour. Mad people act excessively by shedding their clothes, becoming angry and refusing to enter into normal social relations, while the sick continue to behave socially in an appropriate manner.

2.3 Shamanic Healing

Healing of both the sick and the insane is usually undertaken by shamans³¹ and, whenever a person is ill, a number are called to effect a cure. The patient lies on a bed or on the floor surrounded by the shamans who sit or kneel in a circle. The number of participating shamans can vary greatly: in some less severe cases only one may be required but, if an illness is diagnosed as particularly serious, as many as possible are invited and the maximum that I have observed is eleven.³² It is normal for the most powerful of the participating shaman to take the lead and he begins to sing in low, calm tones which indicate that he is using his strong light - *éseyexma* - to search for the tracks of the missing *wanmagko*. When he spots them, he informs his companions and together they begin their journey, following the tracks of the *wanmagko* that they are seeking. Shamans can use various forms of transport in the invisible world, varying from donkeys to aeroplanes, although it is the latter that are most popular. While travelling, the singing of the shamans is strong, rhythmic and purposeful and is maintained until they reach their destination. They can journey almost anywhere in both the visible and invisible worlds, although access to God's world (ie. the highest level) is said to be impossible. The winds at high altitudes, just below the gate to that level, are so strong that no form of transport possessed by a shaman can pass through. *Wanmagko*, therefore, that are taken to God's world cannot be retrieved and so the illness known as *castigo de Dios* (God's punishment) is particularly feared since there is no cure.

Having arrived at their destination, the shamans must quickly assess the situation and determine the best way to rescue the *wanmagko*. This depends on the identity of its captor since if it is being held by an enemy shaman a violent struggle is inevitable.³³ Conversely, if a "human" spirit has acted independently it may be possible to converse and reason with it, although particularly antagonistic non-human spirits never hand over the *wanmagko* without a fight. If negotiation is impossible, the shamans avoid a direct attack, preferring to use guile so as to grab the *wanmagko*

³¹ Healing can also be undertaken by pastors and leaders of new religious movements using similar principles, but different techniques, to shamans.

³² Hunt (1895:183) recorded seeing twelve shamans in one healing session. See also Pride (1894:12). Regehr (1986) provides a similar description of shamanism among the neighbouring Nivaklé.

³³ Cf. Miller (1975:484).

without being spotted. For example, one shaman may create a diversion while another stealthily creeps up to the *wanmagko* to take it carefully in his hands. This is a critical moment since, if the *wanmagko* is accidentally dropped, the patient will die and so only the most skilled shamans should even attempt this task. If successful, the shaman places the *wanmagko* in a special bag that he carries at his side before fleeing. At this moment, the shamans are usually spotted by the spirits or enemy shaman who, furious at their loss, launch into a devastating attack. The healing shamans, assisted by their auxiliary spirits, fight back using all the weapons at their disposal although they must ensure that they are never knocked over nor have their shirts torn or else they themselves will become ill and require healing. Eventually, the shamans make it back to the patient and replace the *wanmagko*. If more than one *wanmagko* is missing, the shamans will need to make an equal number of arduous and dangerous trips to a variety of locations.

Shamans must also remove any spirits and objects that have invaded the patient, a task which they accomplish by entering the body themselves. While some spirits are killed, sometimes it is best to talk to a spirit to persuade it to leave. For instance, it is always thought wisest to converse with those powerful spirits that, in a fight, could easily kill the shaman. Any spirits that are killed, and any other objects that are inside the patient, can be sucked out by the shamans once they return to the visible world. Sucking requires such effort that, on finishing, the shaman will cough and splutter profusely before spitting the object into his hand and showing it to his companions and, on occasion, to others. They can be buried in the ground if there is still any danger. Healing ceremonies can continue all night and if, by morning, the patient is still ill, they may be repeated night after night until either a full recovery is achieved, death occurs or, alternatively, the shamans admit that the task is beyond them.

Shamans do not find their practices to be incompatible with western medicine and, in fact, they often explain the present vigorous state of Enxet shamanism by their lack of access to medical facilities and their consequent need to provide an alternative.³⁴ However, western medicine is generally understood within their own conceptual framework. For example, after spending a lot of time with a patient they may inform him that, to ensure a total recovery, he must obtain western medicine which will kill and expel the objects remaining within his person.

³⁴ For many years, the Anglican Church carried out a successful medical programme among the Enxet who fully appreciate its effectiveness. However, in recent years access to medical facilities has been minimal.

2.4 Death

Death, as I have mentioned, is associated with the permanent loss of the biggest *wanmagko* rather than a cessation of bodily functions, such as the beating of a heart. Once someone is pronounced dead, they are quickly buried, if possible before nightfall.³⁵ The haste with which burials are carried out is, in part, the result of people's fear of the ghost but also because of "sadness" and the concomitant desire to forget the deceased.³⁶ Nevertheless, people nowadays tend to believe that Christians travel to God's world and, in the days immediately following a death, shamans or close relatives often dream of seeing the deceased rise to "heaven," their physical appearance once again restored. Hearing this news is comforting for the relatives especially since the deceased, as they begin their journey, are usually at pains to reassure the dreamer about the restoration of their physical health and well-being. In contrast, non-Christians, or those who die "badly" such as by suicide, are generally believed to continue on earth and gradually lose human form, eventually becoming skeletons. Such ghosts are regarded as particularly dangerous since they may decide to harm their close relatives.³⁷

As soon as possible after a death the members of the deceased's household either modify their house or take it down and rebuild it nearby so as to confuse the ghost and impede it in its search for its relatives.³⁸ At night-time, a silence descends on the community since people are either too scared or too sad to leave their houses. However, after a few days normality returns as the memory of the deceased begins to fade.

A number of anthropologists, including Belaunde (1992:100) and Taylor (1996:202), have asserted that Amazonian indigenous people do not believe that death can result from natural causes but, instead, regard it as due to malignant human agency.³⁹ Consequently, death can only exist as a form of homicide.⁴⁰ Yet, this is not the case among the Enxet for whom death can be caused by the spontaneous permanent displacement of the large *wanmagko*. Old people among the Enxet are known as *kelapey* (females) and *kelapopey*⁴¹ (males) and, as Gow (1991:181) describes for the Piro, old age is associated with a loss of vitality, strength and beauty

³⁵ Cf. Grubb (1911:161).

³⁶ Cf. Taylor (1993:668).

³⁷ I return to a discussion of bereavement practices in Chapter 11.

³⁸ Cf. Grubb (1911:165f; 1914:121) and Gow (1991:184).

³⁹ Cf. Overing (1989a:80).

⁴⁰ Taylor (1996:212f) does add that the agent of death may be an anthropomorphized "spirit."

⁴¹ These terms may be derived from the word for "sadness," [-]lapwayam.

and, by a certain age, old people have a tendency to predict that they will soon die. How exactly they expect this to occur has never been made explicitly clear to me, but they do not necessarily expect to be attacked by malignant agents. Instead, they presume that, at some point, their large *wanmagko* will spontaneously leave their body never to return, most probably travelling to God's world above. Certainly, powerful shamans are unlikely to admit to the possibility of succumbing to homicidal outside forces as this would be an admission of fallibility and weakness on their part.

It needs to be taken into account, of course, that any death generates multiple explanations depending on the perspective of the speaker, as illustrated by the case of Agustín, one of the first ordained indigenous Anglican priests and also a powerful shaman.⁴² He was over eighty and had arrived at a point at which he both expected and hoped to die as he was “fed up” - [-]leklakme - with life and the suffering caused by a series of minor but painful ailments, including a very itchy, reddish skin condition. He did not, though, expect to be “killed” and his eventual demise was explained by his close relatives as the result of his large *wanmagko* permanently leaving his body due to old age. However, other people suggested starkly contrasting explanations including the claim that he was a victim of revenge magic. If a person's death is thought to have been caused by a shaman, before burial a red hot stone, known as a *meteymog*, can be placed into an incision in the cadaver.⁴³ The stone shoots off into the sky to seek out the murdering shaman and burn him to death.⁴⁴ Some people suggested that Agustín's skin problem was caused by the onset of burning from a stone that had emanated from a young child who they accused Agustín of killing with his shamanic power.⁴⁵

Therefore, although it is true that most deaths among the Enxet are said to be caused by enemy shamans, they have a concept of “natural” or non-homicidal death, although strictly within the terms of their cosmology. Nevertheless, when someone dies, different people choose distinct explanations depending on their motives and their relationship to the deceased and any potential suspects. Even when all agree that a shaman is to blame, opinions on the identity of the shaman and the means of causing

⁴² Cf. Santos Granero (1991:225).

⁴³ Grubb (1904:42ff,128; 1911:160ff) and Susnik (1977:22) also refer to the use of the *meteymog*. Chase-Sardi (1981) describes the same ritual among the neighbouring Nivaklé.

⁴⁴ Cadavers can also be mutilated before burial, causing the guilty shaman to die of the same wounds.

⁴⁵ There are a variety of assessments regarding the effectiveness of the stone. Shamans tend to suggest that it is always successful, an essentially self-serving claim since the fact that they continue to live is proof that they themselves have never “murdered” an innocent person. In contrast, non-shamans are usually more sceptical and have suggested that some shamans are so powerful that their many auxiliary spirits can protect them from the consequences of the stone.

death can vary greatly. Yet, the fact that multiple opinions are known to exist is in no sense problematical. Each person believes one version and insists that the rest are lies.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the Enxet concept of the “soul/dream” - the *wanmagko* - which is regarded by the Enxet as the source of human life and vitality. I have shown how the concept is used in daily discourse, especially with regard to shamanic practice, although I should clarify that my account should not be viewed as a full ethnography of the topic but, rather, as an introduction in which certain basic principles are set out. I have tried to avoid falling into the temptation of describing and explaining what “no one actually thinks and expresses” - *a la Taylor*⁴⁶ - and it should be evident that the Enxet concept of the *wanmagko* and the invisible world is somewhat ambiguous and, at times, contradictory. Each person holds their own particular notions yet within a broad cosmology that we can recognize as distinctive.

Another aspect of Enxet personhood that is replete with ambiguity is their concept of the “body.” In fact, it is questionable whether a word exists in Enxet that adequately encapsulates the materiality of bodiness, a point also made by Overing (1996b; 1997) for the Piaroa of Venezuela. Both the Piaroa and Enxet possess a wide vocabulary to describe the component parts of the body and although both have terms for “flesh,” they are not references to form.⁴⁷ Three words can be identified in Enxet as encompassing some sense of our concept of “body,” yet their essential meanings are quite distinct.

The first term - *[-]empehek* - has the essential meaning of “outer covering” and can be used to refer to, for example, tree bark, bean pods, the walls of a house, animal skins and, also, human skin. Yet, it can also signify physical well-being and so, when someone is unwell, they can say “*askehek empehek*” - “my skin/body hurts” - or a fit person could be said to have *kayhek [-]empehek* - “a strong body/skin.” It suggests that “skin” is used to express some physiological aspects of the living body, an extension, perhaps, of the physiological nature of the skin.⁴⁸

Another aspect of “body” is encapsulated by *[-]yócxoho* which is the same term that is used to refer to the largest *wanmagko* which, if lost, results in death. It means, essentially, “everything” or a “totality” and can be used to clarify when an

⁴⁶ See Chapter 1.

⁴⁷ The Enxet term for “flesh” - *[-]ápetek* - also means “meat.”

⁴⁸ Cf. Overing (1997), Palmer (1997:157).

event has been experienced in the waking world rather than oneirically. Therefore, it can be understood as encompassing a notion of “bodily presence” or physical identity.⁴⁹

Finally, a third means of referring to “body” is when a corpse is called [-]*hápok*, literally “rotten.” Rather than focusing on the material nature of the cadaver, the term effectively stresses the decomposition of the body and the fact that, with the absence of the *wanmagko*, the person is no longer there. A similar term focusing on the smell of the corpse is used by the Piaroa (Overing 1997).

It is unlikely that the Enxet and Piaroa are the only peoples in lowland South America with an unclear sense of the material nature of the body. Indeed, Viveiros de Castro’s (1996) comment that indigenous people commonly refer to bodies as “clothing” may signify that skin, or the outer covering is, in fact, a common way of expressing corporeality within lowland South America. Indeed, the assumption by many anthropologists that the body is unproblematic may be the result of their inability to speak the native language. If, for example, research is undertaken in Spanish and anthropologists employ the term *cuervo* - “body” - in an unproblematic fashion, it is not surprising if their informants respond in the same manner. Yet, the meaning they attach to *cuervo* is likely to be very different to that held by the anthropologist.⁵⁰ And, indeed, if indigenous people have no concept of the body that clearly parallels our own, what does this say about our understanding of a body:mind dichotomy? I will turn my attention to this topic in the next chapter as I consider another key aspect of Enxet personhood: the *wáxok*.

⁴⁹ The fact that the largest *wanmagko* - known as the *ekyókxoho* [-]*wanmagko* - is the *wanmagko* that is most similar to a person’s physical appearance may be related to the fact that the term [-]*yókxoho* encompasses a sense of a person’s physical identity.

⁵⁰ Cf. Harwood’s (1978) discussion of “parallel equivalence structures.”

3. THE *WÁXOK*, THE SOCIAL CENTRE OF THE PERSON

There is a tendency in Western thought, at least at the level of a folk model, to construct a dichotomy between the mind and the body in which the mind is associated with cognition and the body with emotions.¹ This model can feed its way into the work of anthropologists and even Viveiros de Castro's (1996) attempt to challenge the universality of the western conception of the body is still based on the same essential dichotomy since he defines the body as a "bundle of affects" and associates thought with the soul. Yet, given that the Enxet concept of the body is problematic it should come as no surprise to find that a mind:body dichotomy has little relevance to the Enxet.

The aim of this chapter is to gain an understanding of an organ of the body known as the *wáxok* which, in Enxet philosophical thought, is recognized as the centre of both cognition and emotions. In addition, it is the social centre of the person and is a salient feature of the Enxet explanation of their social and economic relations. I, therefore, plan to examine how the *wáxok* is constructed and will describe how its development is associated with becoming "knowledgeable." I will show how "knowledgeable" people are those who know how to behave in a socially appropriate manner and I will begin to examine the behaviour expected both of those who are "knowledgeable" and those who lack "knowledge." As Santos Granero (1991:45) remarks for the Amuesha, I will describe how the opposition between "love" and "hate" is a meaningful paradigm in Enxet thought and practice but I will also move on to discuss the ambiguities inherent in the Enxet discourse on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Finally, I will consider how the Enxet explain many aspects of people's behaviour on extraneous influences, focusing especially on the consumption of alcohol.

3.1 Defining the *Wáxok*

The core meaning of the term *[-]wáxok*² is "hollow inside" and it can refer, for example, to the inside of a container, the interior of a house and a former river channel. When applied to a person, though, its meaning becomes more complicated.

¹ Although Lutz (1986) and White (1990:46) describe the mind/body dichotomy as a western folk model, Rosaldo (1984:140) suggests that it may have arisen from Durkheim's (1915) proposal of a dual nature for mankind.

² *[-]wáxok* can only be used with a prefix indicating the person. For example, "my *wáxok*" is *éwáxok*, "his *wáxok*" is *apwáxok*, while "her *wáxok*" is *awáxok*. As a form of shorthand, I will usually write it as *wáxok*.

On the one hand, it can signify a physical organ, the stomach, and as such is associated with the digestive process,³ yet it also has a metaphysical dimension, being both the cognitive and affective centre of the person. It is also the organ of the body that is most likely to be invaded by malevolent spirits and other objects sent by enemy shamans to make people ill.

The encapsulation of both cognitive and affective processes in the *wáxok* is illustrated by a series of linguistic expressions that are constructed using the term. Affects tend to be expressed by describing physical states of the *wáxok*. For instance:⁴ *payhékxek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* spreads out” - and *atsek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* is sweet” - both suggest happiness and contentment; sadness is expressed by various terms including *yentexek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* is heavy” - and *yetnakhawok éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* really leans over;” *tamhaha éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* continually moves” - indicates worry; *pexyenyegke éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* shivers” - can signify fear; and *teyemek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* falls down” - suggests disappointment or shock.

Terms associated with cognition appear to ascribe agency to the *wáxok*. The verb “to think” can be expressed in a number of ways including: *xénchek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* mentions;” *kelketamchek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* searches;” *kelyetsetchek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* reads/measures;” and *táha éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* says.” Other terms indicating the agency of the *wáxok* include: *wanyawok éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* despises;” *kesmések éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* makes fun of;” *kestegwokmek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* dislikes;” *leyawok éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* really takes out” - which signifies liking something; *takhegwokmek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* turns around and goes back to where it came from” - indicates a change of mind; and *wetak éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* sees” - suggests that a person has realized something.

However, despite its physical and metaphysical qualities, the *wáxok* cannot be fully appreciated outside the context of social relations. It is, essentially, a social concept and by developing *wáxoks* that are “knowledgeable” and “understanding” - *[-]ya ’ásekyak*⁵ - people learn how to relate to others in an appropriate manner.⁶ As I will show, each individual is taught how and when to practise both “love” and “hate” but, before discussing this in more detail, I will first of all consider the Enxet explanation of how the *wáxok* is constructed.

³ *[-]wokmo* is an alternative term for the stomach.

⁴ I have written the terms in the first person singular. See Loewen (1966) for other examples.

⁵ The term *[-]ya ’ásekyak* encompasses both concepts of knowing and understanding. In most of my discussion, I will express them in shorthand by the term “knowledge.”

⁶ The *wáxok* appears to be similar to the “social will” of the Wichí (Palmer 1997:162).

3.2 Constructing the *Wáxok*

Although the *wáxok*, as a physical organ, is present in new-born babies, in a metaphysical sense it is still undeveloped. Babies, therefore, are regarded as lacking in “knowledge.” They are, in a sense, still “wild” - *nápawhak*⁷ - and a baby’s temper tantrums are evidence of its “savagery” - *lamchek*.⁸ As a child grows it is expected to develop “knowledge” and a *wáxok* that is “good/beautiful” - *[-]takmela*. Indeed, *[-]takmelcheso* - which means, literally, “to cause to be good/beautiful” - is one means of expressing the raising of children.⁹ Therefore, the creation of “good/beautiful” people is essentially dependent on the construction of “good/beautiful” *wáxoks*.¹⁰ However, the development of the *wáxok* is not regarded as an innate ability of the child but can only be done by those who raise it.

Words or speech, both translated by the term *[-]peywa*, are viewed as the key to achieving “knowledge.” To a certain extent the process is seen as somewhat mechanical in that people “speak to” - *[-]pakhetcheso*¹¹ - children who “hear” - *[-]leg’a*. Alternatively, the verb “to speak to” can also be expressed by *[-]legáso* which is best translated as “to cause to hear.” Indeed, “hearing” is often commensurate with “knowledge” and “understanding” in that, when someone asks “did you hear?” they can also mean “do you understand?”¹² Children, therefore, are considered to be somewhat passive learners while agency is placed with the adults who “speak to” them. Their words stay in children’s *wáxoks*, literally filling them up, and cause a transformation in the children by enabling them to attain “knowledge.”

The importance of words and speech can be observed in many other aspects of the raising of children. When misbehaving, children are “spoken to” - *[-]pakhetcheso* - and it is not uncommon to see adults almost pleading with children not to do something, frequently without success. I have even seen a young child who wanted to pick up a hot cinder and would not listen to his parents who told him not to.¹³ Eventually, he was allowed to take it and to suffer the consequences. Disobedient

⁷ *Nápawhak* is the masculine form of the word. The feminine form is *nawhak*.

⁸ *[-]lamchek* is derived from *[-]ló*, meaning “anger,” and is used to express the savagery of wild animals. Other indigenous peoples of South America, such as the Piaroa, stress the animal nature of new-born humans (Overing 1988:176; 1997).

⁹ The verb *[-]takmelcheso* is formed by adding the causative suffix *[-]jeso* to the adjective *[-]takmela*. See also Chapter 4.

¹⁰ Cf. Overing (1989a:87ff), Belaunde (1992:93f), McCallum (1990:417) and Gow (1991:159ff).

¹¹ The term *[-]pakhetcheso* - “to speak to” is derived from the word *[-]pakmetche* which means “to speak” with the suffix *[-]jeso* added on. This suffix frequently expresses causation but, in this case, can also indicate the act of “doing something for or to someone else.”

¹² Cf. Palmer (1997:163).

¹³ Cf. Grubb (1911:108).

children are described as being “without ears” - *méko apheykyak* - and the same expression can also be used in an ironic fashion to describe adults who, after a decision has been made in a community meeting, refuse to conform.¹⁴

The stress on “speaking to” is also apparent in the general abhorrence of corporal punishment.¹⁵ It rarely occurs and I became fully aware of the Enxet view on the matter in a community meeting in El Estribo. One of the leaders, Papito, was speaking about the problems they were experiencing with the young people and, referring to his own difficult children, stated: “You know the difficulties that I have with them but whenever they act wrongly I hit them.” Suddenly, the whole meeting went quiet, shocked at hearing Papito’s admission. Realizing that he was in danger of irretrievably damaging his reputation, Papito paused for a few seconds before clarifying his position by explaining that he was not, of course, referring to a physical beating but that he “hit them with words.” It was an elegant attempt to wriggle out of a tight corner but, since I had once witnessed Papito forcefully slap his grandchild on the head, it implied a certain economy with the truth.

Corporal punishment would harm rather than build up the *wáxok* of children and, therefore, the most common method used to control children is speech. Adults try to frighten them with some outside threat and so, for example, if children are prone to wander away from the house, they are often called back with the warning that a spirit may attack them.¹⁶ Missionaries are another common threat, especially nurses who, children are told, will vaccinate them if they are disobedient. The force carried by this threat became apparent when a nurse arrived, one day, in El Estribo while everyone was congregated together for a community meeting. Immediately, all the children under six years old scattered to take refuge in the forest and almost half an hour was spent searching for them.¹⁷

Comparable conceptions of how children are taught by being spoken to are found elsewhere in Lowland South America¹⁸ and Overing (1988:179) discusses the pedagogical value of myths among the Piaroa.¹⁹ Since Enxet myths are rarely remembered and infrequently told, it is difficult to know whether this also used to be

¹⁴ When an adult is described as being “without ears,” the speaker can add the comment that he or she is “like a child” - *máxa ensakya’a*.

¹⁵ Cf. Regehr (1987:167) and Overing (1989a:92).

¹⁶ Cf. Regehr (1987:168), Guemple (1988:137), Belaunde (1992:98) and Palmer (1997:65).

¹⁷ A “vaccination” - *láhak* - is clearly differentiated from corporal punishment in that it is believed to make children stronger. The Enxet also use “vaccinations” of sharpened animal bones to gain strength or speed.

¹⁸ Cf. Overing (1988:178), Palmer (1997:161ff) and Belaunde (1992:94ff). See also Myers (1986:107f).

¹⁹ Cf. Palmer (1997:166).

the case among them. However, church sermons based on biblical texts seem to fulfil a similar function and in El Estribo there are two or three services per week which are well-attended by children. Sermons last for up to thirty minutes and references to how people should relate to fellow community members are prominent in each one.

As people become adults they are regarded as more capable of consciously controlling their own behaviour. For instance, in sermons, preachers frequently express the exhortation that “we should make our *wáxoks* good/beautiful” - *antakmelchesek egwáxok* - and, although I have never had it clearly explained how this may be achieved, it would seem, in part, to be a function of “listening to” - *[-]háxenmo* - good “words” and “speech” and achieving greater “knowledge.” Certainly, within the context of Christian teaching, people are told that they will “make their *wáxok* good/beautiful” by “listening to” the preaching of “God’s word” - *Dios appeywa* - which is, by definition, “good news.”²⁰ Listening to God’s word can fill one’s *wáxok* to the brim and, in addition, a *wáxok* can be made “good/beautiful” by allowing God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit to enter and live within. Although much of this language is reminiscent of western Christianity, it has probably been accepted much more literally than the missionaries ever intended; since the Enxet believe that malevolent spirits can enter the *wáxok* to cause illness, madness and anti-social behaviour, it is but a small step to conceive of Jesus and the Holy Spirit as entering.²¹ The agency of people as “listeners” to “good words” contrasts with the passive “hearing” which is characteristic of the learning of a child. “Listening” implies that people permit words to enter the *wáxok* while “hearing” suggests much less control.²² It would seem that, as people gain knowledge, they become increasingly active participants in their own learning and the creation of a “good/beautiful” *wáxok*.

3.3 Characteristics of a Knowledgeable Person

“Knowledge” is an eminently social attribute and “knowledgeable” people are those who know how to practise “love” appropriately or, as Overing (1996b) puts it, possess the capabilities to live a harmonious life. “Love” - *[-]ásekhayo* - is

²⁰ Both “Christianity” and “the Bible” are referred to by the term *Tásek Amya’a* which means “the news is good.”

²¹ Enxet ideas on the nature of Jesus and the Holy Spirit vary quite considerably. For instance, while some people can express ideas that are relatively similar to those of the missionaries, others conceive of Jesus as little different to the shamans’ auxiliary spirits (although considerably more powerful) and many visualize the Holy Spirit as a white dove that enters the *wáxok*. The Holy Spirit is also known as “God’s blowing” (*Dios apwátekhapma*) and the idea is evidently related to the ability of shamans to blow on people to bring about cures or other transformations. For more information see Kidd (1992).

²² Cf. Palmer (1997:163) who explains the difference between “hearing” and “listening” among the Wichí.

understood by the Enxet to be at the very heart of proper social relations.²³ While in “western” folk concepts love is defined as an “emotion” or bodily feeling, the Enxet notion of “love” is much wider, going beyond a “feeling” to encompass both a moral principle and a mode of behaviour. In effect, “love” is associated with what western moral philosophy defines as the “other regarding virtues” (cf. Overing 1988:178), essentially those that express a concern for the well-being of others. Therefore, when the Enxet exhort people to “love” others, they are talking about a way of living. Those who “love” should be generous and share their produce and possessions with others so that, in essence, those who “love,” give, while those who give, “love”.²⁴ “Love” also implies helping others and encapsulates a way of talking so that only “good speech” - [-]peywa ektakmela - is directed towards those who are “loved”. In effect, “love” for the Enxet is something that is done, in other words the practice of sociality, and, if it is not manifested in actions, it does not exist.²⁵

As a moral value, “love” should characterize any interaction between those who consider themselves to be in a sociable relationship. Consequently, the concepts of kinship and “love” are mutually implicated so that kin can be defined as those we “love” while those we “love” are often referred to as kin.²⁶ Another expression that is commonly used to describe a “loving” relationship is the phrase “to look at someone,” [-]lanawo. Those who “look at us” are those who “love” us by, for example, sharing their property, spending time with us, and being willing to eat and drink our food. In other words, they are willing to develop a sociable relationship with us.

“Knowledgeable” people are said to have good “thoughts” and, as I illustrated earlier, “thinking” itself is understood to be an action of the *wáxok* as an agent. Voluntary sharing, a clear expression of “love,” is, in fact, said to be a “thought” - *ekxeyenma* [-]wáxok - literally “a mentioning of the *wáxok*,” while greetings are also expressed by the same term. Since greetings are manifestations of a person’s desire to create or re-create a relationship, the use of a “thought” to describe them is particularly pertinent. Furthermore, people who express a desire to help others can be

²³ I translate [-]ásekhayo as “love” essentially because this is the translation given by the Enxet themselves (ie. *amor* in Spanish).

²⁴ Cf. Santos Granero (1991:202) and Overing (1993b:54).

²⁵ Similar ideas about the relationship between “knowledge” and sociable behaviour are held by other Lowland South American peoples. The Wichí believe that a person who acts socially, with equanimity and right-mindedness, is someone who has “understanding” (Palmer 1997:161ff) while Overing (1985c; 1988) translates a similar Piaroa concept by the terms “thoughts” and “knowledge.” Belaunde (1992:94ff) also discusses the Airo-Pai concept of “thought” and states that the “the Airo-Pai ‘thinking’ and ‘purposeful’ person is eminently social and defined by the capacity to ‘pay attention,’ to ‘love’ and to give a worthy will to his actions.” Cf. Myers (1986:107f).

²⁶ See Chapter 4.

said to have “good thoughts” - “*tásek elketamso [-]wáxok*” - literally, “the *wáxok*’s searching is good.”

Another way of describing a “knowledgeable” and “loving” person is by the term *hápek [-]wáxok*. The essential meaning of the verb *hápek* is “to be soft.” For example, *hápek* could describe a football that is somewhat deflated or, alternatively, two objects that have been stuck or glued together but which come apart easily. In this latter sense of weak bonding, *hápek* can also describe a door that is “unlocked.” Possessing a “soft/unlocked” *wáxok* is regarded by the Enxet as an ideal since such a person practises “love” and shares food and possessions with kin and those in need. In addition, such people are compassionate. For instance, old men have told me that when, during the Chaco War of 1932 to 1936, they were issued with rifles by the Paraguayan army and told to hunt down and shoot Paraguayan deserters, they could not do it. Their “soft/unlocked” *wáxoks* caused them to weep with compassion when they saw the state of the deserters. The concept of compassion is usually expressed by the term *[-]yósek [-]lanawo* which means, literally, “the poor/suffering person that I look at.” “Looking at” someone is, as I have explained, commensurate with the acknowledgement of a social relationship predicated on “love” and compassion occurs when the poverty and/or suffering of the person is recognized. An individual with a “soft/unlocked” *wáxok* practises “love” towards such a “suffering” person.

Another key form of behaviour associated with being “knowledgeable” is to act with *[-]ennawagko*, a term that the Enxet themselves translate as “respect” but which, in reality, is somewhat ambiguous.²⁷ On the one hand, *[-]ennawagko* can mean “timidity” or “shyness” and, is described by the Enxet as similar to “fear” - *[-]eyeye*. For instance, if, in a game of football, the members of one team seem wary of tackling their opponents, they could be accused of being *[-]ennawagko* - “timid.” Similarly, someone who is scared of talking in public could be said to be *[-]ennawagko* - “shy.”²⁸

²⁷ In fact, an analysis of the Enxet concept of “respect” is not without its difficulties as they themselves translate at least three terms by the Spanish word *respeto*. The first *[-]eyeye*, can usually be translated as “to fear,” and is employed in the context of “respecting,” among others, the police, the (national) law or the government. A similar term, *[-]a’awo*, means to “watch out for” or “to be wary of” things that can harm you. Both words are associated with the negative consequences that could result from a lack of “respect” or caution towards powerful entities. Occasionally, though, the translation of these terms can cause problems as happened during a memorial service in Makthlawaiya for an Enxet evangelist who had died some weeks earlier. The Anglican bishop - an English missionary - gave the sermon in Spanish in which he exhorted everyone to “respect” the recently deceased. Unfortunately, the local school teacher, who was translating for him, told everyone “to be wary of the dead person.” As a result, the bishop was understood to be giving a warning to beware the ghost. The third term is *[-]ennawagko*.

²⁸ *[-]ennawagko* is, though, clearly differentiated from the concept of “shame/embarrassment” - *[-]megkakto* - since *[-]ennawagko* is the feeling experienced prior to an action while “shame” is almost

However, as the Enxet translation “respect” implies, [-]ennawagko is much more than an emotion and, as with “love,” it also implies a moral value and an other-regarding mode of behaviour. In this context, it can usefully be translated by the term “restraint.” In normal daily life, unless a relationship is particularly close, such as between members of the same household, people should treat each other with “restraint” and, in this sense, it is regarded as a virtue. By acting with “restraint,” one avoids harming the *wáxoks* of others. One should not, therefore, ask others for food, disturb them if they are otherwise occupied, deny requests, abuse community property nor do things that are against the will of others. “Bad speech” - [-]peywa ekmaso - should be avoided when conversing with others which includes criticizing people to their face and showing one’s anger. In this regard, “restraint” is constitutive of “love” and is a practice that is derived from a “knowledgeable” and “soft/unlocked” *wáxok*.²⁹

“Restraint” is, therefore, associated with an aesthetics of controlling one’s emotions, especially the “wild,” anti-social impulses which are an integral part of being human.³⁰ Such self-control was also commented upon by Grubb (1911:200) as characteristic of the Enxet in the pre-colonial period, and “knowledgeable” people should avoid manifesting emotions - such as “anger” - that would harm the *wáxoks* of others.

“Knowledge” is also associated with the ability to live tranquilly and, indeed, a desire for tranquillity is a key aim of many indigenous peoples of lowland South America.³¹ The Enxet are no different and express personal tranquillity by the term *méke ektahakxa [-]wáxok*,³² which can be best translated as “nothing happening in the *wáxok*.” It describes a “knowledgeable” *wáxok* in a state of calm and motionlessness, one that is not suffering the intrusion of extraneous, pathogenic objects and which, to all intents and purposes, is at peace. It portrays a person who is emotionally

always a consequence. However, among some other indigenous peoples, such as the Tsimane of Bolivia (Ellis 1996:101) and the Pintupi of Australia (Myers 1986:120), “shame/embarrassment” and “timidity/shyness” are expressed by a single term. The Airo-Pai also talk of “fear-shame” (Belaunde 1992:127).

²⁹ The “restraint” practised by the Enxet is distinct to the “restraint/respect” reported for other indigenous peoples by Henley (1982:131), Forrest (1987:325) and Belaunde (1992:128f). In these examples, “restraint/respect” is characteristic of the behaviour shown by younger people to older people. Among the Enxet, even parents should practise “restraint” with their children and this is one explanation for the aversion to corporal punishment. Cf. McCallum (1989:209) who talks of reciprocal “restraint” between neighbours and kin.

³⁰ The importance of controlling emotions is reported for another Chaco people, the Wichí (Alvarsson 1988:135; Palmer 1997:162). Cf. Overing (1989a:91) and (Belaunde 1992:104).

³¹ See, for example, Overing (1989a:79; 1993b) and Belaunde (1992:105).

³² *Méke* means “without” while [-]tahakxa comprises the verb [-]táha (or [-]teme) - which means “to be,” “to say” or “to do” - with the suffix [-]akxa which signifies repetition.

comfortable³³ and whose *wáxok* has not been disturbed by such things as breaches in social relationships and misfortune. It is a state that is not incompatible with certain other agreeable conditions of the *wáxok* such as “sweetness”³⁴ and a *wáxok* that “spreads out.”³⁵

The ideal of “nothing happening in the *wáxok*” is in strong contrast to a *wáxok* that is “in motion” or “disturbed” and which can be expressed by the term *ektamheyka [-]wáxok*.³⁶ A *wáxok* that moves or, in other words, is disturbed, is one that is experiencing such negative or disagreeable emotions as anger, shame, shock, fear or sadness. These, invariably, have causes that are extraneous to the individual, such as difficult social relationships, attacks from beings of the invisible world, or plain misfortune. The effect of such outside influences can be expressed grammatically by changing the *wáxok* from subject to object and adding a causative suffix to the verb; for example, *teyekmek éwáxok* - “my *wáxok* falls down” - could be phrased as *aptegkese éwáxok* which means “he made my *wáxok* fall down.” Consequently, the cause of the emotional state is clearly identified. Similarly, specific events can become the subject so that the emotion term highlights the effect of the event on the state of the *wáxok*. For instance, *chakhak éwáxok* “ - it kills/hits my *wáxok*” - can describe an event, such as a theft of property or bad news, that shocks or traumatizes a person while *yakhápawok éwáxok* - “it really squeezes my *wáxok*” - refers to a situation that causes a person to be very sad.

People continually strive to retain or regain tranquil *wáxoks* and are aware that their personal psychic comfort is dependent on harmony in their social lives. They aspire to live in tranquil communities and, although people are concerned to maintain peaceful *wáxoks* of their own, they realize that this requires that the *wáxoks* of other people, especially co-residents, are similarly tranquil. One should, therefore, practise “restraint” and “love” when dealing with others and should only speak to others when one’s own *wáxok* is tranquil. If so, a person will only use “good speech” and will be concerned to “cause others to be good/beautiful” - *[-]takmelcheso*. If each individual is tranquil, the chances of the community as a whole being tranquil are greatly enhanced.

³³ Cf. Goldman (1963), Overing (1989b:163) and Ellis (1996:12).

³⁴ *Atsek [-]wáxok*, “the *wáxok* is sweet,” suggests contentment.

³⁵ *Payhéxkek [-]wáxok*, “the *wáxok* spreads out,” is indicative of happiness.

³⁶ *[-]tamheykha* is derived from the verb *[-]táha* (or *[-]teme*) - meaning “to do,” “to say” and “to be” - with the addition of the suffix “eykha” which suggests continual activity or movement. It is, therefore, very similar to *[-]tahakxa* and can also be used to mean “work” (see Chapter 6).

3.4 Lacking “Knowledge”

However, in reality, daily community life is pregnant with possible sources of intranquillity and the presence of even one or two people who act without “knowledge” and good “thoughts” can cause tremendous disruption within a community. A variety of terms can be used to describe persistently anti-social individuals. For instance, such people can be known as *ayasaxma*,³⁷ which means, literally, “not having knowledge/understanding,” while a “good/beautiful” *wáxok* is contrasted with a “bad/ugly” *wáxok* - *ekmaso [-]wáxok*.³⁸ Alternatively, people can be said to be “without a *wáxok*” - *méko [-]wáxok*³⁹ - and an old man once used this term to describe young men who walked straight past him without “looking at him.” “They are like snakes or dogs,” he added, suggesting an association between a lack of *wáxok* and an animal nature. *Eyémaxko’o [-]wáxok* is a similar term and can be translated, literally, as “really missing a *wáxok*.”⁴⁰ It describes someone who is *akkyémakpo*⁴¹ which is one way of describing proud people who believe that they are superior to others and refuse to touch or drink *tereré* with normal people who they condemn as dirty.⁴²

Anti-social, “unknowledgeable” people are those who, instead of practising “love,” exhibit *[-]taknagko*, a term that I will translate, in shorthand, as “hate” since it is the opposite of “love.” As with “love,” “hate” is not just a feeling but is a way of acting, in effect a denial of a social relationship and a refusal “to look at other people.” It is associated with a *kayhek [-]wáxok*, a term that characterizes a selfish, egotistical person who is lacking in compassion. *Kayhek* is, essentially, the opposite of *hápek* and can mean “to be strong” (as in a “strong person”), “to be hard” (like a fully inflated football), or “to be tightly stuck” (as in two objects that are glued together). In this latter sense, it is also used to refer to a “locked” door. People with *kayhek [-]wáxok* do not practise “love,” refuse to “look at” people with compassion, and do things for themselves in an individualistic manner without thinking of others. For instance, when someone refuses to share they could be accused of having *kayhek [-]wáxok*, in other words a *wáxok* that is “hard” or, alternatively, “locked” to others.

³⁷ Due to a misunderstanding by the early missionaries, the term *ayasaxma* came to mean “non-Christian.” This has implications for Enxet theology in that no one admits to being a non-Christian.

³⁸ *Ekmaso [-]wáxok* has a somewhat ambivalent meaning and can also indicate that someone has a sick stomach as well as conveying a sense of personal hurt and sorrow. As well as “bad,” *[-]maso* encompasses the meanings “ugly” and “evil.”

³⁹ *Méko [-]wáxok* means, literally, “there is no *wáxok*.”

⁴⁰ Interestingly, the Wichí use the term - “will-less” - to describe those who behave in an anti-social manner (Palmer 1997:166).

⁴¹ *Akkyémakpo* is the masculine version of the word “one who is really lacking.”

⁴² See Chapter 10 for a description of *tereré*, the main social drink among the Enxet.

Furthermore, those who “hate” us can be described as “opponents/enemies” - *[-]lenmexma* - and can seek to harm us, perhaps by using malevolent shamanism. Although non-kin are not necessarily “hated,” “hate” should not characterize a relationship between kin.

Those who lack “knowledge” also act without “restraint.” They demand things off others, give orders and use “heavy” or “strong” words in conversation which can harm the *wáxoks* of the listeners. Indeed, people who do things without “restraint” are often said to have “strengthened” their *wáxoks* - *ekyennaktéso [-]wáxok*⁴³ - so that they can act in this anti-social manner. However, the most extreme lack of “restraint” is said to be “anger” - *[-]lóló*.⁴⁴

“Anger” is regarded as the gravest form of anti-social behaviour and viewed as almost synonymous with “hate.”⁴⁵ In fact, the two words are frequently expressed in almost the same breath as in, “he was angry with me; he ‘hated’ me.”⁴⁶ Anger should, therefore, be totally avoided in inappropriate situations such as with kin, co-residents and, in general, those who are “loved.” In fact, anger and “love” are effectively incompatible. The Enxet relate anger to violent behaviour such as shouting, other unacceptable forms of speech which are subsumed under the notion of “heavy words,” and fighting. Indeed, the fact that *[-]lóló* - “anger” - is usually employed without reference to the *wáxok*, suggests that the focus is on the visible aspects of anger as manifested in behaviour. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that someone who is angry also has an angry *wáxok*.⁴⁷ Although anger is rarely thought of as hidden, it is possible to use the expression “the *wáxok* is angry” to refer to someone who has managed to conceal their true feelings.

So abhorrent is anger that, unless people are drunk, it is rarely observed, a fact also noted by Grubb (1911:200) when he remarked that “seldom do [the Enxet] lose their habitual good-humour.”⁴⁸ Indeed, the self-control that is implied by the term “nothing happening in the *wáxok*” is mainly concerned with the avoidance of anger.

⁴³ *Ekyennaktéso* comprises the adjective *[-]yennakté*, meaning “strong,” the causative suffix *[-]ésó*, and the third person singular females prefix *ek[-]*.

⁴⁴ In certain respects, *[-]lóló* is somewhat similar to the ambiguous Ilongot notion of *liget*, which Rosaldo (1980) translates as “energy, anger, passion.” In certain contexts, *[-]lóló* can also be understood as “energy.” For example, with the addition of a causative suffix, *[-]lóló* can be used to express the term to rest, *[-]lólókáso [-]yampé*, which, translated literally, means “to cause one’s tiredness to be energized.” Similarly, *lólókek [-]wáxok* can mean either to be angry in the *wáxok* (ie. hidden) or can describe an excited state such as that experienced when really “fired up” and enjoying a game of football.

⁴⁵ Cf. Santos Granero (1991:220).

⁴⁶ *Aplokek axta, awanhek sétaknagko*.

⁴⁷ ie. *lólókek [-]wáxok*.

⁴⁸ See also Grubb (1911:196).

Those people who have a tendency to anger easily can be called [-]lamchek, literally “savage,” which, since it is a characteristic of the more dangerous wild animals, effectively underscores their lack of “knowledge.”

3.5 Contextualizing Affective Discourse

Although I have suggested above that “knowledge” is associated with “love” and a lack of knowledge with “hate,” in fact it would be more accurate to say that being “knowledgeable” implies having an understanding of when and how to act appropriately. Therefore, the relationship between “knowledge” and “love” and “hate” is more ambiguous than I have hitherto suggested and, in contrast to the Amuesha who, “see love as permeating every aspect of human interaction” (Santos Granero 1991:201), the Enxet conceive of the requirement to “love” as contextual. Although they stress practising “love,” this does not imply a blanket condemnation of “hate” and so people are taught not just who and how to “love” but also who and how to “hate.”⁴⁹ Therefore, while one should “love” those considered to be in the in-group, it is acceptable to “hate” those on the “outside.”⁵⁰

Therefore, although acting with a “strong/locked” *wáxok* is usually condemned within one’s own in-group, when a leader meets with white people on behalf of his community he should have a “strong” *wáxok*⁵¹ and show no fear.⁵² He need not show “restraint” but should be “strong” - *apmeyhek*⁵³ - and prepared to use “strong words” - *appeywa ekyennakte*⁵⁴ - or “heavy words” - *appeywa ekyentaxnama*⁵⁵ - when speaking to outsiders. Therefore, a leader who, when dealing with outsiders, demonstrates a “soft/weak” *wáxok* is regarded as useless as his *wáxok* would shake or shiver - *ekpeyennama [-]wáxok* - and he would remain quiet, too scared to speak up for his community. Such a leader would be accused of being too “restrained/timid” with the stress being clearly placed on the side of “timidity.”

Indeed, even “anger” is considered to be appropriate behaviour in the right circumstances. While it should never be expressed in a relationship predicated on “love,” it may be acceptable when the need to practise “love” is irrelevant. This is clearest in the action of the shaman who, to save a patient, must fight with malevolent

⁴⁹ Cf. Overing (1989a:82f).

⁵⁰ See Chapter 11 for a discussion of the problematic concept of inside:outside.

⁵¹ ie. *kayhek [-]wáxok*.

⁵² A “strong” *wáxok* is, therefore, associated with courage (cf. Palmer 1997:160).

⁵³ *Apmeyhek* is the male version of *kayhek*, “to be strong.”

⁵⁴ [-]yennakte is the adjectival form of the word “strong.”

⁵⁵ [-]kyentaxnama is the adjectival form of the word “heavy.”

shamans and other dangerous beings of the invisible world. It is anger that causes shamans to harm people and the healing shaman must meet anger with anger in the battlefields of the cosmos. The *meteymog* revenge magic is also provoked by a mixture of sorrow and anger at the loss of a “loved” one, and the death of the guilty shaman is a cause of rejoicing.⁵⁶ Leaders could also use anger to confront missionaries, politicians or government officials if, by doing so, they can acquire material advantages for their communities.⁵⁷ Anger, therefore, when directed towards the outside, can be productive of social life.

The above examples indicate that many Enxet emotion words tend to have multiple meanings and can be used in apparently contradictory and creative ways depending on the context. While a “soft/unlocked” *wáxok* can be used positively to praise a generous “loving” person, the same term can be used to condemn someone regarded as cowardly. And, although a person who refuses to share can be denounced as having a “strong/locked” *wáxok*, in another context the same expression can indicate courage. Indeed, different people can use similar words in conversation but lend quite different meanings to them. For instance, if, in a meeting, someone takes the initiative to confront a wrong-doer to his face, those who support the speaker may speak favourably of his “bravery” - *kayhek apwáxok* - while those on the side of the person attacked could use the same expression to criticize the speaker’s lack of “restraint.” Such apparent contradictions will appear repeatedly in the thesis but, even though it may, at times, appear confusing, I should clarify that the Enxet themselves experience no difficulty in understanding their meaning, interpreting them according to the specific context.

Indeed, individuals can even be said to exhibit two quite different characters and the term *ánet [-]wáxok* - “two *wáxoks*” - can be used to describe such people. Such people may, for example, demonstrate “knowledge” by acting in a “loving,” responsible manner but, at times, could comport themselves as if they were “without knowledge” by, for example, becoming drunk and angry and fighting with others.

3.6 Temptation and the Tempter

The *wáxok* should be understood as encapsulating an individual’s character or personality, although always within the context of relations with others (cf. Loewen 1966). Yet, there remains the question of the degree to which people are regarded as responsible for their own behaviour. Evidently, the notion of individual responsibility

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 10.

has been implied by my description of a correlation between anti-social behaviour and a lack of “knowledge” and, for example, a person’s “savage” - [-]lamchek - behaviour can be explained by the term [-]témakxa,⁵⁸ which means, essentially, “that is how he/she is” or “that is what he/she always does.” At other times, though, anti-social behaviour can be explained by reference to an outside agent invading the wáxok and causing a person to act inappropriately.⁵⁹ One of the most frequently mentioned culprits is “Satan,” who is often referred to by the term *Segyepkeynma*.

Segyepkeynma is derived from the verb [-]yepkeynma which means “to tempt” or “to test,” and can be understood as “he who tempts us.” Its origin would seem to be the story of Jesus’ temptation in the desert during his forty days of fasting and may be a translation of an alternative name for Satan, “the Tempter.” Those who have seen the “Tempter” have described it as very tall, wearing a robe that reaches to the ground, and as distinguished from angels by the fact that it stands on the ground while the latter hover approximately thirty centimetres above the surface. The “Tempter” is often said to tempt people into acting in a wrong or self-indulgent manner but Satan is not the only being that is a source of temptation. Other spirits can tempt us and, indeed, when people turn mad - *yenne* - they can be said to have been tempted by the seducing spirits. Foreign “pop” music is believed to have a spiritual master that can “take hold of” the wáxok of those who dance and “speed them up” - [-]pekhéso - causing them to behave towards others without “restraint.” They could, perhaps, become excited, talk in an unacceptable or insulting manner, have sex with other people’s spouses, or even become angry and fight. Even humans can be said to be “tempters” and a leader of the Enxet Anglican church once complained to the missionaries that I was a “tempter” - *segypkeynma*. He was not accusing me of possessing a demonic nature - at least, I hope not - but was alleging that I tempted the Enxet into returning to their traditional dances which the Church regarded as incompatible with Christianity.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ [-]témakxa is derived from the verb [-]tème (also expressed as [-]táha) which can mean “to be,” “to do” or “to say” while the suffix [-]akxa suggest repetition. It has a variety of meanings, depending on context, and is the nearest word that corresponds to our concept of “culture.” Nevertheless, this is an inadequate translation since, in essence, it means no more than “what we usually do.” Consequently, animals also have a [-]témakxa. In another context, a person with a [-]témakxa could be someone with shamanic abilities while, at other times, it also refers to an individual’s bad behaviour.

⁵⁹ Anti-social behaviour can, therefore, be presented as a form of physical illness caused by the presence of extraneous objects within the person. Cf. Overing (1985b:270f).

⁶⁰ [-]yepkeynma can also imply the “testing” of someone. In the guise of Satan, *segypkeynma* can appear to church leaders who need to pray fervently to resist its attacks and thereby prove the strength of their faith. Similarly, a church deacon in El Estribo understood the death of his grandchild and child within the space of a year as a test - *seyepkeynma* (test of me) - which he successfully stood up to by not leaving the church and his home as would have been expected. And shamans who undertake spiritual struggles are said to “test” each other. If a shaman becomes ill he is often said to have been “tested” by another.

Often, people say that they are tempted into doing things “that they like” - *aksok [-]yespagkama* - in other words, they behave in a selfish and self-centred manner, putting their own pleasure before the well-being of those they “love” or should “love.” However, although the concept of temptation could be used as evidence to support the contention that people’s behaviour is determined by outside “forces,” I believe that, instead, it provides evidence to support the contention that individuals who have been taught to be “knowledgeable” are, in fact, personally responsible for their own actions. People may be tempted, but each individual can choose either to succumb or resist.

An explanation for why people are responsible for their anti-social behaviour can be obtained by focusing on the dual concept of the “soft/weak/unlocked” and the “hard/strong/locked” *wáxok*.⁶¹ People refer to a “door” - *átog*⁶² - to the *wáxok* and, although the term may be figurative, it certainly implies that the *wáxok* can be locked shut. Furthermore, other terms suggest that individuals are active agents in “locking” and “unlocking” their own *wáxoks*. For example, people can be exhorted to “strengthen/lock” their *wáxoks* - *anyennaktésekwáxok* - and, indeed, the verb *[-]yennaktéso* is employed to describe the “locking” of doors. Therefore, when faced with an outside temptation or the possibility of an outside force entering the *wáxok*, I suggest that people possess the ability to “lock” their *wáxoks* and impede entry. Certainly, within a Christian context, those who, for example, resist the temptation to dance, drink and “commit adultery” are said to have “strong/locked” *wáxoks*. In contrast, those who succumb possess “weak/unlocked” *wáxoks* since they allow temptation and other outside forces - such as Satan - to enter. Once inside, these outside forces can influence the *wáxok* and cause people to behave anti-socially.

I suspect that it is “knowledge” that enables people to “lock” their *wáxoks* when required, and it is probably for this reason that young people are more liable to behave asocially.⁶³ Nevertheless, as I have indicated, the notion that people are incapable of resisting outside influence is a continually recurring theme in daily discourse and its inherent contradiction with the concept of human agency and

⁶¹ ie. *hápek [-]wáxok* and *kayhek [-]wáxok*.

⁶² Interestingly, *átog* can also mean “mouth” but I do not believe that a person’s mouth is being referred to when people talk of a door (*átog*) to the *wáxok*. This can be deduced from the prefix employed. *Wáxok* is a “feminine” word and so the word for the “door” of the *wáxok* is constructed using the feminine prefix *á[-]* (ie. *átog*), even when the individual concerned is a male. If the door of the *wáxok* was the mouth then the male prefix *ap[-]* would be employed (ie. *apátog*).

⁶³ Instead of using the concept of “locked” and “unlocked” *wáxoks*, I could have constructed an alternative explanation of resistance to outside forces by using the “strong”：“weak” *wáxok* dichotomy. Yet, any separation of the concepts of “strong” and “locked” may be an irrelevance since, for the Enxet, both meanings are encapsulated within the same word.

responsibility is never adequately resolved. However, for the concepts to work as explanations of human behaviour and social relations it is not necessary for these contradictions to be resolved, and, indeed, the ambiguities permit a greater latitude and freedom whenever individuals explain their own behaviour and that of others. For example, when people act asocially, the options exist either to blame them by referring to their “weak/unlocked” *wáxok* and lack of “knowledge” or, alternatively, to indicate that they were not to blame for their failings and were overcome by powerful outside forces which were almost impossible to resist. Whichever explanation is chosen depends on the motives of the speaker: does he/she want to criticize the errant individual or, alternatively, absolve him or her by shifting the responsibility for any aberrant behaviour to an outside force? It is, once again, a matter of perspective and distinct explanations can, therefore, be attributed to a single act by different people. When people explain their own anti-social behaviour, the tendency is to minimize their own role and blame, instead, some influence from outside such as “temptation” or “the tempter.” This issue can be well-illustrated by considering the role played by alcohol in provoking “anger” and anti-social behaviour.

3.7 Alcohol and Anger

Interestingly, a person’s anger is frequently expressed in conjunction with the causative suffix - *[-]lókáso* - so that the motive for any anger is highlighted and, in addition, located outside the person in a similar way to “temptation.” Often, the actions of other people are identified as causing anger so that, for example, someone who is mistreated could use the causative suffix to indicate that their anger is justified because it has been caused by the actions of another person. Even inanimate objects could be said to cause anger: communal money, for instance, is often said to make people angry if it is not dealt with in a fair manner.⁶⁴

However, it is alcohol that is recognized as the main cause of anger, although among both the Enxet and other indigenous peoples, drink presents something of a paradox. On the one hand, it is an integral element of festivals and community celebrations and its consumption is viewed as generative of informality, enjoyment and sociality.⁶⁵ Grubb (1911:180ff) describes how, during the festivals of the pre-colonial period, the Enxet used to prepare their own alcoholic beverage - *anmen* -

⁶⁴ See Chapter 7.

⁶⁵ See: Goldman (1963:202ff), Gow (1991:127f), Viveiros de Castro (1992:119ff), Belaunde (1992:172) and Ellis (1996:153f).

from honey or the fruit of the *algarrobo* tree.⁶⁶ Even today, despite Paraguayan rum - *caña*⁶⁷ - having replaced the traditional beer of the Enxet, dances still produce a great deal of enjoyment and are described, literally, as *nelsowásamo*, “our rejoicing.”

Concomitantly, though, the consumption of alcohol, even during festivals, has frequently been noted as a major cause of fighting among indigenous peoples⁶⁸ and the only exception I know of are the Tsimane for whom the normal underlying potential for anger is temporarily subsumed by the shared intimacy of drinking⁶⁹ (Ellis 1996:154). The Enxet festivals of the pre-colonial period were frequently punctuated by serious quarrels (Grubb 1911:184) and, nowadays, it is rare for a dance to pass without some people becoming angry and fighting. Although this is normally limited to shouting and fist fights I know of a number of men who have suffered knife wounds. Usually, though, knives are drawn with little intention of their being used, as if drunks are convinced that they can enhance the spectacle of their anger by running around with a knife in the air as they scream out their grievances.

Why should alcohol promote such paradoxical behaviour in that it is both productive and destructive of sociality? The Enxet describe drunkenness as, literally, “alcohol killing/knocking out someone” - *eyakhé anmen*⁷⁰ - and this suggests that the consumption of alcohol brings about a temporary reduction in “knowledge,” in other words people become less aware of how to act towards other people. They begin to lose their self-control and behave with less “restraint” but, as long as this reduction in “restraint” is limited, it can stimulate greater openness and fluidity in social relations and encourage people to talk, joke and, in general, become much more intimate.⁷¹ If, however, excessive “restraint” is lost, it can end in the ultimate disrespect of anger.

At another level, though, the Enxet also stress the agency of beings of the invisible world. One shaman explained to me that people drink because the “owner” of *caña*⁷² sings its song which is so beautiful that men, who hear it in their *wáxoks*, are attracted to the source - usually a shop - where they have to drink. In this sense,

⁶⁶ See also Arenas (1981:62ff).

⁶⁷ *Caña* is also known as *anmen*.

⁶⁸ See: Siskind (1973:127), Kracke (1978:22, 105, 170), Goldman (1963:216ff), Thomas (1982:162), Brown (1986:319), Myers (1986:119), Forrest (1987:300f), Gow (1991:128), Belaunde (1992:105), Viveiros de Castro (1992:128), Harvey (1994:53), Dean (1995:93) and Peters (1998:207).

⁶⁹ Forrest (1987:300f) suggests that while traditional drinking among the Kalinya did not create a social problem and was an expression of social solidarity, the consumption of non-indigenous alcohol is the cause of almost every case of violent conflict. However, I suggest that Forrest has fallen into the trap of accepting too literally the indigenous people’s idealistic view of their own past.

⁷⁰ *Eyakhé* means “it kills” or “it knocks out.”

⁷¹ Cf. Ellis (1996:153).

⁷² The “owner” of *caña* is the “owner” of sugar-cane from which *caña* is produced.

alcohol is a “temptation.” In addition, the drinking of alcohol exhibits similarities to shamanic training in that it is a fermented plant that is digested, and it may be that drunkenness is explicated as a meeting with the “owner” of *caña*. In fact, a shaman once asked me to give him some schnapps that he had tasted in my house so that he could “train” with it. Another shaman, though, gave a slight twist to this interpretation when he told me that fighting occurs whenever the *waley apyepmeyk* - the spirits known as the “fathers of Paraguayans” - pour their “medicine”⁷³ into the alcohol that people are drinking. Their medicine enters the *wáxok* and turns people “crazy” - *yéhaxma*⁷⁴ - for a while so that they act without “knowledge” and are prone to anger.⁷⁵

However, people are still judged to be individually responsible for their own actions and, if “knowledgeable,” are recognized as capable of refusing drink if they so desire or, at least, of not becoming angry when slightly drunk. Once, a teacher in El Estribo, who had hit his wife when drunk, tried to blame me by saying that I had made him drink. He had been one of a group who, earlier in the day, had drunk some wine in my house before going elsewhere to continue drinking. Another teacher, though, defended me by pointing out that no one could pour drink into another person’s *wáxok*, highlighting, in the process, that each individual is responsible for his own actions. Those who easily succumb to the temptation of drinking are said to have “soft/unlocked” *wáxoks* and describe themselves as drinking because they “like” it. They easily give in to “temptation” and there is usually no middle ground with drinking: people either abstain completely or, having begun to drink, continue until the supplies are exhausted.

If people want to give up drink they should “strengthen/lock” their *wáxoks* to “temptation,” a capacity that is gained by being “spoken to” *[-]pakhetcheso* - by others. People can say that they come to a “realization” that they should give up drink and the verb “to realize” - *[-]ya’asegwayam* - means, literally, “to arrive at knowledge.”⁷⁶ The change of behaviour is, therefore, explained by gaining “knowledge” through “listening to” others. Sometimes, when heavy drinkers become ill, a shaman may frighten them into giving up drink by telling them that, if they continue to drink, they could become sick again and die. One leader in Makthlawaiya received this advice and complied so faithfully that he was encouraged to travel to an

⁷³ The word for “medicine” is *panakté* which is also the generic term for “plant.”

⁷⁴ *Yéhaxma*, a mild form of insanity, means, essentially, “to go round and round” or “to be dizzy.”

⁷⁵ Ellis (1996:154) has made a similar point for alcohol among the Tsimane, remarking that it incorporates a non-human agency that can be both life-generating and life-depleting.

⁷⁶ *[-]ya’asegwayam* comprises *[-]ya’asekyak* - “knowledge” - with the addition of the suffix *[-]wayam* which is the substantive form of the verb “to arrive somewhere else for the first time.” When employed as a suffix it indicates that something has been done or accomplished.

Anglican Church conference in Asuncion to give his “testimony.”⁷⁷ However, very few Enxet women drink alcohol, and Grubb (1911:184) reports that female consumption of beer was unknown prior to colonization. Their abstinence is explained by their possession of “strong/locked” *wáxoks*, at least in this context.

Drunks have a characteristic speech and body language which suggests that, to a great extent, drunken behaviour is learnt. Certainly, becoming drunk can be a conscious strategy to cope with certain social situations as illustrated by a leader who was angry with me because of the lack of progress on his land claim. He had avoided me for a long time because his *wáxok* was too “soft” and he was too “restrained/timid” and “fearful” to say “hard words” to me. However, on one of my visits to his community, he decided to become drunk so that he could face me and express his anger and he became quite belligerent as he lost his “restraint.” The Pintupi of Australia seem to have a similar attitude to drink and, despite being predominantly non-violent, can threaten to take revenge “any time, when I am drunk” (Myers 1986:119).

Nevertheless, people are tolerant of those who succumb to “temptation,” realizing that they themselves may “fall,” and are understanding of drunks who become angry. Indeed, one shaman told me that we should “hate” the drinking rather than the drunk. In contrast, a person who becomes angry when sober is likely to be much more harshly condemned. For instance, when a couple’s son-in-law arrived home drunk and began to mistreat his wife, the father-in-law became furious and began to beat the young man. The commotion could be easily heard in my house some one hundred and fifty metres away and, although the members of my household were aware of what the young man had done, their strongest criticism was reserved for the father-in-law who, they pointed out, had become angry without having drunk alcohol.

Any judgement on people’s anger is, again, dependent on the perspective and intentions of the speaker. He/she may, for example, choose to describe someone’s anger by adding the causative suffix to the verb thereby reducing the responsibility of the angry person by focusing on the person or event that provoked the anger. On the other hand, though, the same verb construction could be used to stress the wrongdoing of the angry person by emphasizing the unimportance of the cause. And, when someone is said to be angry without the addition of the causative suffix, this is usually

⁷⁷ The fact that the transformation in the man’s life had been brought about not by God but by the shamans was not deemed relevant and demonstrates that it is behaviour rather than belief that is significant in Enxet theology.

understood as a direct condemnation of the person. Therefore, the decision to add or omit the causative suffix can depend on the speaker's relationship to the angry person. When referring to "close" kin it is likely that the cause and the justifiable nature of the anger will be stressed while, in contrast, when talking about a rival or someone who is "hated" the causative suffix may well be omitted. However, this point should not be over-stretched as the use of the causative suffix can be little more than a grammatical device. Even if a person is caused to be angry, he or she is angry nevertheless and, therefore, ultimately responsible.

When drunks who have been angry eventually sober up they usually "realize" what they have done and one common reaction is to experience "shame" - *[-]megkakto*. In a sense, shame could be described as the result of "arriving at a knowledge" *[-]ya'ásegwayam* - about one's behaviour; in other words, it is a "realization" that one has behaved inappropriately and without due "love" and "restraint." One common reaction to an experience of "shame" is to leave a community⁷⁸ and, in fact, throughout the thesis "shame" will frequently appear as an explanation for social behaviour, almost as if it were a social regulatory mechanism. Certainly, it is described in this way by the Enxet.

3.8 Conclusion: an Enxet Perspective on Personal Autonomy

Although it has only occasionally been explicitly referred to, a central theme running through this chapter has been the notion of personal autonomy, a value that has been widely noted as a key characteristic of lowland South American indigenous societies, including those of the Chaco region.⁷⁹ Yet, as a number of authors have stressed, this autonomy should not be confused with a rampant, ego-centred and asocial individualism that finds an echo in certain strands of western thinking.⁸⁰ Although, as Overing (1989b:162) has pointed out, "the antipathy between the principles of community and personal autonomy is salient to a major strand of Western individualism," among many indigenous peoples autonomy is understood to be grounded in the social totality (Ingold 1986:223). Rather than undermining social life, personal autonomy underpins and produces the community and should be regarded, in effect, as a social and cultural quality⁸¹ (Overing 1989b:162; 1996b).

⁷⁸ See Chapter 11.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Goldman (1963:253), Buenaventura-Posso and Brown (1980:111), Thomas (1982), Rivière (1984:4), Santos Granero (1986b:108), Renshaw (1986:13, 272), Forrest (1987:325), Overing (1988; 1989a; 1989b; 1993a; 1993b; 1996b), McCallum (1989:241), Belaunde (1992:20) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:109ff). Personal autonomy has also been noted as a characteristic of many hunter-gatherer societies (cf. Woodburn 1980:106; Ingold 1986:222ff).

⁸⁰ Cf. Overing (1989b:162f), Santos Granero (1991:254) and Ellis (1996:12f)

⁸¹ Cf. Thomas (1982:236), Myers (1988) and Ellis (1996:13).

The Enxet discourse on personal autonomy corresponds perfectly with the wider picture from lowland South America and is always expressed within the context of an individual's relationship with intimate others. Rather than just centring on a person's own freedom and fulfilment, it is conveyed through a series of ideas on how one should treat and respect others. As Overing (1996b) states for the Piaroa, it is necessary, "to conjoin the conscious, intentional I with skills for both social and customary action." For the Enxet, these skills are intimately related to the concepts of the *wáxok* and "knowledge." They repeatedly use phrases such as: "we must present only good/beautiful *wáxoks* to 'our kin'"; "we should only speak to 'our kin' when nothing is happening in our *wáxoks*" (ie. when tranquil); and, "we should make 'our kin' good/beautiful."⁸² Alternatively, people can stress the need to avoid "harming the *wáxok* of others" and care should be taken in only using "good words" when speaking to each other. Central to this aesthetics of interpersonal relations is the notion of "restraint" and its implication that people should not impose themselves on others.⁸³ Such behaviour is an essential aspect of "loving" one another.

As Overing (1996b) remarks for the Piaroa: "The responsible, reflective 'I' from the start is a social 'I': one's own autonomy is dependent upon the autonomy of others - and *vice versa*." If, within a community, there is mutual respect among each member for the autonomy of all others, the community will prosper and "love" will be engendered. The key, as Thomas (1982:237) has noted for the Pemon, is to extend "autonomy as a prerogative *of the other*" so that, rather than giving priority to one's own independence, stress is placed on upholding the well-being of others. However, as always, this is only relevant within the appropriate context, in other words among those who "love" each other.

The Enxet discourse is, however, quite distinct from that of the Piaroa who, if a person is questioned about a personal decision, is most likely to answer with a phrase that can be understood as: "what I do is *my* business, and not yours - nor anyone else's," (Overing 1996b). This is probably the most commonly heard expression among the Piaroa and is described by Overing (1996b) as, "an emphatic statement of personal autonomy or purpose." Quite apart from the fact that the Enxet rarely question each other's personal decisions, such a self-centred comment would be

⁸² The expression "*antakmelchesek egmok*" which I have translated as "we should make 'our kin' good/beautiful" could also be translated as "we should take care of 'our kin'."

⁸³ Cf. Forrest (1987:325).

anathema to the Enxet. In contrast, a very similar term - [-]teme [-]agkok [-]agko⁸⁴ - is employed as a criticism of those who act in a selfish, individualistic manner. It could be translated, literally, as “one does one’s own thing, it really is” and implies a sense of “acting on one’s own behalf” or “in one’s own interests.” Such an accusation implies a lack of “restraint” and “love,” and when individuals act in an egotistical manner others will often say, “*etnahe apagkok*,”⁸⁵ which can be understood as “leave him to do his own thing.” It is rarely said to the faces of errant individuals - since this would require the speaker to have a “strong” *wáxok* and to practise a concomitant lack of “restraint” - but, instead, is directed towards those who are thought to share the same opinion. The statement is a condemnation of selfish behaviour yet, at the same time, it expresses a continued respect for the autonomy of others, irrespective of their errors. It is similar, perhaps, to the Piaroa expression “too much individualism” which Oldham (1996) has reported is used to criticize egotistical leaders.

The discussion, in the previous two chapters, of Enxet conceptions of personhood and the affective life will, I trust, function as a background to the remainder of the thesis. One of my main interests will be to present the Enxet explanation of their own behaviour, social organization and social relations. A characteristic feature of Enxet discourse on this topic is its salient use of emotion words and many of the terms and concepts that have been introduced in this chapter will continually reappear throughout the thesis. Yet, I have also shown that the Enxet concept of their universe is full of ambiguities and incoherencies and that, similarly, the translation of many “emotion words” is not a straightforward task. Instead, meaning is dependent on such factors as context and the perspective and motives of the speaker, and is frequently contested. In one context a word may have a very positive valuation whilst, in another, it may be quite the opposite. However, rather than being viewed as a problem, it should be understood as an integral element of the use of language. Indeed, I hope to show in the following chapters that, only by dwelling on the ambiguities of language, can we obtain a fuller appreciation of its true significance.

⁸⁴ The verb [-]teme means “to be,” “to do” or “to say,” [-]agkok is a possessive which could be translated as “it really is” (see Chapters 4 and 7) while [-]agko is the same word and adds further emphasis.

⁸⁵ *Etnahe* is the future tense of *apteme*. When referring to a woman the term is *katnahe agkok*.

4. GENERATING KINSHIP

For many years, the study of kinship in social anthropology was dominated by a structuralist paradigm. Kinship was both conceived of and represented as a static system, as predicated, ultimately, on “biological facts.” Consanguinity was seen as the force that bound people together and, as Overing (1985b:160) points out, such an assumption led anthropologists to the position of treating kinship terms, “as a set of words closed to any cultural or social consideration.” The work of Levi-Strauss was highly influential in the development of this approach which, in a sense, dehumanised kinship by stressing the production of ideal models through which to think and express kinship systems.

In recent years, there has been a strong reaction against this formalism and, in consequence, a number of interesting studies have appeared that have concentrated on the actual use of kinship systems in everyday life. Rather than creating models, emphasis has been placed upon the use and meaning of kinship terms and on uncovering processes. Such a perspective has led Overing (1996b) to characterize lowland South American kinship as “generative”¹ in that, rather than being dependent on a unique biological act, it is continually re-created through the daily interaction of people.² In this view, kinship is not fixed at birth but is dependent on how people live their lives.

Throughout this chapter, I will adopt a similar approach to examine Enxet kinship. I will demonstrate that the Enxet create kinship relations through the practice of “love,” primarily through the nurturing and raising of children. Furthermore, I will suggest that Enxet kinship terms and, indeed, their whole concept of kinship, cannot just be regarded as a system of classifying people into social categories. It is also a moral system and kinship terms are imbued with affective and social meaning. They are used as statements of how people regard, feel about and relate to others and indicate how people view the quality of the relationship they have or wish to have with others (cf. Overing 1985b:156). As a result, the choice of kinship terms is inherently unpredictable and, consequently, any attempt to analyze Enxet kinship as a static phenomenon will tell us very little about how people use kinship terms in their daily life and interaction with others.

¹ See Chapter 1.

² Cf. Overing (1989b:162ff), McCallum (1989:18), Gow (1991:194), Belaunde (1992:18) and Ellis (1996).

4.1 The Creation of Kinship

While reading Peter Gow's (1991) description of the Piro indigenous people of eastern Peru, I was struck by the tremendous similarities between their notions of the creation of kinship ties and those of the Enxet. Gow suggests that the Piro do not view kinship as predicated on fixed consanguineal ties but as processual. Rather than being dependent on a unique act, such as conception or birth, it is viewed as a process. Similar ideas have been expressed for the Cashinahua and Airo-Pai of Peru by McCallum (1989; 1990) and Belaunde (1992).

The Enxet do have a physiological understanding of parenthood which is expressed through their theories of conception and the existence of post-partum prohibitions.³ However, I experienced similar problems to Gow (1991:151f) when attempting to elucidate their ideas on conception.⁴ People were either reluctant or unable to discuss it and the very limited information that I have is based on joking comments made by men. When discussing sex, men often refer to their penises as guns⁵ - *elmaga* - that shoot bullets into the woman. However, the word for bullet - *aktek* - can also mean seed and may express some idea of the man sowing inside the woman.⁶ Men also refer to pregnant women as having been "made to swell" - *[-]yephéso*⁷ - by men through sexual intercourse which would indicate that semen is seen as an important contributory factor in procreation.⁸

In almost all cases of child-birth one man is clearly identified as the genitor but whether this reflects a theory of conception or the fact that most relationships, within marriage, are monogamous is not entirely clear. Confusion surrounds the identity of the fathers of children whose mothers are known to have had sexual intercourse with a number of men around the time of conception. Such women are referred to disparagingly as "female dogs"⁹ in that they act as if they are on heat and have men queuing up to have sex with them. Their sexual liaisons may take place over a number of weeks or months but I know of one case of 15 men who had sexual

³ Cf. Grubb (1911:132ff), Loewen (1966) and Renshaw (1986:322).

⁴ Cf. Taylor (1993:657; 1996:205).

⁵ The correct word for penis is *texa*. Similar expressions have been recorded for the Airo-Pai of Peru who refer to their penises as spears (Belaunde 1992:85), whilst the Arawaté of Brazil call the penis a bow or shotgun (Viveiros de Castro 1992:187).

⁶ The word *aktek* is used to refer to very small objects and is usually employed in conjunction with another noun. For example, *elmaga aktek* means "bullet" (literally the seed of the gun) whilst *latsehe aktek* means maize seed (ie. *latsehe* = maize). An eye is also referred to as an *aktek* (plural: *akta'ak*).

⁷ The root of the word *[-]yephéso* is *[-]yephé* which means "a swelling" while *[-]éso* is a causative suffix.

⁸ Among the Wichí people of the Chaco, the foetus is said to be formed by the accumulation of semen (Palmer 1997:155)

⁹ ie. *semheg*.

intercourse one after another with a Sanapaná girl.¹⁰ People say that they do not know the identity of the fathers of such children and in a joking manner refer to them by the Spanish word *selección*.¹¹ This could mean something like “you pay your money and you take your choice” but in Enxet *selección* is usually employed to refer to a football team that is comprised of the members of a number of other teams, such as the Paraguayan national team or a team made up of representatives of different indigenous communities. It may, therefore, indicate that a number of men are responsible for the pregnancy although the evidence is not particularly strong. Nevertheless, in practical terms, such children grow up as if they do not have a physiological father and often take their mother’s surname.¹² Therefore, no child is ever said to have more than one genitor.

A physiological connection is also recognised between a child and its biological mother, although I do not have any information on whether this is on the basis of shared substance such as through the transformation of menstrual blood. What I do know is that a sibling relationship can be claimed on the basis of having come out of the same women through the use of the term *nenteyepmóxamó* which means “we share where we came out of.”¹³ It is reminiscent of the Airo-Pai term “offspring of one belly” which is used by biological siblings (Belaunde 1992:47).

However, despite a recognition of a corporeal identity between a child and its genitor and genitrix, the most significant kinship links are developed after birth through the nurturing of the child. The fundamental idiom through which the creation of kinship is expressed is “love” - *[-]ásekhayo*. It is a concept that is at the heart of Enxet kinship since, ideally, the relations between kin are expected to be characterized by “love.” Indeed, “love” and kinship should be viewed as mutually implicated since the practice of “love” is the basis of the creation of the parent-child relationship and, indeed, of kinship in general. Within the context of child-rearing there are two words that are most commonly used to express love in action: *[-]wánegkeso* and *[-]takmelcheso*.

¹⁰ After this occurred, my wife and I spoke to a number of women in the community to find out their opinion. They did not regard it as rape but blamed what had happened on the woman for being drunk since they understood this as indicating that she wanted it to happen. Of course, their opinion may have been influenced by the fact that the woman in question was a Sanapaná. The men found the whole thing a great laugh and made jokes about it the next day.

¹¹ If the Piro do not know a father’s identity, the child is known as “a child of the wind” (Gow 1991:152).

¹² It is normal practice for children to take their father’s surname.

¹³ The root of the word *nenteyepmóxamó* is *[-]teyepma* which is derived from the verb “to come out of.” *Nen[-]* is a prefix indicating the first person plural whilst *xamó* means “together” and often appears as a suffix to indicate shared identity.

Although [-]wánegkeso means “to raise,” it can be translated literally as “to cause to grow” since it comprises [-]wánegye - the verb “to grow” - and the causative suffix [-]eso. Since [-]wánegye is derived from [-]wañam, which means “old” or “big,” an alternative literal translation could be “to cause to be old/big.” Therefore, when children are nurtured by adults they are literally made to grow through the giving of food. The Airo-Pai of Peru use a similar term to express the raising of children which they also directly associate with the obtaining and giving of food (Belaunde 1992:89ff) while the Piro explain that children are raised by the giving of “real food” which consists of game, plantains and manioc beer. It is this food that evokes a child’s love for its parents (Gow 1991:161).¹⁴

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the other word employed to express nurturing - [-]takmelcheso - while it can be translated as “to care for,” literally means “to cause to be good/beautiful.” Adults that “care for” children give them food, clothe them, keep them warm, teach them, give them presents and undertake a wide range of other actions with the ultimate aim of creating “knowledgeable people” with “good/beautiful” and tranquil wáxoks.

The raising and caring of children by adults is a fundamental aspect of the creation of the parent-child bond, in that the parents of children are those that raise and care for them. These actions both express “love” and are “love” itself and actively create a bond of “love” between the raisers and those they raise. In this way ties of kinship are created and “love” becomes the main idiom through which such ties are expressed and understood. The Piro possess a comparable concept and view the raising of children as the core idiom of kin ties, believing that raising a child is a supreme act of love.¹⁵ As Gow (1991:159) notes, this is a two-way process: “On one hand the care provided by a person to a child is a sign of the love that the person feels for the child. On the other hand, the care given evokes the love of the child for the parent.” Such an understanding is also applicable to the Enxet and, as Gow (1991) suggests, it is the memory of love received in childhood that organises a person’s adult social life.¹⁶

Therefore, whilst the Enxet recognise two idioms of kinship, one predicated on physiological links and the other on “love,” it is the latter that is pre-eminent. Since children are usually brought up by their biological parents the two idioms are often not separated (cf. Gow 1991:159). Nevertheless, a consideration of some

¹⁴ Cf. McCallum (1990:416f).

¹⁵ See Gow (1991:121, 159).

¹⁶ Cf. Belaunde (1992:18).

instances of children being raised by people other than their physiological parents will demonstrate the fundamental importance of love, raising and caring in the creation of kinship.

Children are often raised and cared for by other members of their extended family.¹⁷ For example, it is common for grandparents to be responsible for the raising of their grandchildren so that divorced or single mothers are unencumbered when looking for a future husband (cf. Renshaw 1986:228). When a second child is born, it is also common for the elder child to move into the bed of its grandparents who then become responsible for its nurturance. This is especially so if the parents leave the house for extended periods in search of work. Grandparents can also ask their children to give them a child to bring up, especially if their own children have married and left their house, leaving them feeling lonely. In all these cases, the children usually refer to their grandparents as their parents. In one example of a child, mother and grandmother living together in the same house in Makthlawaiya, the child calls her grandmother “mother” and her biological mother by her personal name. In another household in Palo Santo, one of the daughters had a child by a Nivaklé who she did not marry. Although her son calls her “mother” he refers to his grandfather as “father” since he, essentially, is the male member of the household who is responsible for raising him. For their part, grandparents can refer to the grandchildren they raise as their “children.” Once, while walking in El Estribo, I met a woman accompanied by a young girl and, during our conversation, she explained that, although the girl was physiologically her grandchild, she was now her daughter as she was the one who was “causing her to grow.”

Gow (1991:160f) describes comparable situations among the Piro and points out that the use of the term “parent” to refer to a grandparent does not imply an ignorance of the physiological facts. Similarly, among the Enxet all the parties involved are usually aware of these “facts” and so the adoption of the terms “mother” and “father” to refer to grandparents can be taken as evidence of the pre-eminence of nurturing over biological links.¹⁸

Men can marry women who already have children and, if they choose, can become their fathers. It is said of such men that they do not “hate” - [-]taknagko - the children and for this reason they adopt them. Since “to hate” is always set up in

¹⁷ Cf. Grubb (1911:108).

¹⁸ A similar phenomenon can occur in other cases of adoption. If a woman has a number of children she may give one to a sister to raise. This can happen if the sister is barren or has not been able to have a child for a long time.

opposition to the word “love,” the stating of non-hatred means, by implication, that they raise and “love” the children. There are also cases of men, with children, who remarry and the same process occurs with the new mother. Married couples can also adopt unwanted children. One man was wandering in the forest when he came across a woman who was about to bury her new-born child.¹⁹ He himself was nearly sixty but childless and, after asking for the child, he and his wife raised it as their own.

Adopted children are often referred to as *sekwánegkeso* - “that which I made grow” - but, interestingly, the term is never used to refer to children raised by their biological parents. This should not be understood as an indication of the primacy of physiological parenthood but occurs, instead, because it is assumed that such biological children have been “made to grow” by their parents. Gow (1991:158f) suggests that the overt identification as an “adopted child” highlights the care given to it and, among the Enxet, this conclusion is reinforced by another term that is used to refer to “adopted” children - *[-]meykha*. For a long time I was confused by this term due to it being derived from the verb “to use.” It could, therefore, be translated as “my using” and, if this were the case, would suggest that such adopted children “serve” their adoptive parents. However, the Enxet insist that the term is synonymous with “caring” and a closer examination shows how this is so. *[-]meykha* comprises the verb *[-]ma* - which means “to take” or “to have” - with the suffix *[-]eykha* - which indicates repetition and continuity. Therefore, *[-]meykha* can also indicate “to have continually” and so, when people refer to their adopted children as *sekmeykha*, they are saying, in essence, “that which I continually have.” The adopted child is, effectively, considered to be a permanent addition to the family.

Physiological parents who raise their own children refer to them as *sekte megwayam* which could be translated as “my creation.”²⁰ Such a “creation” is, however, not derived only from physiological procreation since *sekte megwayam* can also refer to children who are adopted at a very early age. For example, the leader of the community of Yakyé Áxa adopted a blond *mestizo* baby who he refers to as *sekte megwayam* and such adopted children are not known as *sekwánegkeso*. In this context, we can refer back to the use of the term *nenteyepmóxamó* which is used by siblings to refer to their common origin from the same mother. Although this term, with its emphasis on the physical birth, seems to stress the physiological bond, siblings can also refer to each other as *nentamóxamóneme* which means, literally,

¹⁹ Such a woman would be said to “hate” the baby although, in reality, there are many reasons for why infanticide would be committed. See, for instance, Grubb (1899:207f; 1911:143).

²⁰ The root of *sekte megwayam* is *[-]teme* which means “to say,” “to do,” “to make” and “to be” while the suffix *[-]wayam* indicates that something has been accomplished. The prefix *sek[-]* indicates the first person singular.

“we fed from the same breast.” This evidently puts much more stress on the aspect of nurturing.

The lack of importance attached to physiological origins is most evident in the case of children of mixed Enxet and Paraguayan origin. Such children are relatively common and are usually the result of short-term relationships between Enxet girls and Paraguayan ranch hands or owners. In most cases the Paraguayan fathers quickly disappear and their children have no further contact with them. If the mother subsequently marries, her husband usually raises the child as his own, often giving it his surname.

These examples of child-raising indicate the pre-eminence of nurturing over physiological origin in the creation of kinship among the Enxet and show them to be comparable, in this respect, to the Cashinahua, Piro and Airo-Pai.²¹ As Gow (1991:161) notes for the Piro, caring is “a sign of love of the parent, and the use of kin terms by the child [is] a sign of its reciprocation of this love.” Yet, not all investigators report similar findings. Basso (1988:77f), for example, is adamant that the Kalapalo of Brazil conceive of physiological links as pre-eminent. She states that:

For the Kalapalo, filiation is a permanent relationship which cannot be broken or changed. Adoption is entirely absent, and although fosterage (by which a person is raised by someone other than his real parents) is common, the fact that persons may act in a way identical to real parents does not make them such in the Kalapalo view.²²

Yet, such an insistence on the importance of filiation sits somewhat uneasily with her observation that (Basso 1988:82):

A parent is expected to be both nurturer and teacher to his children. The most important task of the parents, especially the mother, during the early years (that is before puberty seclusion), is to provide food for their offspring.

This quote suggests that kinship among the Kalapalo may be, in some way, dependent not just on a physiological link but also on people’s actions such as the giving of food. At the very least, it leaves a question mark over Basso’s rejection of nurturance as a factor in the creation of kinship.

²¹ See McCallum (1989), Gow (1991) and Belaunde (1992).

²² Basso (1988:102) also notes that parents are not necessarily spouses. Given that it is the sexual relationship that is said to determine parenthood among the Kalapalo, the father can be the lover of a child’s mother.

One can only wonder whether Basso has confused the existence of an idiom of kinship predicated on a physical link with the pre-eminence of this idiom.²³ The Enxet do not deny the permanence of the physiological idiom and neither do the Piro or Airo-Pai. Indeed, the Piro refer to a person's biological child as a *hijo legítimo*, or "real child" and an adopted child is said to have two fathers, one being the physiological father and the other the person who raised the child (Gow 1991:159). Similarly, Belaunde (1992:47) points out that the Airo-Pai can indicate whether a person is "biological" kin, but only when the listener does not know it. Both Gow (1991:158) and Belaunde (1992:90) point out that it is the identity of the person who has rights over a child that is important and suggest that the rights are held by the socially created parents rather than the physiological ones. I prefer to phrase this point somewhat differently in the context of the Enxet since the word "rights" does not adequately reflect the autonomy enjoyed by Enxet children.²⁴ Consequently, I prefer to speak of the legitimate parent as the person who, through the raising and caring of a child, creates powerful affective bonds which can be reflected in later life in common residence, the mutual sharing of material goods and the opportunity to raise the children of one's children. Indeed, it may be that the idiom of "raising" is of greater significance among the Enxet than among both the Piro and Airo-Pai. Whilst the latter continue to describe physiological children as "real" children, the Enxet, through their use of the term *sektmegwayam*, can come to recognise an adopted child as "real" even though both parties are aware that the child's physical origin is different.

This can be illustrated by the story of Fidel, a teacher in the community of Veinte de Enero in El Estribo. Although Fidel's genitor was married to his mother at the time of his birth, they were divorced when Fidel was a young child. His mother subsequently remarried and Fidel began to call Anastacio, her new husband, "father" - *táta* - despite continuing to use the surname of his physiological father. Fidel was married a number of years ago and, during my fieldwork, he, his wife, and their six children, lived in the house of his mother and his social father and next door to his parents-in-law. In early 1996, Fidel told me that his physiological father wanted to become his "father" and the expression he used in Enxet - "*peyk etnahek táta*"²⁵ -

²³ Reed (1995:76) appears to be similarly confused.

²⁴ For example, once a child becomes capable of making its own decisions, it can decide with whom it lives. Some children frequently change households of their own accord, usually to live with their parents' siblings, and I know of a seven-year old who successfully insisted on leaving his parents in Makthlawaiya to visit El Estribo in the company of his mother's sister and her husband. Whenever I asked parents why children did such things they usually replied, "because they want to," and never, "because I say they can." Parents also have a very limited influence in selecting their children's marriage partners: they are usually chosen by the children themselves and a parent cannot oblige a child to marry someone.

²⁵ "*Peyk etnahek*" means, literally, "he wants to be." *Etnahek* is the future form of the verb [-]teme, "to be."

clearly implied that Fidel did not consider his genitor to be his father. Furthermore, he himself was rather sceptical about the idea. He described how his physiological father had abandoned him and that it had been Anastacio who had “caused him to grow” and cared for him, giving him food, clothes, an education and many other benefits.²⁶ Eventually, Fidel rejected the idea and, in late 1996, he moved with his social father and father-in-law to a new community about 200 kilometres from El Estribo.²⁷

Nevertheless, the case of Fidel does indicate that physiological connections between people continue to have some influence on their social relationships, even if it is of much less significance than those kinship ties created by nurturing. For example, the physiological father of Miguel - who lived in the community of Kayawé Átog Kelasma - had been a Paraguayan ranch-hand, although Miguel himself had been raised by an Enxet who had married his mother some time after Miguel’s birth. Miguel called his mother’s husband his “father” - *táta* - but, in 1994, when Miguel was around fifty years old, he discovered the address of his physiological father who, by then, was a bank manager. Miguel was staying in Asunción at the time, caring for his son who was recovering in hospital after accidentally shooting himself in the head. His family was in dire financial straits and so Miguel began to visit his physiological father who gave him occasional monetary gifts. Soon he was referring to his Paraguayan genitor as *táta* and, since then, he has continued to keep in contact.

Yet, although people may be aware of physiological connections with other people, this is not commensurate with the existence of a relationship. Rather, the biological link provides the springboard or pretext for activating a relationship which is then created through the practice of “love.” Consequently, the Paraguayan became Miguel’s “father” only after he began to “care for” him by helping him and giving him gifts. When a physiological relationship has not been activated by “love,” people talk as if it does not exist.

The significance of raising and caring in the creation of a loving bond can be further seen in the relationship between Enxet women and missionary children. When the Anglican missionaries lived in Makthlawaiya, they usually employed Enxet women to look after their children. Strong affective bonds were created between these women and the children under their care and the missionaries’ return to their home countries usually brought great sorrow to the women. One lady, who had brought up a missionary child in the 1960s, became extremely upset when, in 1993, he visited

²⁶ Cf. Gow (1991:158)

²⁷ Interestingly, Gow (1991:158) claims that he heard of no case among the Piro of a physiological father claiming a child simply on the basis of physiological parenthood.

Paraguay but made no effort to see her. She complained that she had been the one who had raised, fed and clothed him and could not now understand why he did not visit her.

Relations between kin among the Enxet should not, therefore, be understood as mere expressions of genealogical relationships but rather as loaded with affective meaning. The recognition of someone as kin not only affirms the existence of a relationship but conveys a message about the quality of that relationship. It is an acceptance that the relationship is, or should be, characterized by “love” as a practice and this would seem to be common to many indigenous peoples in Lowland South America.²⁸

4.2 The Kindred

The Enxet conceive of the world of humans as divided into kin, affines, non-kin and other peoples (ie. non-Enxet). Kin are known by the generic term *émok*, expressed here in the first person singular form “my kinsperson.”²⁹ Since the Enxet do not distinguish between the second and third person, the term for “his/your”³⁰ kinsperson” is *pok* whilst “her/your”³¹ kinsperson” is *mok*.³² The plural of *émok* is *énámokkok*, that is “my kinspeople.”³³

Those Enxet who are not kin to ego are referred to simply as *hávé émok*, “non-kin.”³⁴ Since the Enxet have an exogamous marriage rule that prohibits marriage between cognatic kin, non-kin could, theoretically, be regarded as potential affines but I prefer not to use this term as it misrepresents Enxet concepts. Indeed, they have no word that could be translated as potential affine and only employ the term non-kin.³⁵ It is interesting to note that Rivière (1993:513) suggests that the coining of

²⁸ See, for example: Basso (1988:74), McCallum (1990:416), Gow (1991:121, 159), Santos Granero (1991:202f) and Belaunde (1992:18, 94).

²⁹ *Émok* means, literally, “my other.” However, this should not be confused with “the Other” and is, instead, similar in meaning to the English term “another” which indicates sameness. The Wichí also describe their kin as “others” (Palmer 1997:88).

³⁰ ie. “your,” when *pok* is used, refers to a male subject.

³¹ ie. “your,” when *mok* is used, refers to a female subject.

³² *Mok* is a shortened form of *mowok*, *pok* of *powok* and *émok* of *émowok*.

³³ The second and third person male form is *apnámokkok* whilst the second and third person female form is *anámokkok*.

³⁴ There are other ways of referring to non-kin such as *katnaha émok* which means “he/she is not my kin” or *pok énxet*, literally “other people.”

³⁵ Renshaw (1986:255) takes a different, yet somewhat confusing position in his study of Nivaklé kinship terminology. Whilst he asserts that the Nivaklé conceive of all other Nivaklé with whom they cannot trace ties of kinship as affines, he also states that, since the Nivaklé lack a generic term for affines, they refer to affines as *ni llavelh’a*, that is “non-kin.” In fact, the Nivaklé would seem to have a similar concept to that of their neighbours, the Enxet. Palmer (1997:116) also talks in terms of

terms such as “affinability” is an imposition of the anthropologist, “to protect the integrity of the dualistic structure of the so-called Dravidian terminologies.” As we shall see, despite certain similarities the Enxet kinship system is clearly not Dravidian. Affines are referred to by the generic term *eyepye*³⁶ and are also regarded as non-kin. Nor are spouses regarded as kin which is unsurprising given the exogamous marriage rule.

Yet, although the above description of the Enxet social world would seem to be clear-cut, in reality things are not so simple. As is common in lowland South America, the term *émok* is polysemic and has a wider meaning than “kin.”³⁷ It also includes the connotative notion of friendship which is, in itself, further evidence of the conceptual link between kinship and “love.”³⁸ Consequently, if people develop an affective (non-sexual) relationship they often refer to each other as *émok*. Indeed, people who are not particularly close could refer to each other as *émok* as a means of making a moral statement about how their relationship should be.³⁹

The Enxet classify kin according to the closeness of the relationship. “Close/real” kin are identified by adding the adjectives *keto* - meaning “close” - or *[-]agko*,⁴⁰ which could be translated as “it really is” or “real.”⁴¹ Such terms are reminiscent of the Airo-Pai’s employment of “close kin” or “very much kin” (Belaunde 1992:48) and, indeed, the use of the terms “close” or “real” kin would seem to be common in lowland South America.⁴² “Distant” or “not real” kin are signalled by the addition of the qualifying terms *teyépek*, meaning “far,” or *aksa* which suggests either doubt or a lack of seriousness. While “distant” kin are still understood to be kin, the use of the term *émok aksa* suggests that the relationship is one of friendship or that the kinship link between people is so tenuous that it is of little importance.⁴³

“potential affines” among the Wichí when, in fact, those in question are non-kin who are referred to by the Wichí by the term *we'nathlamej*, meaning “different.”

³⁶ *Eyepye* is the first person singular form, “my affine.”

³⁷ Polysemy is commonly reported in Lowland South America. See, for example, Basso (1988:78ff), Overing Kaplan (1984:133) and Rivière (1984:42). Also see Bird-David (1994:593).

³⁸ Cf. Overing Kaplan (1975:71) and Belaunde (1992:48).

³⁹ See also Chapter 10.

⁴⁰ *Ahagko* is the first person singular form, the masculine second and third person singular is *apagko* and the feminine second and third person singular is *agko*.

⁴¹ *[-]agko* is usually employed as an adjective to add emphasis to a noun. It would seem to be derived from the possessive, *[-]agkok*, meaning “mine” and it is used to stress the truth of the noun to which it is attached, as could be conveyed, in English, by the term “it really is.” It is frequently used almost as a repetition of a possessive, such as in the expression *ahagkok ahagko* which could be translated as “it is mine, it really is.”

⁴² Cf. Overing Kaplan (1975:72ff), Rivière (1984:31f), Alvarsson (1988:75) and Gow (1991:162ff).

⁴³ *Aksa* is frequently used in conjunction with the term *sekte me émok*, “My saying that he/she is my kinsperson.” This usually refers to those with whom a kinship link is not very close or to those with

In general conversation such qualifying terms are usually not applied. People are most likely to be referred to only by the term *émok* which conveys the message that the relationship is - or should be - predicated on "love." Qualifying terms are employed only when there is a specific desire to stress that someone is, or is not, "close" kin. Yet, there are no rules governing the use of qualifying terms which vary according to the speaker and the context. On one occasion, it may be important to restrict "close" kin to very few people whilst at other times the category can be extended quite widely. This is evidently related to the affective significance of kinship terms. When someone is classified as "close" kin, the speaker is not just emphasising the closeness of the kinship connection but is also stressing the extent to which that person is "loved." For example, ego could classify as "close" kin people who are genealogically more distant than others who are considered to be "distant" kin because of the deeper affective bonds that were developed during co-residence in childhood. Or a speaker could call someone "close" kin as a means of communicating a message in a specific context and, sometime later, refer to the same person as "distant." It is, therefore, impossible to fix the category of "close" kin to some static point on a genealogical table. Similar observations on the idiosyncratic and flexible nature of such qualifying terms have been made for the Piaroa (Overing Kaplan 1975:72f), the Piro (Gow 1991:163f) and the Airo-Pai⁴⁴ (Belaunde 1992:48f).

Nevertheless, there is a tendency to limit "close" kin to those with whom the connecting kinship links have been directly experienced by the speaker. In other words, if the speaker has known and remembers the people who constitute the linking steps in a relation between kin, the kinsperson in question is likely to be regarded as "close" (cf. Gow 1991:163). In this way, the importance of seeing or direct experience is emphasised and it is common for people to say that someone is *émok aksa* - "not real kin" - or *teyépek* - "distant" - because they have not "seen" a relative who links them although they may have "heard" about them.⁴⁵

A significant restriction on the extent of a person's direct experience of other kin is the shallowness of their genealogical knowledge which rarely reaches back more than two or three generations⁴⁶ (cf. Renshaw 1986:248). This is due, in part, to

whom there is no kinship link. When *aksa* is added, such as in the expression *sekte me aksa émok* the speaker is almost certainly emphasizing a very tenuous kinship link.

⁴⁴ Cf. Reed (1995:83).

⁴⁵ The expression for "I have not seen" is *mótak* whilst the expression for "I heard" in this context is often combined with the term *aksa* signifying some kind of uncertainty, ie. *sekleg'a aksa* - "I just heard about it."

⁴⁶ Cf. Overing (1975:71), Seeger (1981:61), Gow (1991:151), Taylor (1993:653) and Reed (1995:78).

the unwillingness of people to refer to a dead person by name and, whenever I attempted to elaborate genealogies among the Enxet, I was hampered by the fact that, if people had not seen a grandparent or great-grandparent, they would deny all knowledge of their name (cf. Gow 1991:151). The lack of personal experience of kinship connections can also be signified by the use of descriptive expressions that omit linking kin. For instance, a speaker could classify someone as “distant kin” by noting that “my mother called her mother, ‘kin’” without being able to describe the exact connection (cf. Gow 1991:164).

In common with many other South American peoples, the kindred is a key element of Enxet social organization. The term *énámokkok*, “my kinspeople,” could be understood as meaning “my kindred” although it can also be used in the singular to mean “a member of my kindred.”⁴⁷ As is common throughout the Chaco, the Enxet kindred is exogamous and traced bilaterally so that it includes, theoretically, all cognatic kin.⁴⁸ It is ego-focused so only full siblings can share the same kindred. The kindred does not include affines nor spouses, all of whom are categorised as non-kin. Essentially, people incorporate in their kindreds those they classify as “close” kin and, given the subjective nature of the term “close,” the kindred should be regarded as similarly flexible. It is clearly not a bounded group and those considered to be within a person’s kindred can vary according to context. Therefore, Renshaw’s (1986:248) statement that, for the Chaco as a whole, “in practice, an individual’s kindred rarely extends beyond two degrees of collaterality” - in other words, all those descended from the siblings of a person’s grandparents - is too precise. Nonetheless, the Enxet conceive of the kindred as if it were bounded: for example, a man, when explaining to me the meaning of *énámokkok* (kindred), drew a circle on the ground and stated that all those inside were his kindred whilst those outside were non-kin. However, the kindred is not conceived of as a geographical unit and, indeed, a person’s kindred is usually spread throughout many communities.⁴⁹

One of the clearest indications of how the Enxet conceive of their kindred or close kin is seen in marriage. As I mentioned earlier, the Enxet prohibit marriage between cognatic kin although, in practice, this prohibition only extends to those classified as “close.” Therefore, an idea can be obtained of who the Enxet regard as “close” kin, at least within the context of marriage, by seeing how closely spouses are

⁴⁷ Renshaw (1986:247) refers to the Nivaklé term for “kindred” as *lhavelh* which also seems to be the same as the term for a “kinsman” in the singular.

⁴⁸ Cf. Renshaw (1986:247) and Palmer (1997:113ff).

⁴⁹ See Chapter 11. Palmer’s (1997) use of the term kindred among the Wichí appears to correspond to territorial groups. Alvarsson (1988:63ff) refers to such groups as *wikyi*’ and does not describe them as kindreds.

related. The closest marriage I know of was between a girl and her MFFZSS but most people found this somewhat strange and her grandfather explained to me that it was probably just a sexual relationship rather than a proper marriage and that it was likely that they would soon separate. Another marriage that was regarded as uncomfortably close was between a girl and her FMMBSSS and, in fact, I found very few marriages between people with the same great-great-great-grandparents (in other words, covering four degrees of collaterality). Apparently, therefore, when considering marriage, the classification of “close” kin would seem to cover at least three degrees of collaterality. Although such wide genealogical knowledge is almost certainly beyond the personal experience of a couple who are about to be married, when assessing whether potential spouses are “close” kin, it should not be overlooked that grandparents can play a significant role by adding on at least two further generations of genealogical memory to that of the couple themselves.⁵⁰

Although the role of parents and grandparents is minimal in the selection of spouses, their intervention can be critical in permitting or prohibiting marriages between kin. In the marriage of one man, his paternal grandmother and his prospective spouse’s father considered each other to be kin - *émok* - although they could not name the kin that connected them. Before agreeing to a formal marriage in church, the man’s paternal grandmother and his fiancé’s mother met together to discuss the implications of the marriage and agreed that, as they were “distant” kin, the marriage could go ahead. In fact, if “distant” kin do marry, it is common for the relationship to be conveniently forgotten so that the spouses are considered to be non-kin, a common occurrence in lowland South America.⁵¹ However, if the prospective spouses are considered to be too closely related it is likely that a parent or grandparent with a strong *wáxok* will intervene. For instance, a young man in Makthlawaiya was sleeping with and interested in marrying his MBSD. He was stopped by his MB, the girl’s grandfather (FF), who, on discovering what was happening, became incensed and let them know exactly what he thought.

4.3 Kinship Terminology

Much of the work that has been undertaken in lowland South America on kinship terminologies has concentrated on their use as systems of marriage classification. This has been particularly the case among those investigators who have

⁵⁰ Overing Kaplan (1975:71) makes a similar point for the Piaroa. The Enxet are quite happy to marry non-Enxet, as they did in the pre-colonial period (cf. Hunt 1898:47).

⁵¹ See, for example, Overing (1984:139f), Gow (1991:172), Viveiros de Castro (1992:161) and Palmer (1997:125).

worked with indigenous peoples possessing Dravidian kinship systems, a two-line terminology in which people are expected to marry those whom they categorize as cross-cousins. It is a system that seems to be widespread throughout the continent yet investigations carried out in the Chaco indicate that the indigenous peoples of the region present a notable exception, with some authors suggesting the prevalence of a Hawaiian terminology (Bernard-Muñoz 1977:136; Alvarsson 1988:87). However, the data that I have collected on Enxet kinship nomenclature contrasts, in significant aspects, with the general picture reported for the Chaco. Indeed, at first glance, it may suggest the existence of a Dravidian relationship terminology. Yet, despite similarities, it would be wrong to classify Enxet kinship terminology as Dravidian on the grounds that it is not a marriage classificatory system. I have already described how the Enxet, in common with other Chaco peoples, prohibit marriage with all cognatic kin, and there is no correlation at all between the affinal and kinship terminology.

Indeed, rather than classifying people as marriageable or not, Enxet kinship terminology would seem to reflect their stress on the importance of nurturing. Key terms in the first ascending (G+1) and first descending (G-1) generations which, at first sight, seem to be Dravidian in nature, are perhaps better understood as indicating nurturing roles within the household. Furthermore, whilst the first part of my discussion will be dedicated to a formal discussion of kinship terms, I will subsequently demonstrate how the practice of nurturing can lead people to modify their actual use of terms.

Information on relationship terminologies within the Chaco is limited and the best sources are: Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969) and Renshaw (1986; 1996) on the Nivaklé; Miller (1966), Renshaw (1986; 1996) and Braunstein (1992) on the Toba; Alvarsson (1988) and Palmer (1997) on the Wichí; and Bernard-Muñoz (1977) and Renshaw (1986; 1996) on the Ayoreo.⁵² I will take the opportunity to compare the Enxet with other Chaco peoples and, although this discussion will be mainly confined to the footnotes, I will consider the most significant points of contrast in the main text. I should also point out that Enxet reference and address terms are essentially identical.⁵³ Tables 4.1 and 4.2 list the terms for kin and affines in the first person singular and I shall restrict myself to the same form in the following discussion.

⁵² Susnik (1977) collected some kin terms for the Enxet but her list is both incomplete and flawed.

⁵³ The conflation of reference and address terms also seems to be the case for the neighbouring Nivaklé (Wicke and Chase-Sardi 1969:485; Renshaw 1986:254) although Miller (1966) reports significant differences among the Toba.

Table 4.1: Enxet kin terminology⁵⁴

GENERATION	KIN TERM
+2	<i>áta</i> = FF, MF, FFB, MFB, FMB, MMB <i>áma</i> = FM, MM, MMZ, FMZ, FFZ, MFZ
+1	<i>mémé</i> = M <i>táta</i> = F <i>appa</i> = MB <i>eyha</i> = FB <i>mémay</i> = MZ <i>hátem</i> = FZ
0	<i>háwok or eyapma</i> = eB, FBSe, FZSe, MBSe, MZSe <i>yáye or eyáxa</i> = eZ, FBDe, FZDe, MBDe, MZDe <i>eyáxeg</i> = yB, yZ, FBSy, FBDy, FZSy, FZDy, MBSy, MBDy, MZSy, MZDy
-1	<i>hatté</i> = S, D, female ego's ZS, female ego's ZD <i>ephénem</i> = BS, BD, male ego's ZS, male ego's ZD
-2	<i>etáwen</i> = SS, SD, DD, DS, BSS, BSD, ZSS, ZSD, BDS, BDD, ZDS, ZDD

In the second ascending generation (G+2) and above and the second descending generation (G-2) and below there is minimal differentiation in the terms employed. In the second ascending generation, grandparents (FF, FM, MF and MM) and their siblings are referred to by the same terms, the only distinction being based on gender: male members of the second ascending generation are known as *áta* and female members as *áma*,⁵⁵ and the same terms are used for the third ascending generation (G+3). In the second descending generation only one term, *etáwen*, describes ego's grandchildren and those of his or her siblings, irrespective of sex, and the same term is applied to those in the third descending generation (G-3).⁵⁶

In the first ascending generation (G+1) the terms for “mother” - *mémé* - and “father” - *táta* - differ from those for ego's parents' siblings. Whilst this is consistent with other Chaco peoples, there is a major distinction between the Enxet and other Chaco peoples in the terms reported for ego's parents' siblings. According to most of the available literature, other Chaco indigenous peoples distinguish ego's parents' siblings only by gender so that the term for FB is the same as MB and FZ corresponds to MZ.⁵⁷ In contrast, the Enxet terminology differentiates ego's parents' siblings not

⁵⁴ Unless stated otherwise, the kin terms are used by both male and female ego.

⁵⁵ *Áta* and *áma* seem to be contractions of the words *eyáta* and *eyáma* which are still used occasionally.

⁵⁶ The lack of gender distinction in the second and third descending generations (G-2 and G-3) is also characteristic of the Toba (cf. Miller 1966:95f; Renshaw 1986:259; Braunstein 1992:4) but among the Nivaklé, Wichí and Ayoreo the differentiation between males and females is maintained (cf. Wicke and Chase-Sardi 1969:488; Renshaw 1986:351, 355; Alvarsson 1988:82ff and Palmer 1997:88).

⁵⁷ Cf. Metraux (1946:311).

just by gender but also according to whether the link is through the mother or the father: therefore, FB is *eyha*, MB is *appa*, FZ is *hátem* and MZ is *mémay*.

Whilst these terms manifest Dravidian characteristics, in reality they are irrelevant for marriage classification. Instead, the Enxet explain one important distinction, that between FZ and MZ, on the basis of the principle of nurturing and as reflecting the influence of an uxori-local residence pattern which encourages sisters to live in the same household. Noting the similarity between the terms for mother - *mémé* - and MZ - *mémay* - they argue that this is because a woman shares in the raising of her co-resident sister. They say that a person's *mémay* is a *yamegken*,⁵⁸ a term that means "like a mother," and I have also been told that *mémé* and *mémay* are *egken xamó*, that is they are "mothers together."⁵⁹ Even when sisters live apart, they can care for each other's children with the mother allowing them to live in a sister's house for extended periods. An adopted child could also call his adoptive mother *mémay*, but this can vary: other adopted children use the term *mémé* while others, for reference, say *sekte me mémé*, "I say mother."⁶⁰ The choice of term probably depends on the degree of intimacy that the children want to express.⁶¹

Neither of the terms for ego's parents' male siblings are regarded by the Enxet as similar to the term for father, which is *apyap* in the second and third person masculine singular forms.⁶² Yet, this could also reflect the influence of uxori-locality since, once an FB or MB marry, they usually change their residence and are less likely to be directly involved in the upbringing of their siblings' children.⁶³

Whether the terminology exhibited by the Enxet in the first ascending generation (G+1) is, in fact, such a unique case in the Chaco, could be questioned. Although Renshaw (1986:262) reports that the parents' siblings among the Ayoreo

⁵⁸ *Egken* is the second and third person singular term for "mother" or both men and women.

⁵⁹ If a *mémay* is particularly close to her sister's children, they could call her *ma'ay*.

⁶⁰ Susnik (1977:240f) says that the Enxet usually call female siblings that are considerably older, *mémay*, and explains that this indicates greater respect and distance. I have not heard this use but, if it does exist, it is likely to be the consequence of an elder sister raising her younger siblings.

⁶¹ An adopted child could refer to the man who brought him up as *sekte me táta*, "My saying father." However, if a child was adopted when very young he would probably just say *táta* (father).

Alternatively, if he has been brought up by his uncle, he could continue to use the term for uncle. Indeed, there is a great deal of flexibility in the choice of terms, an issue to which I will return later. A similar situation occurs among the Nivaklé (Renshaw 1986:258): an affinal term is used to refer to the stepfather but, if ego is a young child when his mother remarries he is likely to call his stepfather by the term for father.

⁶² *Apyap* is a contraction of the term *apyápam*. In reality the term is not too dissimilar for the terms for parents' male siblings when given in the second and third person masculine singular forms: FB is *apyaha* and MB is *apyapka*. The point I make in the text is that the Enxet themselves do not note any similarity: in the first person singular forms there is none: F is *táta*, FB is *eyha* and MB is *appa*.

⁶³ An exception could occur if the child's father's brother were to marry the child's mother's sister.

are differentiated only according to gender, he mentions that in certain circumstances - which he notes “are not entirely clear from the data” - FB is distinguished from MB as is FZ from MZ. For example, in an echo of the Enxet example, the mother’s sister could be called, literally, “another mother,” a variation that Renshaw also suggests could be caused by uxorilocality. However, in his summary of the Chaco situation, he does not explore the implications of this observation (1986:263). Yet, Bernard-Muñoz (1977:133) provides data on Ayoreo kinship terms in the first ascending generation that are reminiscent of the Enxet case. She notes four separate terms for FB, MB, FZ, and MZ and translates the term for MZ as “little mother.” Furthermore, Verena Regehr (personal communication) has questioned the Nivaklé data provided by Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969) and Renshaw (1986) and suggested that the true situation may also be similar to that of the Enxet.⁶⁴ Among the Wichí, Palmer (1977:87) mentions the existence of two terms for “uncle” although he insists that they are used interchangeably for both FB and MB. Furthermore, the Wichí conflation of the terms M and MZ, and F and FB, when referred to collectively, may also suggest the influence of nurturing (1997:87).⁶⁵

In ego’s generation, siblings and the children of MB, MZ, FB and FZ are referred to by the same terms, and the only distinctions at this level are by gender and relative age. Elder brothers (both “real” and classificatory) are referred to as *háwok* or *eyapma* whilst elder sisters (both “real” and classificatory) are called *yáye* or *eyáxa*.⁶⁶ However, the distinction by sex does not apply to younger siblings and classificatory siblings who are known as *eyáxeg*.⁶⁷ If the Enxet want to distinguish between male and female younger siblings, they need to attach the words for male and female, such as *eyáxeg akkenna* (male younger sibling) and *eyáxeg kelwána* (female younger sibling). It should also be clarified that the difference in age is relative to ego and does not depend on any connecting relative (cf. Renshaw 1986:257). Therefore, ego’s father’s elder brother’s son who is younger than ego would be his *eyáxeg* whilst ego’s mother’s younger sister’s daughter who is older than ego would be his *yáye*.

⁶⁴ Care should be taken with the data provided by Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969) and Renshaw (1986) since they both used the same informant, a *mestizo* Nivaklé who was raised by Roman Catholic priests and has lived in Asunción for many years.

⁶⁵ See also Reed (1995:77) for a possible example of a similar phenomenon among the Guaraní-speaking Chiripá.

⁶⁶ The Ayoreo differ from other Chaco peoples in that they have various terms for elder brother depending on absolute age (Renshaw 1986:355).

⁶⁷ The lack of gender distinction between younger siblings contrasts with the terminologies recorded for other Chaco peoples which consistently demonstrate a division by sex between younger siblings (cf. Miller 1966:195f; Wicke and Chase-Sardi 1969:485; Renshaw 1986:353ff; Alvarsson 1988:82f; Palmer 1997:88). However, a non-differentiation by sex for this term is not unknown elsewhere in lowland South America and Rivière (1984:45) reports that it is quite common in the Guianas.

It is at the level of ego's generation that the contrast with a classical Dravidian system is clearest as there is no distinction between parallel and cross cousins. It also needs to be clarified that we are not dealing with an example of so-called "hidden affinity" or "Hawaiian neutralisation"⁶⁸ as described by Basso (1970) for the Kalapalo and Rivière (1984:46f, 68f) for the Aparai, Ye'cuana and Pemon of the Guianas. In the case of the Kalapalo, their kinship terms have two dimensions of contrast. When they refer to kinship relations the only apparent terminological differentiation is between generations so that their nomenclature reveals distinctive Hawaiian features. However, the other principle of contrast is related to marriage rules so that when "affinability" is specified the bilateral nature of the terms is clearly expressed so that the Dravidian features of the terminology become apparent. The Aparai, Ye'cuana and Pemon terminologies have distinct terms for same-sex siblings and same-sex cross-cousins but only one term covers all members of the opposite sex. Yet this causes no confusion when defining marriageable and unmarried categories since a differentiation is made by reference to the terms used in the first ascending level. Both these examples are quite different to the Enxet situation since, although terminologically the Kalapalo, Aparai, Ye'cuana and Pemon may not distinguish cross and parallel cousins, they clearly do so conceptually and their relationship terminologies are still marriage classificatory systems. In contrast, the Enxet make neither a terminological nor conceptual distinction between cross and parallel cousins since no one in either category is an eligible marriage partner for ego.

A more fruitful approach may be to understand the correspondence between the terms for ego's siblings and the children of ego's parents siblings as consistent with the practice of nurturing. Given the frequency of joint residence between siblings, especially sisters, their children are often raised together.⁶⁹ It is, therefore, not a great surprise to find that there is a conflation in the terms used by ego to describe his or her own siblings and the children of his or her parents' siblings (cf. Miller 1966:198). Nevertheless, if the Enxet want to distinguish between "real" and "classificatory" siblings, they can. By adding the word *ahagko* (real) onto a sibling term - such as *eyáxeg ahagko* - this is understood to mean that the person indicated has the same mother and father as ego.

In the first descending generation (G-1), further distinctions can be noted between the Enxet terminology and that reported for other Chaco peoples. Whilst the Enxet make no discrimination at this level on the basis of gender, this contrasts with

⁶⁸ The term "Hawaiian neutralisation" is used by Viveiros de Castro (1992:163).

⁶⁹ Cf. Crocker (1985:77).

many other Chaco peoples.⁷⁰ If the Enxet want to differentiate between the sexes, they must add on the terms for male and female but this is only done when there is a need to specify gender.⁷¹ Furthermore, whilst other Chaco peoples distinguish between ego's own children and the children of ego's brothers and sisters, this distinction is not so clear-cut among the Enxet. Although ego will call his or her own child, *hatté*, the same term is also used by a female ego to refer to her sister's child. In other words, a *mémé* (M) and a *mémay* (MZ) of a child will both refer to that child as *hatté*. In contrast, a male ego's sibling's child and a female ego's brother's child are known as *ephénem*. Whilst this distinction may again be reminiscent of a Dravidian terminological system, it needs to be remembered that it is totally unrelated to a system of marriage classification. Instead, the use by a *mémay* (MZ) of the term *hatté* - which could legitimately be translated as "my child" - for her ZS and ZD is unsurprising given the Enxet notion of the *mémay* as co-participator in the nurturing of her sister's children.

Furthermore, as occurred with the first ascending generation, questions can also be raised about whether the Enxet are, in this respect, as unique in the Chaco as has been suggested by the literature. Although the evidence is slight, Miller (1966:197) does refer to Toba informants who insisted that the term for son could include "a nephew with whom one is particularly intimate," but he does not state the sex of ego nor whether there is a distinction between the children of ego's brother and sisters. Nevertheless, the use of the term "son" does indicate the influence of nurturing and this is even clearer in Renshaw's (1986:355) translation of the Ayoreo terms for a sibling's children as "another son" or "another daughter." Indeed, Bernand-Muñoz (1977:135) describes a more differentiated terminology than Renshaw for the Ayoreo first descending generation, distinguishing between a female ego's sister's children, known as "other sons/daughters," and a quite separate term for a female ego's brother's children. As in the Enxet case, this may reflect the influence of uxorilocality and shared nurturing between sisters.⁷²

⁷⁰ At the G-1 generation, the Wichí, Nivaklé, Toba and Ayoreo would seem to differentiate according to gender. See, for example: Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969), Bernand-Muñoz (1977:135), Renshaw (1986:351ff), Alvarsson (1988:81f) and Palmer (1997:88).

⁷¹ Rivière (1984:45) suggests that it is uncommon, in the Guianas, not to apply the principle of sex at the first descending level although he notes that the Wapishiana, as with the Enxet, do not.

⁷² However, the terms recorded by Bernand-Muñoz (1977:135) for a male ego's siblings children are similar to those given by Renshaw (1986:355).

Table 4.2: Enxet affinal terminology⁷³

GENERATION	AFFINAL TERM
+2	<i>eyepye</i> = all affines of this generation
+1	<i>eyepyáta</i> = WF, HF <i>eyepyáma</i> = WM, HM <i>eyepye</i> = all other affines of this generation
0	<i>etáwa</i> = H, W <i>eyepye</i> = all affines of this generation
-1	<i>ephayem</i> or <i>étánegyap</i> = DH <i>étánegken</i> = SW <i>eyepye</i> = all other affines of this generation
-2	<i>eyepye</i> = all affines of this generation

Enxet affinal terminology would seem to be among the simplest of those recorded for Chaco peoples. People considered as affines are either the kin of ego's spouse or the spouses of ego's kin and comprise a large proportion of ego's probable co-residents, irrespective of whether ego lives among his or her own kin or among those of his or her spouse. Although not strictly considered as an affine, the spouse is referred to by one term regardless of sex, *etáwa*. However, this is in the first person singular form only (ie. my wife) and in the second and third person singular forms the sex is clearly distinguished: *aptáwa* means "his/your wife" and *atáwa* "her/your husband."⁷⁴

As is clear from Table 4.2, almost all affines, whether they be the spouses of ego's kin or the kin of ego's spouse are referred to by one term, *eyepye*, irrespective of gender.⁷⁵ The only Enxet affines that are referred to by specific words are ego's

⁷³ The terms are used by both male and female egos.

⁷⁴ The situation with regard to the terms used for spouse among other Chaco peoples is not clear from the literature. Renshaw (1986:354ff) states that among the Toba and Ayoreo, spouses are differentiated by sex yet, in the Toba case, Miller (1966:196) and Braunstein (1992:4f) seem to disagree since they record only one term although it is possible that the contrast observed could be the result of dialectical differences between Toba sub-groups. Both the Nivaklé and Wichí are reported to employ only one term for spouse but in none of the cases is it mentioned whether prefixes vary according to the person in question, that is "my," "his," or "her" (Wicke and Chase-Sardi 1969:490; Alvarsson 1988:81; Palmer 1997:110). Renshaw (1986) only records the Nivaklé term for wife. Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:490) also report that the Nivaklé term for spouse varies according to whether or not the marriage has produced off-spring.

⁷⁵ *Eyepye* is the first person singular form, ie. "my affine." Susnik (1977:241) reports a much more restricted use of the term *eyepye* whilst, elsewhere in the Chaco, there would seem to be a much greater differentiation in affinal terminology. The Wichí, Nivaklé and Ayoreo distinguish between the kin of ego's spouse and the spouses of ego's kin as well as by gender and, although Renshaw (1986:354) states that the Toba make no distinction between the affines of kin and the kin of affines, Miller (1966) is again in disagreement. The Toba and Wichí also seem to have terms for the spouses of certain kin of ego's spouse, a situation that does not occur among the Enxet (Miller 1966:196; Alvarsson 1988:85; Braunstein 1992:5). Nevertheless, given Braunstein's (1992:5) translation of this Toba term as

parents-in-law and ego's children-in-law.⁷⁶ The father-in-law of either spouse is known as *eyepyáta* and the mother-in-law as *eyepyáma* and a marked similarity can be noted with the terms for grandparents, *áta* (*eyáta*) and *áma* (*eyáma*). Indeed, the only difference would seem to be the addition of the infix [-]ep[-] and Alvarsson (1988:84f) and Palmer (1997:109) have noted an almost identical situation among the Wichí.⁷⁷ Interestingly, Alvarsson suggests that the Wichí terms for parents-in-law could be understood to mean “she/he who is like my own grandparent” and, although I would not be confident about making the same translation for the Enxet, it is likely that the terms imply a sense of intimacy in the relationship.

The son-in-law is usually referred to as *ephayem* and the daughter-in-law as *étánegken*. The latter is a composite term meaning, literally, “the mother of my grandchild”⁷⁸ and, occasionally, the son-in-law can also be referred to as *étánegyap*, which corresponds closely to the equivalent term for daughter-in-law since it means, literally, “the father of my grandchild.”⁷⁹ However, *étánegyap* is not in common usage and some people have never heard of it. I was also informed that the term for a daughter-in-law without a child would be *étánegken sat*, literally, “she who will be the mother of my grandchild.”⁸⁰ However, this term may be somewhat artificial and may be indicative of the changes introduced by church weddings and marriage certificates. In the past - and, indeed, in many cases still - a marriage was not considered to be a permanent union until the first child was born.⁸¹ Prior to the recognition of a marriage, a “partner” is referred to as *sekmayhekxa*. Essentially, this term refers to a sexual relation and seems to be derived from a word meaning “to desire greatly.” In the past, it is possible that, prior to the birth of a child, there was no need for a term for daughter-in-law.⁸²

Étánegken and *étánegyap* are examples of teknonyms, a practice that is not uncommon among the Enxet. Teknonyms can also be employed to refer to a wider

“companion,” it may be feasible to suggest that it may refer more to those who co-operate together and who are neither kin nor affines since, given the residence patterns of Chaco peoples, those with whom ego co-operates would often be the spouses of ego's spouse's kin. This is certainly one way in which the term “companion,” [-]xegexma, could be understood in Enxet (see Chapter 8).

⁷⁶ Although I do not deal here with bereavement terms, it should be mentioned that when ego's sibling dies, ego refers to the sibling's spouse as *selyansamaxche*, and *vice versa*.

⁷⁷ Although it is not commented on by Renshaw (1986:351f), the Nivaklé terms for parents-in-law also seem to be formed from the addition of an infix to the words for grandparents.

⁷⁸ The full version of *étánegken* would be *etáwen egken*.

⁷⁹ *Étánegyap* is a shortened version of *etáwen egyap*.

⁸⁰ *Sat* is used to indicate the future tense.

⁸¹ Cf. Grubb (1911:214).

⁸² Prior to marriage in a church, people refer to their fiancées as *sekpagkanma* which means, literally, “that which I have reserved.” I suspect that this term is relatively modern and has only been adopted with the introduction of church weddings.

range of affines: for example, a woman could call her husband's sister, *hatté chátem*, literally "the aunt of my child" and could refer to her husband's relatives as *hatté anámokkok*, literally "the kinspeople of my child." The use of teknonyms has also been reported among other indigenous peoples in South America.⁸³ In the context of the Chaco, Renshaw (1986:264ff) describes a similar practice among the Nivaklé and Ayoreo although rather than employing only kin terms, names are also used: for instance, a Nivaklé could call his daughter-in-law "María Llamimi," which means the mother of María, his granddaughter.⁸⁴

Overing Kaplan (1975:169ff) explains teknonymy among the Piaroa of Venezuela as a means of reducing difference and they use teknonyms to refer to affines who, through marriage, have moved into a local group.⁸⁵ The Piaroa conceive of communities as groups of co-resident kin and the introduction of an affine, who is conceptually associated with the Other and danger, is viewed as a potential threat to the well-being of the community. The birth of a child to a co-resident affine provides the opportunity for the latter's incorporation as putative kin by the creation of a teknonym that traces the links between affines through those children who are kin to both parties, in much the same way as the Enxet and Nivaklé. Affines, therefore, come to be referred to by the use of kin terms and so, through the creation of children, kinship is created between former strangers. In this way, the community remains a putative group of co-resident kin and otherness and danger are dissipated. Renshaw (1986:267) makes a similar point for the indigenous people of the Chaco.

While this explanation can also be fruitfully applied to the Enxet, a slightly different approach will provide a more accurate representation of their own view, one that stresses the conceptual link between kinship and "love" - [-]ásekhayo. An in-marrying spouse can often find the experience of moving into another household to be difficult, especially if he or she is from a different community. He/she will be non-kin to the other household members and, unless they have been co-resident prior to the move, they are unlikely to have already developed affective ties. Initial relations with parents-in-law may be tense and newly-wed in-marrying individuals are usually withdrawn and seem to spend much of their time huddled away with their spouses. If

⁸³ See also: Overing Kaplan (1972) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:143ff).

⁸⁴ Whether or not the Nivaklé term for daughter-in-law is a composite term meaning the "the mother of my granddaughter" is not clear from the literature. It is not mentioned by Renshaw (1986) and, in the data on affinal terms that he provides, he only notes the first person singular form of mother, that is "my mother." However, it must be regarded as a possibility since, according to Renshaw (1986:352), the Nivaklé term for daughter-in-law is *Yitaumite 'e* and for grandchild it is *Yitaukshich 'a* (male) and *Yitauklishe 'e* (female). Evidently, there is a certain similarity between the terms but more information is required.

⁸⁵ Although the Piaroa make great use of teknonyms, Rivière (1984:48) states that it is not widespread among other indigenous peoples of the Guianas.

their parents live close-by, they tend to visit them as frequently as possible so as to be in surroundings where their *wáxoks* are more tranquil. However, as time passes and children are born, relations between parents-in-law and their children-in-law begin to improve. Fathers-in-law and sons-in-law could begin to hunt together and help each other in other ways (cf. Renshaw 1986:226ff). Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law could accompany each other as they gather plants and fruits, collect firewood, wash clothes and care for any children. They may all work in the same garden and any food brought to the house will be shared by all. Through these and other experiences of mutual help and sharing, “love” develops between the in-marrying affine and the rest of the household. And, as “love” is created, it is not surprising that affines begin to be referred to by teknonyms that indicate kinship and, indeed, begin to be thought of as if they were kin. Since children are at a nexus connecting affines, it is no surprise that the teknonyms created between co-resident affines are calculated through the children who are kin to both parties.

However, teknonyms can also be created through a combination of affinal and kinship terms. For instance, sons-in-law are often referred to as *hatté atáwa*, “the husband of my daughter,” a term that also indicates the creation of “love” between affines. On the one hand, the terms stress the importance of their daughter as the link in the relation between parents-and-law and their son-in-law.⁸⁶ It also underscores the matrimonial bond which the Enxet conceive of, ideally, as a permanent relationship. Both the parent-daughter and the husband-wife relations are predicated on a bond of “love” so that the term *hatté atáwa* indicates a continuous line of “love.” Similarly, it is common for the respective parents-in-law of a married couple to refer to each other as *hatté egyepyáta*, “the father-in-law of my child” and *hatté egyepyáma*, “the mother-in-law of my child.”⁸⁷ This indicates how, after a marriage, the two sets of parents often begin to develop closer relations and, again, the terms stress the significance of the parent-child relationship.

The importance of teknonyms as indicators of a relationship characterized by “love” is emphasized by their occasional use to refer to non-kin with no affinal ties. For instance, my wife was occasionally referred to by our neighbours in Makthlawaiya as the mother of our daughter, *Sarina egken*. On the one hand, the term indicates the close relationship between our daughter and our neighbours who spent so much time “caring for” and nurturing her that they developed a great “love” for

⁸⁶ A similar point is made by Viveiros de Castro (1992:144).

⁸⁷ To be more accurate, *hatté egyepyáta* means the “father-in-law of my daughter” whilst *hatté egyepyáma* means the “mother-in-law of my daughter.” The term for “father-in-law of my son” would be *hatté apepyáta* and for “the mother-in-law of my son” it would be *hatté apepyáma*.

her. However, the term was used specifically to express the close relationship they felt they had with my wife. Indeed, they considered the relationship to be so close that, at other times, they described my wife as “like our sister.”⁸⁸

The existence of teknonyms suggests a certain flexibility in the use of kinship terminology and it is this flexibility that I will proceed to consider in more detail. In this way I hope to demonstrate that kinship systems can only be properly understood through a consideration of their use rather than by a formal analysis. Enxet kinship is not just an expression of a physiological relationship and a place on a genealogical table since, if it were, we would expect to find order in their use of kinship terms. Yet, the Enxet seem to employ kinship terms in a chaotic and irregular fashion, with little or no regard for any underlying structures. While this can be somewhat disorientating for outsiders, I hope to demonstrate that such confusion is most probably the result of an *a priori* identification by outsiders of kinship with consanguinity. The Enxet themselves experience no confusion because of their distinct conception of kinship, one that privileges the practice of “love” over the existence of a physiological bond. So, rather than ignoring the chaotic nature of much of my kinship data, I intend to demonstrate that within the chaos lurks an underlying logic, one predicated on nurturing rather than procreation and which demands that kinship must be conceived of as a process rather than as a structure.

In my description of the kinship terminology, I deliberately omitted any mention of terms that would correspond to the descendant kin of ego’s grandparents’ (PP) siblings.⁸⁹ Miller (1966) takes the same approach but, in contrast, Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969), Renshaw (1986) and, to a limited extent, Alvarsson (1988) and Palmer (1997) extend the kinship terminology to include such kin. In doing so, they present a rigid maintenance of the generations so that, for example, the same term is used for both the FB and the FFBS whilst the FFBS is referred to by a male sibling term. While, theoretically, this may also be the case among the Enxet, in reality I found it impossible to determine. At this degree of remoteness from ego, informants found it extremely difficult to visualize the genealogical positions that I was referring to and I eventually began to realise that I was imposing on them my idea of how their kinship terminology should be envisaged. As a result, I was ignoring how kinship terms were used, in practice, and I was eliminating much of the flexibility and imprecision that was inherent in the system. Overing (1985a:12; 1985b:156) describes an analogous situation among the Piaroa for whom indeterminacy marks the ordering of social relationships. Outside the range of “first cousin collaterals,” the Piaroa often

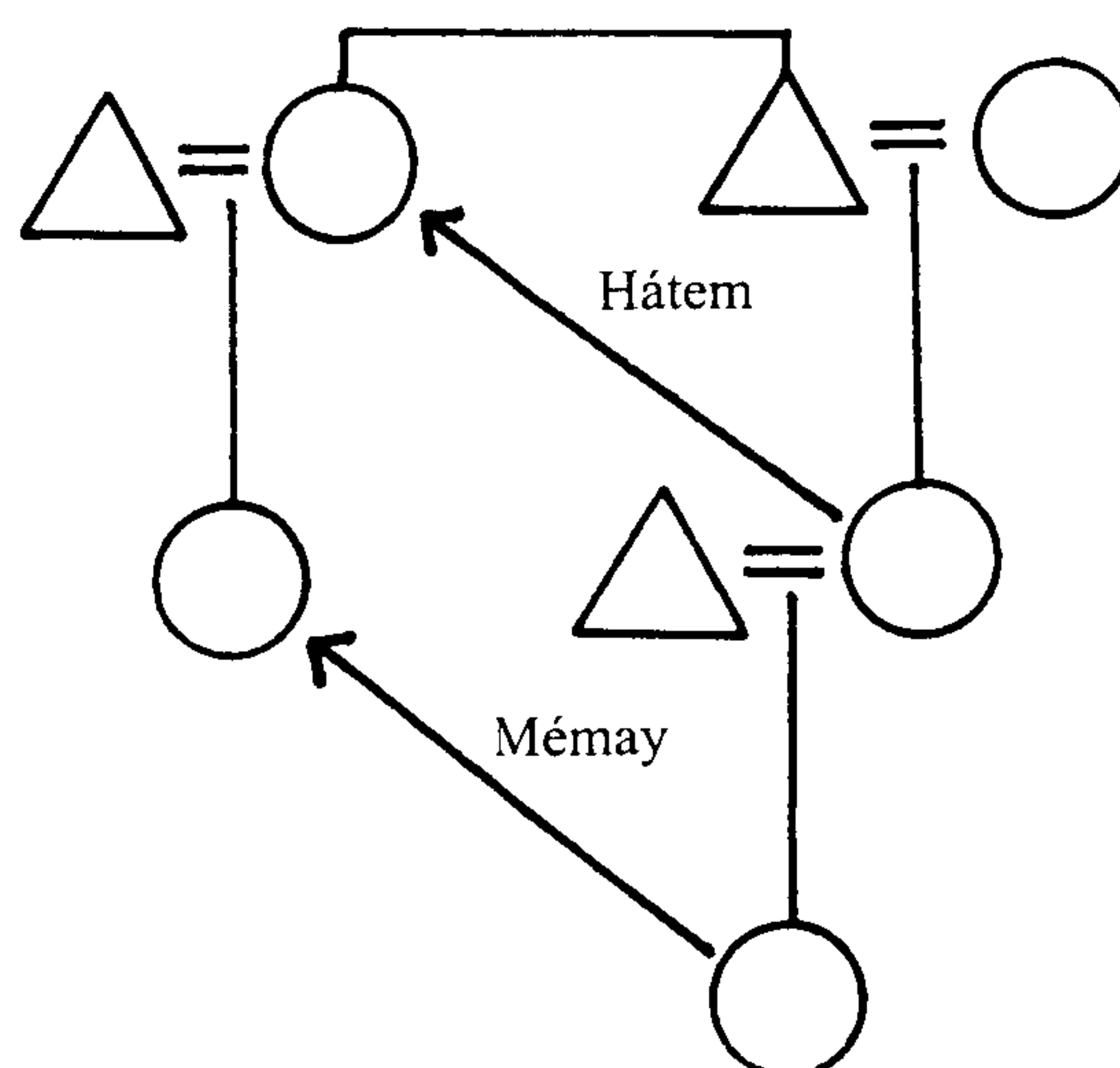
⁸⁸ *Máxa egyáxeg* is the term “like our sister.”

⁸⁹ As I mentioned earlier, ego's grandparents siblings are referred to by the same terms as grandparents.

ignore genealogical relationships in the classification process so that their application of kinship terms is highly unpredictable.⁹⁰

Although most people can usually give the “correct” kin term for the descendant kin of their grandparents (FF, FM, MF, MM), when dealing with the descendant kin of their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ siblings other criteria can distort the picture. Indeed, the exact kinship term is often irrelevant with people referring to more distant kin by the general term for kin, *émok*. Alternatively, relative age can become significant. If people are of the same approximate age, but of different generations, they are likely to refer to each other by terms that indicate a putative membership of the same generation. For example, a man who is younger than ego but who, according to genealogical reckoning, belongs to the generation of ego’s father, could, in practice, be called ego’s younger brother, *eyáxeg*.⁹¹ Miller (1966) and Palmer (1997:89, 94) have noted the same tendency among the Toba and Wichí, but Renshaw (1986:255) states that major age differentials among the Nivaklé lead people to refer to each other by the generic term for kin. However, Rivière (1984:45f, 55) remarks that the modification of kinship terms in response to relative age is common in the Guianas and suggests that it allows for considerable manipulation of the terminology.

Figure 4.1: An example of a cause of potential confusion in the use of kinship terms.



⁹⁰ See also Overing Kaplan (1975) and Reed (1995:77).

⁹¹ Even among "descendants" of the same grandparents, if the age differential is pronounced between people of the same generation this can lead to a modification of the kinship terms employed.

It also needs to be recognized that there is a great deal of arbitrariness in the Enxet use of kinship terms. At times, when I questioned people about kinship terms, they would give answers that in no way conformed to what would be expected;⁹² this perhaps indicated their preference for the generic term, *émok*, or that they were more accustomed to using personal names for address and reference (cf. Renshaw 1986:254). However, a tendency to arbitrariness is inherent in the terminological system especially when referring to kin in the first ascending generation (G+1). As Figure 4.1 demonstrates, whilst ego could refer to an individual as *mémay* (MZ) ego's mother could refer to that same individual's mother as *hátem* (FZ). This is the result of terms in the first ascending generation being determined by the sex of the most immediate connecting relative to ego (ie. his/her father or mother). Not surprisingly, there is a tendency for people occasionally to confuse the terms in this level.

However, another important cause of variation from the expected use of kinship terms is affectivity or intimacy. As I have already explained, kinship terms do not only indicate a "biological" relationship, but their use also implies the existence of an affective relationship predicated on the practice of "love." When related people use the "correct" kinship term, this, in itself, is a statement of their recognition and acceptance of the affective nature of their relationship. Similarly, if a supposedly "incorrect" term is used, this could imply that a transformation in the speaker's conception of that relationship has taken place. This frequently occurs between ego and his or her siblings' children. Although, formally, only a *mémay* (MZ) would refer to her sister's children as *hatté* (my child), in practice the term can also be used by ego's *hátem* (FZ), *appa* (MB) and *eyha* (FB) whenever they have participated in the nurturing of the child. The use of *hatté* implies that the speaker was co-resident with the child when it was young, and reflects the fact that many households are not consistently and exclusively uxorilocal.

Earlier in the chapter, I described how grandparents who raise their grandchildren can call them *hatté* (my child) and be known themselves as *mémé* (mother) and *táta* (father). However, *hatté* can also be employed between people who meet in later life and, as such, it is a statement on the closeness of the relationship. For example, a few years ago an old man visited the houses of two brothers in El Estribo who lived next door to each other; one was in his late twenties and the other in his thirties. They had not met him before but he introduced himself as the younger

⁹² Overing Kaplan (1984:143) describes a similar situation among the Piaroa. Although they could calculate the "correct" genealogical category for a particular relative, this does not mean that he/she would be so classified. This is because any particular person may be related to ego in a number of different ways and beyond the range of first cousin the Piaroa can trace relationships through a variety of relatives. This is not usually the case among the Enxet although it can happen.

brother, *apyáxeg*, of their father and was welcomed into their households. He was particularly well received because he was a shaman and was willing to protect their families. Indeed, he helped the elder brother reactivate his shamanic abilities and also trained the younger one. He became a member of their households and he now refers to both men as *hatté* (my child), even though he is only the FBS of their father. In return, they call him *eyha* (FB). The closeness of the relationship is often stressed by the old man's use of the term "*hatté, xeyep seyásekhayo*," literally, "my son, you I love."⁹³

People in affinal relationships, when particularly close, can also refer to each other by kinship terms. This is most likely to happen when affines live in the same household or are in close contact. For example, a man could call his wife's grandparents (PP) by the same terms that she uses (ie. *áta* or *áma*) but it should be stressed that there are no rules about which alternative terms should be used for specific affines. Someone could call the husband of his or her MZ or FZ either *eyha* (FB) or, alternatively, *háwok* (eB). Whenever a kin term is used to refer to an affine, it indicates a significant affective incorporation of the affine into the household or community. A similar situation occurs elsewhere in the Chaco and, among the Nivaklé, Renshaw (1986:258f) describes a degree of arbitrariness that is reminiscent of the Enxet. Conversely, the Toba seem to have a much more structured and predictable conflation of affinal and kin terms, to the extent that many terms are regarded as both affinal and consanguineal (Miller 1966; Renshaw 1986:260).

However, the transformation of an affinal relationship into one of kinship does not only occur between people who are in a close relationship. It can also be used to communicate how people want their relationships with others to be viewed. This was brought home to me by the following experience. In 1993, a friend in El Estribo told me about an *apyáxeg* - "younger sister" - of his father who lived in Puerto Colón, a community about 150 kilometres away on the River Paraguay. He referred to her as *hátem* (FZ) and remarked that she was a *mestizo* and was married to a Paraguayan. At around the same time, I began to work with the husband of my friend's *hátem* on a land claim as he was, in fact, the indigenous leader of the Enxet community of Puerto Colón. Near the end of 1995, the claim was successful and Puerto Colón, together with three other communities, obtained 25,000 hectares. In 1996, during a conversation with my friend, he again talked about the husband of his *hátem* in Puerto Colón but this time - and in dramatic contrast to his previous description of him as a

⁹³ Interestingly, although the old man has two of his own children in the community, who are in-marriage wives, he chooses not to live with them.

Paraguayan - he called him *eyha* (FB).⁹⁴ The change was probably due to his having met the leader in Asunción and a combination of his knowing my relationship to the leader and the fact that the leader's community was now relatively well-endowed with land undoubtedly made him interested in letting me know his own link. By using a kinship term instead of an affinal term, I was meant to appreciate how close he felt the relationship to be.

Yet, the transformation of an affine into putative kin is not of a permanent character. Although an affine may, in certain situations, be referred to by a kin term, this does not mean that he or she ceases to be regarded as an affine and, in another context, the speaker may decide to use the generic affinal term *eyepye*. Indeed, this variability in the use of kinship terms underlines the way in which they are loaded with meaning and can convey messages about the quality of relationships. Consequently, although a person may begin to refer to an affine by a kinship term, if the relationship deteriorates the same two people may revert once more to an affinal term. This, again, indicates the wider affective meanings inherent in the use of kinship terms. Furthermore, since relationships among the Enxet are between individuals, although someone may refer to an affine by a kin term, this does not guarantee that his or her kin will do so. The term employed depends on the interaction and the state of the relationship between each of the individuals.

4.4 Conclusion

Whilst there has been a tendency in comparative studies of kinship to focus on supposedly underlying "structures" within kinship systems, I have taken a different approach in this chapter by explaining the creation of kinship as a process. I have shown that for the Enxet, in common with other lowland South American indigenous peoples, such as the Piro, Airo-Pai, Cashinahua and Piaroa, the creation of kinship is predicated on the practice of nurturing. As a result, the parents of children are those who raise them, not those physiologically responsible for their birth. Sometime ago, Gow (1991:161) asked whether the characteristics of Piro child-raising and kinship that he described were typical of Lowland South America and suggested that there was too little information to know. However, as research increasingly demonstrates the existence of similar systems throughout South America, we can begin to respond to Gow's question in a more positive vein: although we may not yet be able to show

⁹⁴ The original description of the leader of Puerto Colón as a Paraguayan may have been influenced by the fact that he is of mixed Enxet and Paraguayan "parentage" and has a very Paraguayan appearance. He also normally speaks Guaraní although he does know Enxet.

whether the creation of kinship through nurturing is “typical,” we can certainly say it is both common and widespread.

Among the Enxet, nurturing is one aspect of “love.” More than a mere feeling, “love” is a practice which, between adults, is characterised by activities such as sharing and mutual help. There is a conflation of kinship and “love” so that kin are those who “love” each other and those who “love” each other are kin. This leads to creativity and unpredictability in the use of kin terms which, rather than being dependent on a permanent physiological relationship, reflect the current state of relations between people. As Overing (1989b; 1996b) has pointed, kinship in Lowland South America must be continually created.

5. PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE

Having examined kinship as one key element of Enxet social relations, I will now consider another important relationship, that of co-residence, looking specifically at the spatial distribution of people within communities. I should clarify that, at this point, it is not my intention to deal with the actual dynamics of day-to-day interpersonal relations - as this will be a central issue in subsequent chapters - but will focus, instead, on the role played by kinship and marriage on patterns of residence. In the literature, both these factors are identified as influencing residential choice and anthropologists have often used kinship and marriage to try and discern some order in indigenous settlement patterns. Order, as I will demonstrate, is an elusive commodity and although I will agree that ties of kinship and marriage play an important role in people's choice of residence, I will suggest that we need to look beyond these factors if we are to fully understand Enxet settlement patterns and social relations. I will conclude that, for the Enxet, the key factor underlying residential choice and interpersonal relations is "love" and that, furthermore, residential patterns do not necessarily reflect the actual dynamics of daily social relations, a topic that I will deal with in detail in subsequent chapters.

I should clarify that the communities I will be dealing with are the relatively large, agglomerated communities found on contemporary indigenous colonies. In this study I will examine settlement patterns on the colony of El Estribo and the average population of its eight communities was 190 people, which I believe is typical of most communities on Enxet colonies.¹ However, I will focus specifically on the communities of San Carlos and Palo Santo which, in early 1996, had populations of 117 and 188 respectively.

As Map 5.1 indicates, the two communities are adjacent, being divided by a road and fence. In 1985, when the two communities chose where to settle in El Estribo, they viewed the fence as a useful dividing line through a large area of savanna *espartilla* grassland that was interspersed with smaller areas of forest. The community of San Carlos chose the land to the west while Palo Santo took the area to the east.² Settlement occurred between November 1985 and January 1986 and, in San

¹ Makthlawaiya, with a population of over 500 is atypical since it is formed by only two communities, one of which comprises less than fifteen people.

² San Carlos' land extends for 1,400 metres to the west where a fence marks the boundary between it and the community of Alegre. Palo Santo extends to the east as far as the Riacho San Carlos, which at that point has a north-east to south-west orientation, and beyond which is the community of Veinte de Enero. The land of both communities is bounded, to the north, by an arbitrary line some 300 metres beyond the Riacho San Carlos, at the point where it crosses the road and fence, and to the south by the indigenous (Enxet) colony of Paz del Chaco, owned and administered by the Mennonites.

Carlos, most people built their houses along the road, receiving plots of land 100 metres in width and 300 metres in length, while a small group settled further to the west near the community of Alegre. In Palo Santo land allocation was more haphazard although most households still received around three hectares. A potential conflict between the two communities arose when one household from San Carlos (House No.21) built their house just to the east of the fence, on the land of Palo Santo. The problem was resolved by the household deciding to transfer its allegiance to Palo Santo: they had claimed membership of San Carlos through the wife's relationship with the leader (her MFBSS), but became part of Palo Santo through a close kinship link that the husband claimed with the wife of the leader of Palo Santo.³ Since the time of the original settlement, the composition of the communities has undergone some modification through both in- and out-migration. The spatial distribution of the houses in the community in mid-1996 can be seen in Map 5.1 and, in Appendices 1 and 2, the genealogies of the two communities can be found in which the residents of each household are shown.

However, although "officially" Palo Santo and San Carlos are two communities, in many ways they function as one. They share one central area where the church, school, football pitch and volleyball court are located, and community meetings are always held jointly. Although they continue to have two separate leaders, both are relatively inactive and most of the effective leadership is in the hands of Eugenio, a man who, in 1990, was chosen as one of El Estribo's legal representatives. In 1993, Eugenio strategically moved his residence from San Carlos - where he lived next to House No. 17 - to an area located in the centre of the two communities (House No. 25), thereby symbolising the effective unity of the communities and his joint leadership. Furthermore, many people in the two communities consider themselves to be related as kin or affines, and these links have been strengthened by marriages between the members of the two communities following their arrival in El Estribo. It should also be borne in mind that, prior to settling in El Estribo, virtually everyone in Palo Santo and San Carlos were members of the community of Makthlawaiya where many developed strong affective ties.

The communities on contemporary indigenous colonies correspond in size to those reported by Grubb (1893:104) for the pre-colonization Enxet territorial groups⁴ which were sub-divided into a number of small communities dispersed over areas of

³ Tomas Mendoza claimed that the leader's wife was his MS, but that link has been denied by the leader's WB. Whether it is true or not, the link of close kinship was certainly accepted at the time as a means of avoiding a conflict.

⁴ The pre-colonial Enxet territorial groups would appear to be similar in size to the territorial groups of the Piaroa (Overing Kaplan 1975:26).

between 90,000 and 150,000 hectares.⁵ Between 1889 and 1894, the reports of Anglican missionaries suggest that communities ranged in size between thirty and seventy inhabitants,⁶ while, between 1898 and 1910 they appear to have been somewhat smaller, varying between four and sixty people, with most between ten and thirty.⁷ The reduction in size was almost certainly due to the devastation caused to the Enxet by a series of epidemics⁸ and Coryn (1922:230) did note a significant reduction in the size of one Enxet settlement - from 75 to 37 people - over a period of 14 years due to illness.⁹

Therefore, pre-colonial Enxet communities evidently had much smaller populations than those found in contemporary colonies although, during times of abundance - for example, when the *algarrobo* tree was bearing fruit or there was plenty food in the gardens - the various communities within a territory would come together for feasting. Male and female initiation ceremonies could last up to six or seven weeks, while other feasts had a duration of between one and five days¹⁰ (Grubb 1911:178f). However, as soon as a feast was over, the guests would immediately depart (Grubb 1911:187), a characteristic also noted by Ellis (1996:155) for the Tsimane. During most of the year the smaller community sizes would be the norm.

Once their land had been colonized the Enxet were obliged to live in communities on the ranches of the zone and, in 1978, prior to the acquisition of their colony land, the mean population of a ranch settlement in the area of influence of the Anglican Mission was thirty-two and the median was twenty-one.¹¹ In addition, 894 people lived on the mission station of Makthlawaiya. Therefore, for the majority of the Enxet the contemporary communities on indigenous colonies are larger than those

⁵ Cf. Grubb (1898:26), Pride (1901:52) and Hunt (1910/11:47). Alvarsson (1988:125) paints a similar picture of dispersal for the Wichí in the Bolivian Chaco.

⁶ See: Henriksen (1888:246), Robins (1889:136), Grubb (1890:248f; 1893:103) and Pride (1894:12).

⁷ See: Hay (1898:50), Westgate (1900:40; 1901:63f), Pride (1901:52), Aylwin (1902:56) and Caddow (1906/7:60f; 1910/11:78).

⁸ See Kidd (1992:71f). Interestingly, Susnik (1981:143) reports Enxet (Machicui) communities of between 80 and 200 inhabitants at the end of the eighteenth century. However, I do not consider this data to be particularly reliable.

⁹ Elsewhere in South America, Ellis (1996:83) has reported that measles and smallpox epidemics may have caused a similar reduction in settlement size among the Tsimane, although Overing Kaplan (1975:114) has described a different scenario among the Piaroa where a severe population loss led to the amalgamation of various communities.

¹⁰ See Grubb (1911:177ff), Loewen (1967) and Arenas (1981:92ff) for descriptions of the male and female initiation ceremonies of the Enxet.

¹¹ Source: census undertaken by the Anglican Church in 1978. 62 people lived in 11 communities smaller than 10 people; 423 people lived in 26 communities of between 10 and 29 people; 526 people lived in 14 communities of between 30 and 49 people; 395 people lived in 6 communities of between 50 and 99 people; and 573 people lived in 4 communities of over 100 people. The largest community, apart from Makthlawaiya, had 170 people.

that they used to live in although, for the people from Makthlawaiya who moved to El Estribo, their communities are now significantly smaller.¹²

Interestingly, there is no term in the Enxet language that adequately encapsulates our concept of community although two terms express some elements of it. The first term, [-]hawóxama, is used by community members to refer to each other, and is a composite word combining [-]hawó, meaning “equal” or “the same,” and xama, meaning “one.” It is a polysemic term and can refer to those co-resident in a single household, those resident in the same community or even all those living in a single colony such as El Estribo.¹³ It is employed in an ego-centred manner and the identity of ego is indicated by a prefix: for example, *sekhawóxama* means “my co-residents” whilst *aphawóxama* means “his/your co-residents.” All those who reside in a single household or community - except for ego’s spouse¹⁴ - are regarded as [-]hawóxama whether they be kin, affines or non-kin. As with kin, [-]hawóxama are ideally expected to “love” each other and, indeed, given the mutual implication of the concepts of kinship and “love,” it is not uncommon for people to refer to all their co-residents as kin. However, this depends on context and, at other times, people may clearly distinguish between those co-residents who they consider to be kin and those who they do not.

The second term, *nátegma*, refers to the physical structure of the village and comprises *tegma*, meaning “house,” with the prefix *ná[-]*, meaning “in the.” Although the term can be translated, literally, as “in the house,” it usually refers to a village.¹⁵ Yet, neither of these terms adequately encompasses the notion of a community as a bounded, known body of co-resident people which is a concept with which the Enxet are familiar. Indeed, they express this concept of “community” by employing the Spanish terms *grupo* - “group” - or *comunidad* - “community.”¹⁶ The use of Spanish would seem to indicate that this notion of community post-dates the colonization of Enxet territory.

¹² However, the residents of Makthlawaiya used to spend much of their time living in small communities when absent from the colony working on ranches.

¹³ The term [-]hawóxama can be pronounced in a number of ways and most people tend to shorten it to [-]hóxó, [-]hóxama or [-]hawóxó. Until recently I believed that the differences were purely dialectical but, during my trip to Paraguay in November 1997, I discussed the use of the word with a group of three men who explained to me that [-]hóxama referred to the members of a household whilst [-]hawóxama signified the members of a community. I need to carry out further work to be fully convinced.

¹⁴ The Enxet do not regard spouses as [-]hawóxama because, they say, the relationship is permanent while [-]hawóxama can move away.

¹⁵ “In the house” is usually translated by the alternative term “*kañe tegma*” with *kañe* meaning “in” or “inside.” Interestingly, the city of Concepción is called *Nátegma* while Asunción is known as *Nepyeyam*, literally, “the south.”

¹⁶ Cf. McCallum (1989:274).

5.1. The Household

In common with other indigenous peoples of lowland South America, the household is a key residential unit within Enxet communities and will be the focus of my discussion in this chapter.¹⁷ Its composition is almost invariably synonymous with the inhabitants of a physical house, although it could also be said to correspond to the group of people who share the same hearth.¹⁸ Within the household food is *pooled* rather than *shared* - a distinction that I shall explain in more detail in Chapter 7 - and its members usually eat from a single pot. However, the household is not an independent unit of production. Although household members can co-operate in production, most especially in gardening, individuals also frequently accompany people from other households when hunting, gathering and fishing and, occasionally, when gardening.¹⁹ The average size of the households in San Carlos and Palo Santo was six people, with the largest having twenty inhabitants and the smallest two.²⁰

The physical structure of the “house” is called the *tegma* and most indigenous houses in the lower Chaco are constructed from the trunks of the *áxa* palm tree.²¹ Roofs are built by splitting palm trunks down the middle which are then hollowed and fitted together as overlapping, elongated tiles in an extremely effective, water-proof manner. Palm trunks are also employed in the construction of walls while doors are made of whatever is available. Windows are rarely found, and most houses consist of one room.²² In El Estribo, though, the *áxa* palm is virtually non-existent and

¹⁷ For example, Ellis (1996:139), following Rivière (1995:201), describes the Tsimane household as a “crucial social institution” while Forrest (1987:33) mentions that the household is the “primary unit of residence in Kalinya society.” However, I should point out that a distinction should be made between types of household within lowland South America. For instance, in the Guianas, the household would appear to be synonymous with a settlement (cf. Rivière 1995). What I refer to as the Enxet household would probably correspond to the hearth-group within the Guianas.

¹⁸ There are very rare examples of more than one hearth-group inhabiting the physical structure of a house but these are usually of short duration and should be regarded as anomalies.

¹⁹ The role of the household in production varies between the indigenous peoples of lowland South America. Among the Tsimane, the household is the centre of production, consumption and distribution (Ellis 1996:139) while, for the Pemon, although production is almost totally a household affair, consumption patterns compose a wider field (Thomas 1982:58). In contrast, Overing (1993:52f) states that Piaroa daily production and consumption patterns do not closely conform to the family unit but are flexible with many different groups of people co-operating in economic activities. Such groups, she notes, reflect the personal moods and preferences of the individuals involved. Belaunde (1992:161) states that Airo-Pai spouses - and, therefore, by implication the household - are not an economic atom since each spouse forges relationships with other members of the community.

²⁰ Cf. Renshaw (1986:155).

²¹ The *áxa* palm is known, in Paraguay, as the *karanda* 'y and its scientific name is the *Copernicia Alba* (Arenas 1981:130).

²² See Renshaw (1986:221) for another description of contemporary indigenous houses in the Chaco. Prior to their contact with Anglican missionaries, Enxet houses were temporary constructions described by Grubb (1911:56f) as, “the most primitive dwellings imaginable, constructed simply of boughs of trees fixed into the ground, which are interlaced together, and covered with grass and palm-

alternative materials have had to be utilized. Roofing material usually comprises corrugated zinc or asbestos sheets while small, straight tree trunks have been used for walls. The dimensions of most houses are little more than three by three metres although some can reach eight metres by four. They are mainly used for the storage of possessions and for sleeping in when it is wet or cold.²³ During most of the year people prefer to sleep outside and also pass most of the day-time outside, sitting in the shade of a tree or around a fire if it is cold. Cooking is usually done outside over an open fire although, if it is raining or cold, the fire may be moved to small lean-tos that are constructed from roofing sheets or palm trunks.

Despite the significance of the household as a residential unit among the Enxet, no word exists in their language to adequately describes it.²⁴ In fact, some element of our understanding of “household” can be found in three different words. The first is the ego-centred, polysemic term [-]*hawóxama* which can be best translated as “fellow household member” and could be used to encompass all members of ego’s household. A second word, which is also polysemic in nature, is [-]*xpanma* and is derived from the negative form of the verb [-]*xpakne* which means “to disperse.” It means, essentially, “those who have not dispersed,” and, within the context of household, refers to a married couple and those children and grandchildren, with their respective spouses, who are co-resident within one house. Like [-]*hawóxama*, it is an ego-centred term although a person will usually employ the first person plural, as in *óxpanma*,²⁵ to signify “those of us who have not dispersed.” However, [-]*xpanma* is rarely heard in everyday conversation and people are more likely to employ [-]*hawóxama*.

A third term implying a sense of “household” is [-]*xagkok* which can be translated as “home,” and it is always used with a prefix to indicate whose home is being referred to: for example, *éxagkok* is “my home,” *axagkok* is “her/your home” and *apxagkok* “his/your home.” It focuses on the physical structure of the house rather than relations with the co-residents but does not necessarily imply ownership of the building.

leaves loosely thrown on.” Other information on pre-colonization Enxet housing can be found in Lindsay (1900:290f), Grubb (1911:78f) and Renshaw (1986:220).

²³ Cf. Renshaw (1988:339).

²⁴ The lack of a term for “household” or family is not uncommon in lowland South America (cf. Thomas 1982:52, Forrest 1987:33; Rivière 1995:199). The Matsigenka refer to the household by the ego-centred term “those with whom I sleep” (Rosengren 1987:141).

²⁵ The word *óxpanma* includes the prefix *ó[-]* meaning “we.” Although the grammatically “correct” version of the word, in its negative form, would be *móxpanma*, the “m” is invariably dropped without causing any confusion in the listener.

Renshaw (1986:216ff) suggests that the nuclear family is the most common form of household among the indigenous people of the Chaco region and remarks that between 60% and 70% of households are of this type. However, my research among the Enxet offers markedly different results and indicates a much greater degree of variability in household composition than is recognized by Renshaw. Out of a total of 177 households in six communities,²⁶ I found that only fifty-seven comprised nuclear families, that is 32%, approximately half the rate mentioned by Renshaw. A more detailed analysis of household types found in five communities of El Estribo is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Household composition in five communities of El Estribo

COMMUNITY	NEOLOCAL	UXORILocal (DH with WF/WM)	VIRILOCAL (SW with WF/WM)	OTHER
San Carlos	8	5	3	5
Palo Santo	10	6	3	8
Veinte de Enero	10	6	0	12
Karandá	4	4	3	5
Santa Fé	10	3	0	11
TOTAL	42	24	9	41

Although the neolocal household is the most common type of household formation in El Estribo (comprising 36% of those studied), the most striking feature is the variability in household composition. While there is a stronger tendency to purely uxori-local households than viri-local ones - 20% of households are uxori-local²⁷ while only 9% are viri-local²⁸ - this still leaves forty-one households (35%) which do not fit easily into any of the aforementioned categories.

The variety in the internal composition of the remaining forty-one households bears testimony to the freedom that the Enxet have when choosing their residence. Eleven households are “filialocal” which indicates that elderly single parents are living with their married children. Some households combine uxori-local and viri-local residence while others comprise three generations of married couples (ie. a couple, their married child or children, and their married grandchild or grandchildren) or,

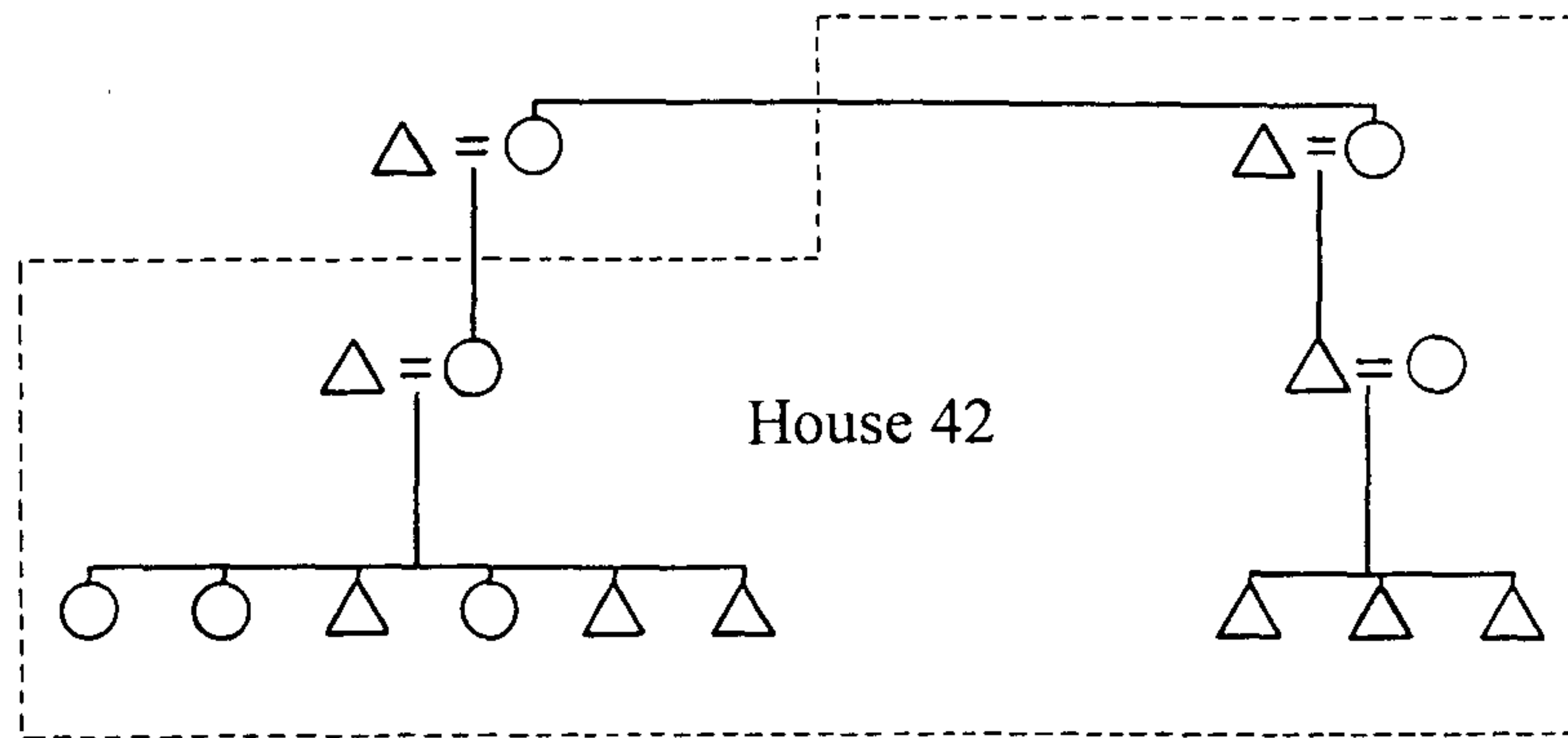
²⁶ The data for my analysis comes from the community of Makthlawaiya, and five communities in El Estribo: San Carlos, Palo Santo, Veinte de Enero, Karandá and Santa Fe.

²⁷ In the three Chaco communities studied by Renshaw (1986:217) he found that only 5% of the households were uxori-local.

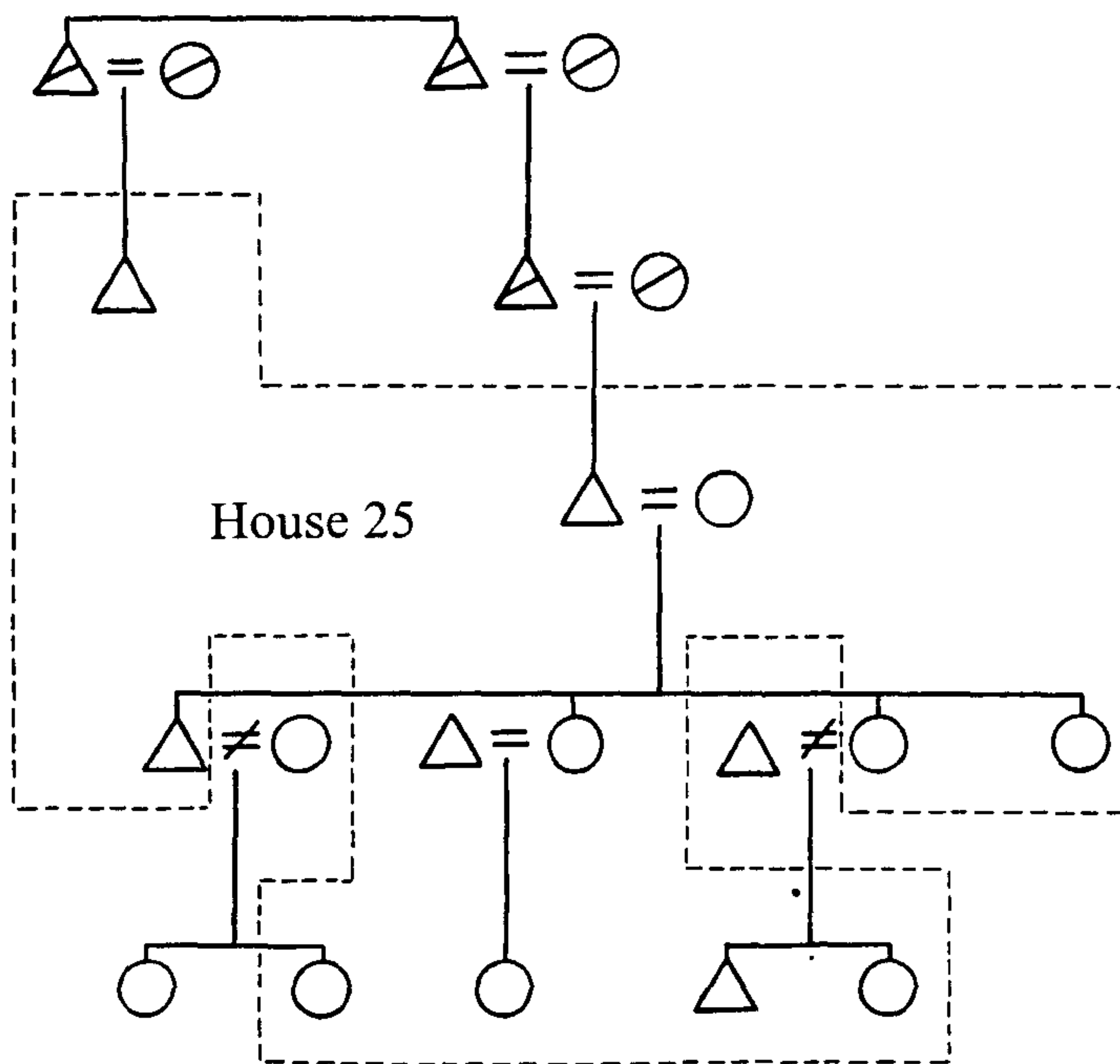
²⁸ Renshaw (1986:217) found, in three Chaco communities, that 2% of the households were viri-local.

Figure 5.1: Examples of multiple households in El Estribo.

Example 1.



Example 2.



more commonly, three generations with only one of the elder spouses still alive. There are households that comprise co-residing siblings with their respective spouses and off-spring, while others bring together seemingly random combinations of kin. For example, in Palo Santo one household comprises an older couple with their married son, his wife and their grandchildren, as well as the daughter of the elder woman's sister, her husband and children (see example No. 1 in Fig: 5.1). Another household is made up of a couple, their married daughter, husband and children, a divorced son and one of his children, a single daughter with two children, another unmarried daughter as well as the elder man's FFBS who moved into the household in the late 1980s (see example No. 2 in Fig 5.1).

A further type of household is formed by unmarried off-spring or grandchildren who live with their widowed or divorced parents or grandparents. For example, in House 16 in San Carlos, an unmarried daughter lives with her widowed elderly father,²⁹ while, in Veinte de Enero, another elderly man shares a house with the grandchild and great-grandchild of his deceased wife.³⁰ There is one instance of a man who resides alone (in Karandá), although he lives next door to his sister's daughter whose children often sleep in his house.

Multiple family households are frequently caused by recently married couples moving in with the parents of one of the spouses. In Table 5.2. I have listed the type of residence of all married couples with unmarried children in five communities within El Estribo, plus the community of Makthlawaiya.³¹ I found no cases of recently married couples living neolocally but there was a strong tendency for a young couple to reside uxorilocally³² with 65% of couples without children living with the wife's parents while only 28% resided virilocally.³³ This tendency appears to continue even after the birth of the first child: of those with children under two years old, 64% live with the wife's parents while 28% reside with the husband's. In fact, even when

²⁹ Prior to 1995, the household had been much larger. The man's wife had still been alive while another (adopted) daughter had also lived there with her husband and children. However, the wife died and a short while later the married daughter went mad - *yenne* - and, after some difficult months, she was eventually abandoned by her husband who took their children to live with his mother in Santa Fe. In early 1996, the mad daughter herself left the community and went to live with her relatives in the Enenxet (Toba-Maskoy) colony of Casanillo.

³⁰ The great-grandchild is the ZS of the grandchild.

³¹ The communities in El Estribo are Palo Santo, San Carlos, Veinte de Enero, Karandá and Santa Fe.

³² Uxorilocal post-marital residence is very common in lowland South America. See, for example: Maybury-Lewis (1974:85f), Overing Kaplan (1975:83), Turner (1979b:182), Rivière (1984:30ff), McCallum (1989:189), Gow (1991:135), Santos Granero (1991:173), Viveiros de Castro (1992:100), Campbell (1995:148) and Reed (1995:80). For other Chaco references see: Siffredi (1977:63), Renshaw (1986:212f) and Palmer (1997:83).

³³ The two cases listed as "other" could be classified as virilocal. They refer to two recently married brothers whose father had died a few months earlier and whose mother had moved in with a Paraguayan. Both couples were living in the household of the brothers' mother's parents.

the eldest child is between two and five years of age, 53% of couples continue to live uxori locally. A similar situation seems to have occurred in the pre-colonial period (Hay 1902:70; Grubb 1911:214).

Table 5.2. Type of residence of married couples with unmarried children in El Estribo and Makthlawaiya

AGE OF ELDEST CHILD	UXORILocal	VIRILocal	NEOLocal	OTHER
No children	19 (65%)	8 (28%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)
0-1 years	16 (64%)	7 (28%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
2-5 years	22 (53%)	11 (27%)	7 (18%)	1 (2%)
6-9 years	9 (31%)	9 (31%)	11 (38%)	0 (0%)
Over ten years	17 (32%)	11 (21%)	23 (43%)	2 (4%)

Why is there a tendency to uxori local residence among young married couples? In the anthropological literature, the period of uxori local post-marital residence is often referred to as “brideservice” but, as I will explain in Chapter 9, this practice does not exist among the Enxet. In fact, as Overing (1988:188) and Gow (1991:135) have noted for the Piaroa and the Piro, no formal rule exists among the Enxet regarding where a couple should live following their marriage.³⁴ Indeed, Renshaw (1986:230) suggests that this is characteristic of the whole Chaco region. Nevertheless, under normal conditions, the Enxet *expect* post-marital residence to be uxori local. This has little to do with the sense of obligation associated with the term brideservice but is best explained by reference to the nature of the prospective spouses’ relations to their respective households. A young woman tends to have much closer ties to her own household than does a young man, co-operating closely with her mother in the normal household tasks.³⁵ In contrast, young unmarried men contribute very little to the household, spending much more time outside with their friends or on visits to other communities. This is illustrated by a survey I undertook on the mobility of nineteen young men and thirteen young women from the communities of Palo Santo and San Carlos, all of whom were unmarried but of marriageable age.³⁶ On average, the young men resided with at least one of their parents only 60% of the time, while for young women the figure was 88%. In fact, if the two most frequently absent young women are excluded from the sample, the average rises to 98%.³⁷ In

³⁴ Santos Granero (1991:173) also mentions that the Amuesha do not have a proper uxori local residence “rule.” Nevertheless, he describes post-marital uxori local residence as a requirement.

³⁵ Normal household tasks for women include: collecting water and firewood, gathering plant produce, working in the garden, caring for any young children, food preparation, etc.

³⁶ The survey involved recording the location of people every Wednesday and Saturday evening over a period of nearly four months.

³⁷ The young girl who was most frequently absent had travelled to Loma Plata with her elder brother where they lived with relatives. The other girl had been placed by her father with a Mennonite to work

other words, most of the young women spent almost the whole period with at least one of their parents. Since young men are more used to being absent from their parental home, on marriage they are usually willing to accede to their wives' wishes to remain with her parents as their *wáxoks* are likely to be less "disturbed" by unfamiliar surroundings. Furthermore, when a girl gives birth, she prefers to do it among her own kin, with her mother present to help her.³⁸

Any decision on post-marital residence is based on mutual consent between the husband and wife although parents with "strong" *wáxoks* may try and influence the outcome so that their wishes are taken into account. Nevertheless, no one should feel obliged into doing something against their will since this would imply a lack of respect for their personal autonomy. That there is room for discussion is demonstrated by the relatively large proportion of young married couples who choose to reside virilocally - almost a third (see Table 5.2). Nevertheless, almost all these cases of virilocal residence are the result of special circumstances. For example, when the husband is an only child, or all his siblings have already moved out of the parental house, a couple will often decide to reside with the husband's parents so that they are not left alone.³⁹ Virilocal residence can also occur if the wife's parents' household is considered to be overcrowded.⁴⁰

However, there are very few cases of true virilocal residence since, in most instances, the wife's parents are also resident in the community.⁴¹ This is made possible by the high numbers of marriages between members of the same communities. For instance, between 1986 and 1996 there were thirty-two marriages involving residents of the communities of Palo Santo and San Carlos and, of those, eighteen were between members of the two communities, six were with residents of other communities within El Estribo, and only eight were with people from outside El

as a home-help. Her father's stated aim was for her to learn how to undertake domestic tasks from the Mennonites.

³⁸ Renshaw (1986:230) presents a similar argument to my own to explain the tendency towards uxorilocality within the Chaco. See also McCallum (1989:198), Gow (1991:135) and Ellis (1996:57).

³⁹ Married couples dislike living alone, a situation that can be described as *yetsó*, "very unsweet." If couples have been abandoned by all their children, they can adopt one of their grandchildren and raise it as their own child.

⁴⁰ A range of unusual circumstances could also encourage virilocal residence. In one case, in Makthlawaiya, a girl's mother had, herself, just remarried and it would have been uncomfortable if her daughter's husband had moved in as well. Another young couple lived virilocally because the wife's mother was known to be slightly mad. The latter preferred to live for short periods in the houses of each of her children. In another case, an older divorced woman lived in the house of her recently acquired husband's parents in Makthlawaiya since that enabled her to be near her young children from her previous marriage, who continued to reside with their father. The woman's own parents lived almost 100 kilometres away near the River Paraguay.

⁴¹ In this context, I consider Palo Santo and San Carlos to be a single community.

Estribo.⁴² In practical terms, this high frequency of marriage between co-residents permits a virilocally residing woman to spend time in her own parents' household each day, thereby maintaining an important set of relationships. In one case, in Palo Santo, a girl's parents decided to build their house next door to their daughter's parents-in-law so that contact was almost continuous (Houses 47 and 48).

5.2 Intra-Community Settlement Patterns

Having examined the composition of Enxet households, I will now consider the extent to which relations between "close" kin are reflected in the spatial arrangements of communities. It is, though, important to recognise that residential patterns vary considerably through time, a fact that would be disguised by a purely synchronic analysis. I will, therefore, provide a diachronic perspective on residential choice by adopting the analytical tool known as the "development cycle of the domestic group,"⁴³ taking the household as my point of departure.

I have already described how recently married couples establish their initial place of residence in the household of the parents of one of the spouses. However, as their own children grow older, a couple may decide to change their residence. Some may choose to live with the parents of the other spouse while other couples may oscillate between uxori-local and viri-local residence.⁴⁴ Many couples, though, decide to establish their own independent households, a tendency that is apparent in Table 5.2. While I found only two families (8%) with the eldest child under two years old living in their own house,⁴⁵ as the age of the eldest child increases, so does the tendency to

⁴² Despite the high incidence of marriages within the community, the marriages themselves are not between "close" kin.

⁴³ The term "development cycle of the domestic group" was popularized in a volume edited by Goody (1958). Within lowland South America, Viveiros de Castro (1996:189) seems to associate its use with studies undertaken in Central Brazil on the "political economy of control." In fact, the concept has been widely used as an analytical tool throughout lowland South America. See, for example, Overing Kaplan (1975), Turner (1979b:181ff), Thomas (1982:55), Renshaw (1986:224ff), Forrest (1987:32ff), Viveiros de Castro (1992:100), Reed (1995:80) and Ellis (1996:51). Interestingly, Crocker (1985:78) states that the concept of the development cycle is inapplicable to the case of the Bororo because their households are not based on consanguinity.

⁴⁴ Ellis (1996:57) suggests that the Tsimane resolve what she refers to as the "uxori-local dilemma" - the desire of each spouse to live with their own parents and siblings - by residing both uxori-locally and viri-locally over time. Among the Enxet, the relatively high frequency of intra-community marriages tends to provide a partial solution to any possible uxori-local dilemma, but those couples who change their residence from uxori-local to viri-local, and *vice versa*, do so, as among the Tsimane, in response to the desire of each spouse to live with their "close" kin. However, rather than a long-term change in residence, it is more common for Enxet couples to visit the parents of the spouse with whom they are not resident, often for a month or more.

⁴⁵ One of the couples was an exceptional case since both spouses were in their late thirties. In fact, both spouses had children from former marriages who had been raised by their ex-spouses or by the children's grandparents. Indeed, it is questionable whether the couple should have been considered in the category of "parents with the eldest child under two years old."

neolocal residence: 18% of couples with an eldest child aged between two and five years old resided neolocally, rising to 38% of those with the eldest child aged between six and nine, and 43% with the eldest child over ten years old but still unmarried.⁴⁶

In Map 5.1. I have used red lines to indicate those houses in Palo Santo and San Carlos that are linked by a parent/child relationship - with arrows showing the direction of the parent/child bond - and, clearly, relations between parents and their married children are a significant element in intra-community relations. As the Enxet express it, their aim is to “stick with” their kin - “*nenyepetchek egmok*” - when deciding where to reside.

As McCallum (1989:198) points out for the Cashinahua, a couple’s decision to reside neolocally is, in effect, an assertion of their independence. Usually, though, whenever couples first establish their own households they build their house near to one of the spouse’s parents, most frequently those of the wife.⁴⁷ Often this is at the insistence of the wife who wants to maintain close contact and co-operation with her mother and sisters. Within El Estribo, distances between such houses are rarely more than 150 metres and the young couples’ houses are often located on the garden plots of the parents. Many of the shorter red lines in Map 5.1 are indicative of this kind of relatively recent move: for example, House 11 was built in 1988 by the son-in-law of the owners of House 10 while House 15 was constructed in 1995 by the son-in-law of the owners of House 14. Two houses, numbers 31 and 35, were established by couples who decided to locate their own houses between those of both spouses’ parents.⁴⁸

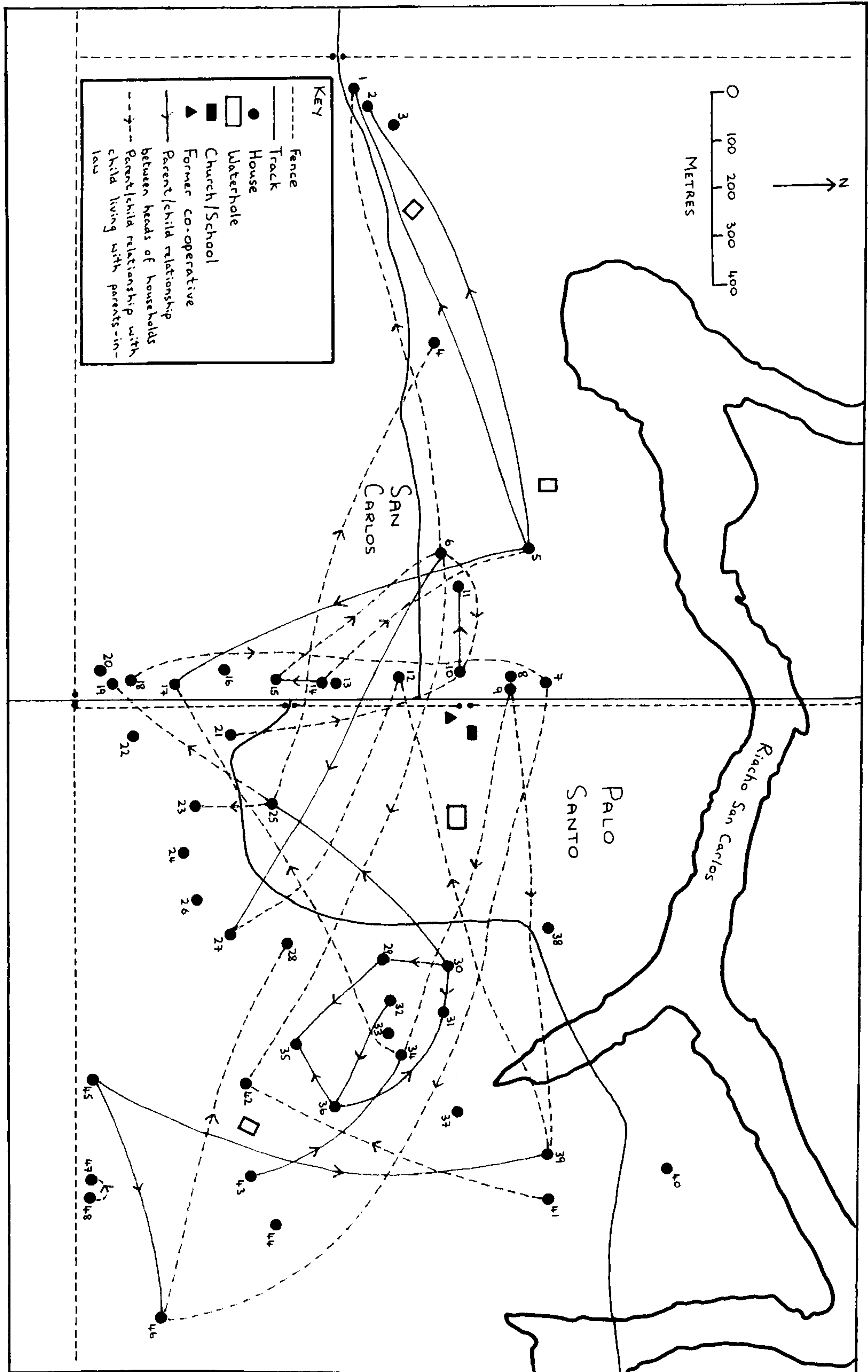
However, as can be seen in Map 5.1, the distances between the houses of parents and their children can be much greater than would be expected - at times more than 500 metres - and this can be explained by a number of factors. In some cases it reflects a more advanced stage of the development cycle of the domestic group. As the children of a neo-locally resident couple grow older and marry, their parents may desire even greater independence and move even further from their own parents so as to obtain a larger garden plot. Or, they may decide to live in closer proximity to one of the spouses’ siblings: for instance, House 17 is located relatively far from the

⁴⁶ Of course, some of the neolocal households of older couples are caused by the death of their co-resident parents.

⁴⁷ Within Palo Santo and San Carlos, nine independent married children’s houses were near to the wife’s parents, three were close to the husband’s parents, while two were located between both sets of parents.

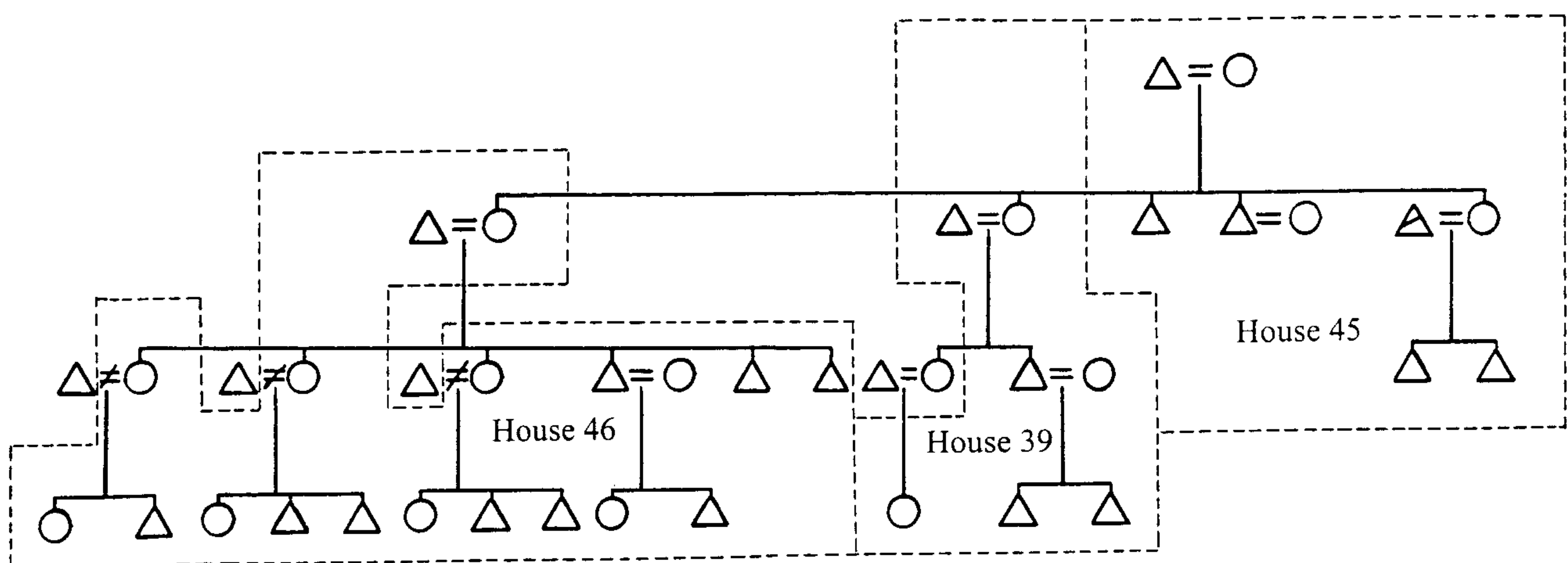
⁴⁸ House 31 was established in late 1995 when the couple moved out of the husband’s parents’ house. A couple of years earlier, the husband’s classificatory brother (his FZS/MBS), who was married to his wife’s sister, established House 35 after moving out of his own parents-in-law’s house.

Map 5.1. Households in Palo Santo and San Carlos that are Linked by a Parent/Child Relationship



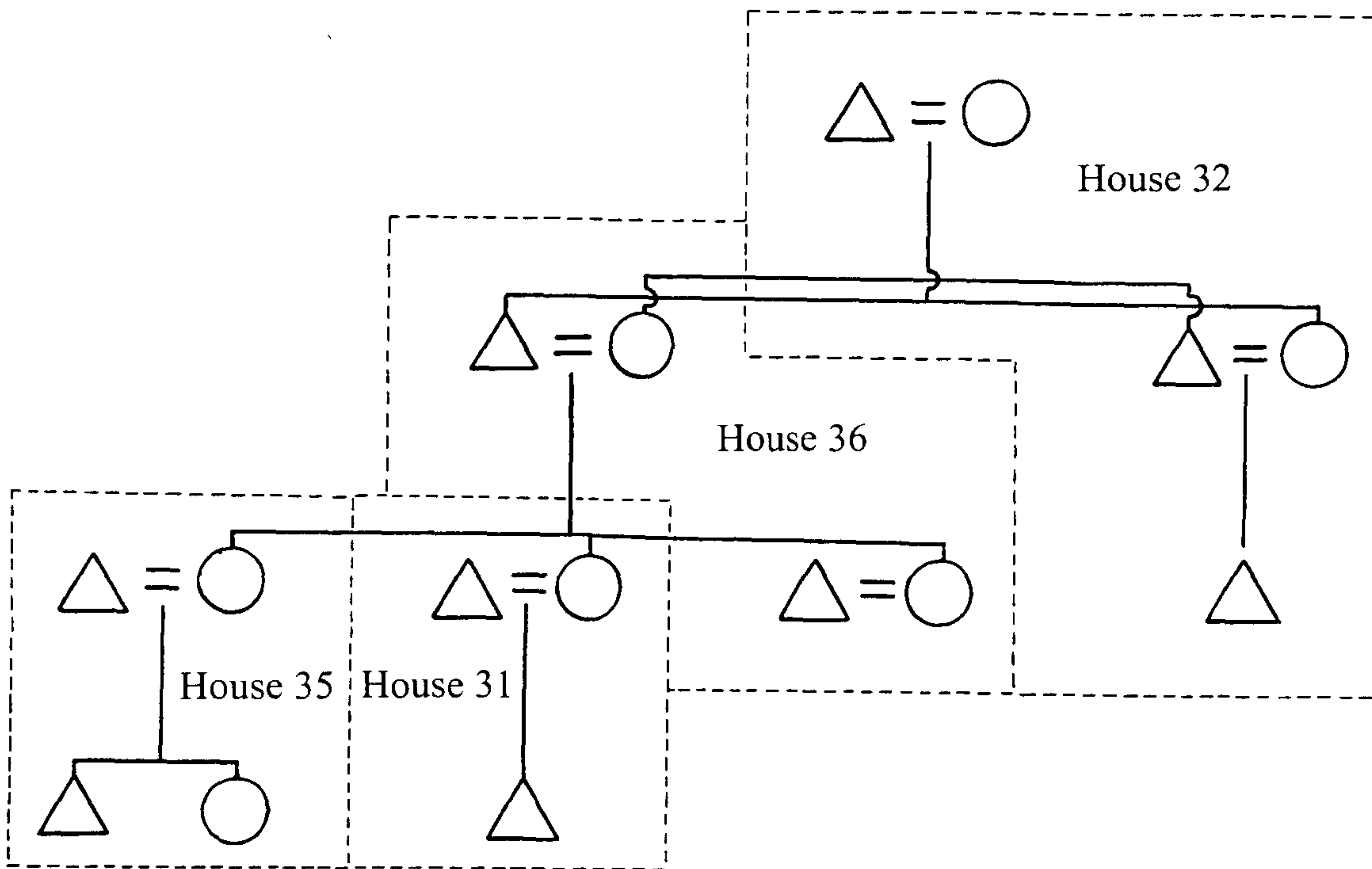
wife's parents - who live in House 5 - because her husband wanted to live near to his brother in House 25.⁴⁹ In addition, their relationship with their own children will begin to counterbalance their relationship with their parents and, whereas the wife may have once co-operated closely with her mother or mother-in-law, she will, eventually, begin to co-operate more closely with her own daughter. One example is the relationship between an elderly couple in House 45 and their daughters' households in Houses 39 and 46 (see Figure 5.2). Eventually, a couple's children can establish their own houses, and the developmental cycle will be repeated: for example, the son of the elderly couple in House 32 has his own house some three hundred metres away (No. 36) and, in 1995 and 1996, two of the son's daughters established independent households (Houses 31 and 35) in 1995 and 1996 (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.2. Residents of Houses 39, 45 and 46



⁴⁹ When House 17 was built, the husband's brother also built his house 30 metres to the north. They had both moved to San Carlos from the community of Alegre in 1989, and it was in 1993 that House 25 was established in its present location. The male owner of House 25 is the "recognized" legal representative of El Estribo who, as I mentioned earlier, decided to locate his house between the communities of Palo Santo and San Carlos. House 39 is another example of a son-in-law desiring to live near his siblings in Houses 29 and 30. Until a few years ago, the son-in-law's house had been located only ten metres from his brother's house (No. 29).

Figure 5.3. Residents of Houses 31, 32, 35 and 36



However, many instances of parents living relatively far from their children in Palo Santo and San Carlos reflect intra-community marriages. When both spouses have parents in the community, they can live with one set while frequently visiting the other. I have indicated this relationship between parents and children who reside with their parents-in-law on Map 5.1 by dotted red lines and, in general, the distances are relatively large. One exception is provided by Houses 47 and 48: a young couple live with the husband's parents in House 47 and the wife's parents decided to build their house less than thirty metres away so that they could be close to their daughter.⁵⁰

Interestingly, though, Table 5.2 indicates that, even among those couples with children above the age of ten, the majority continue to reside with the parents of one of the spouses. How can this apparent disinclination to neolocal residence be explained? Renshaw (1986:220f) suggests that one cause is a shortage of housing materials and this could certainly be a factor in communities like El Estribo where natural roofing materials - ie. the *áxa* palm - are rare or non-existent.⁵¹ Yet, given that

⁵⁰ In Chapter 10, I discuss how the respective parents of a young couple can begin to develop close relationships.

⁵¹ A couple in El Estribo who want to build a house face considerable difficulties and expense: eight sheets of corrugated zinc and the necessary timber, plus transport, cost in excess of a month's wage. Therefore, any new houses that have been built in El Estribo by couples moving out of their parents' or

in Makthlawaiya, where there is an abundance of *áxa* palm trees, the proportion of neolocal households is even smaller, it would appear that further explanatory factors need to be found.

A further suggestion of Renshaw (1986:221) concerns people's fear of their possessions being stolen while they are away working. He explains that, if people share dwellings, their possessions can be cared for in their absence. The danger of theft certainly exists in El Estribo,⁵² and some households, when leaving to work elsewhere, often tie their possessions into bundles and hang them from the roof. During an extended absence objects begin to disappear and, in one house (No. 3 in San Carlos), after the owners had been absent for over a year, only one bed was left. Yet, much of the danger could be avoided by leaving the more valuable or easily movable possessions in the houses of other people.

One significant factor explaining the disinclination to form neolocal households in colonies such as El Estribo involves the dynamics of contemporary population movement. Within extended households it is normal to find at least one couple working for non-indigenous employees outside the colony so that, in effect, they spend much of the year living neolocally. Usually, it is the younger generation, with their spouses, who leave to find work and, within the communities of San Carlos and Palo Santo, between February and July 1996, married men who resided with their parents-in-law spent, on average, 46% of the time absent from the colony, while the figure for married men living with their parents was 60%. However, in some households the married children remain while the parents work elsewhere and, in the same communities, married men who resided with married children spent, on average, 27% of the time absent from the colony. For example, a teacher in Palo Santo, who received a regular monthly wage from the Ministry of Education, resided almost continuously in the colony while his "co-resident" father and mother worked for a Mennonite some forty kilometres away. In Palo Santo and San Carlos, many of those

parents-in-laws' households are the result of one of the following strategies: elder couples with large numbers of corrugated zinc sheets can give some to their children to enable them to build a house nearby; other people cover the cost of roofing materials by obtaining a monetary "windfall," in most cases from the sale of the cotton harvest; some Mennonite employers offer to buy the necessary materials for their indigenous employees, the cost of which they discount from the employee's wage over a relatively long period; and, finally, some Mennonites provide housing materials free of charge as a reward for long service.

⁵² The danger of theft in El Estribo is not as great as that described by Renshaw (1986:221) for the Chamacoco community of Fuerte Olimpo, where people were worried about the building materials of their house being stolen or chopped up for firewood. In El Estribo, a number of houses were left abandoned for long periods and the construction itself was never touched, possibly because the presence of neighbours and "close" kin of the house owners makes such thefts extremely difficult.

away working have permanent jobs on Mennonite farms, with accommodation provided by the employer.

Therefore, although many couples do not construct their own houses, in practical terms neolocal residence should be seen as more prevalent than indicated by Table 5.2. Indeed, although a young couple may regard their parents'/parents-in-law's house as their home - [-]xagkok - they may also refer to the accommodation provided by Mennonites by the same term. Since couples working outside the colony effectively live in an independent fashion, the incentive to assert their independence by investing effort and resources in the construction of separate dwellings within their home colony is reduced. Furthermore, when visiting their home community, it is to their advantage to co-reside in an established household since they are given full access to the household's pool of food.

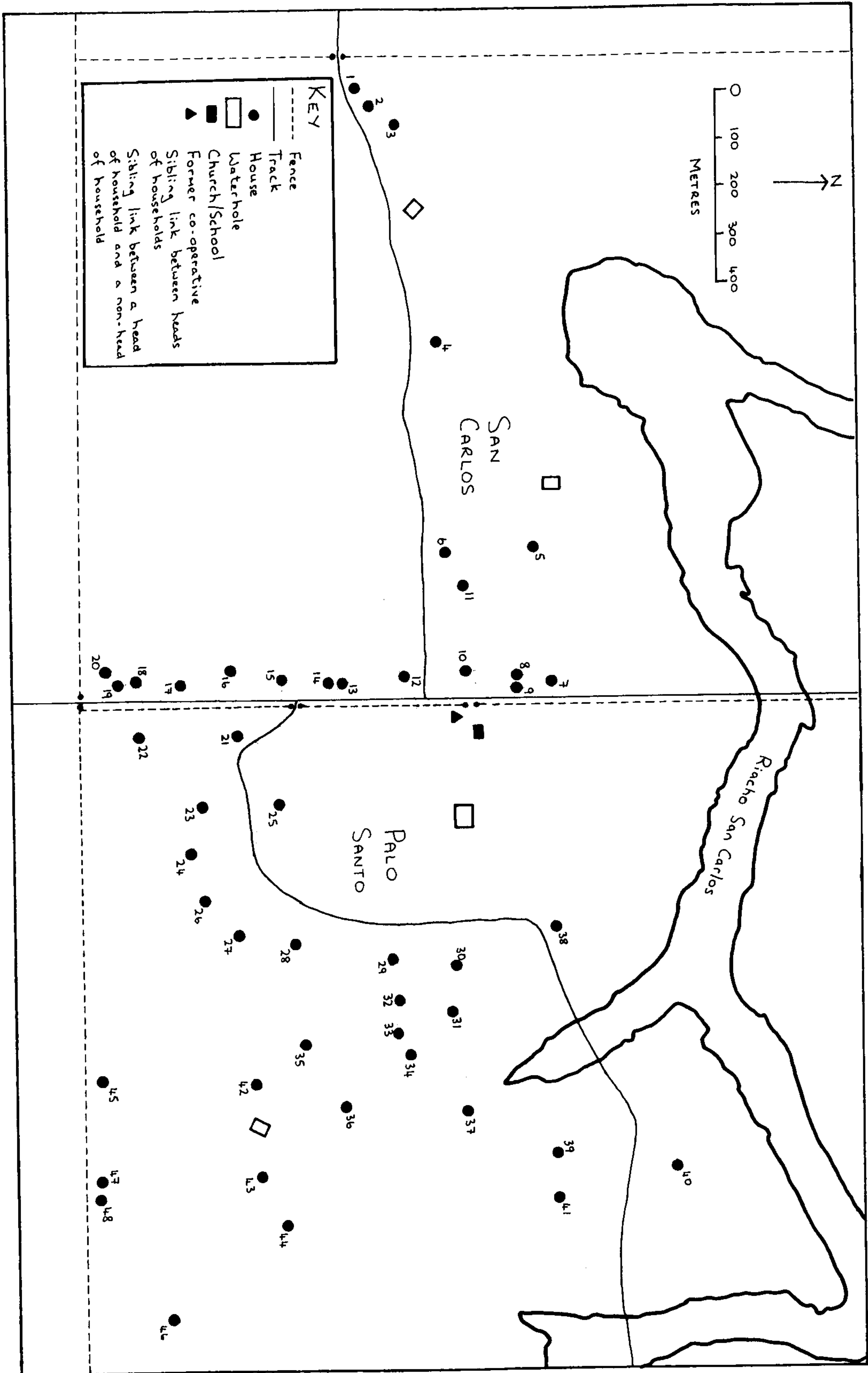
However, the relatively low proportion of neolocal households is also explained by the fact that it is normal for at least one child and spouse to remain with the parents so that they are not left alone.⁵³ In such households, the children's children will eventually marry leading to the appearance of households that contain three generations of married people. Increasingly, the elder couple become less capable of work and imperceptibly the ownership of the house becomes identified with the child and child-in-law. While many older couples choose to remain in the same household, some may be invited by their children who live in different communities to move in with them. Children recognize a responsibility to look after their parents when they become old which they explain by reference to the memory of care received when they themselves were being raised. Some say that, "we 'care for' those old people who 'cared for' us when we were young,"⁵⁴ and so, by implication, not only do people invite their elderly parents to live with them, they can also invite others who played a role in nurturing and bestowing "love" on them during their childhood.

During a later stage of the development cycle there is a tendency for siblings to reside close to each other and in Map 5.2 the links between siblings in Palo Santo and San Carlos have been indicated. Many siblings are clearly near-neighbours and such spatially proximate sibling sets may appear following the death of parents who had a number of children living close-by. For instance, this transition will soon occur in Houses 25, 29 and 30 of Palo Santo where a widowed mother (in House 30) will soon die leaving three of her children living relatively close together in separate

⁵³ Almost all cases of couples who live alone are of couples without children or whose parents have died.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 4.

Map 5.2. Households in Palo Santo and San Carlos that are Linked by a Sibling Relationship



houses.⁵⁵ Houses 32, 33, 34, 36 and 37 are an example of the transition having occurred following the death in 1993 of the mother of three brothers and two sisters who now live in five separate houses.⁵⁶ Siblings, though, may also decide to move near to each other following the death of their parents. When El Estribo was first settled, many siblings took the opportunity to build their houses in relative proximity. Houses 12, 13, 14 and 16, for example, comprise the households of three brothers and a sister who established their houses in their existing positions in 1985. Other sets of siblings decided to establish adjacent houses some years after the colonization of El Estribo. Two sisters, whose parents had died many years earlier, were among the first settlers in El Estribo, establishing Houses 18 and 21. During the next three years, they managed to persuade another sister and a brother to establish their own households in El Estribo (Houses 23 and 24). Both had been in the area of the Mennonite colonies for many years but did not possess houses of their own. El Estribo, with its proximity to the Mennonite labour market, provided them with a convenient location for permanent residence.

Greater spatial distance between the households of siblings may reflect a subsequent stage in the development cycle of the domestic group. As a sibling's own children marry and have children themselves, they may eventually begin to establish independent households nearby and their parents will tend to give priority to the relationship with their children rather than with their siblings. Alternatively, as siblings grow older, they themselves may change their residence so as to be near children who live in other communities. One example of the dispersal of siblings occurred after the original settlement of Palo Santo. The wife of the original leader, Juan, moved to Palo Santo from Makthlawaiya accompanied by two sisters and a brother. Another brother and sister remained in Makthlawaiya where the brother was the leader. At the time, all of the siblings were over fifty years old and had a number of children and grandchildren, except for Juan and his wife who were childless but had raised the children and grandchildren of his wife's deceased elder sister. Some of the siblings' children had moved with them to Palo Santo, while others had remained with their parents-in-law either in Makthlawaiya or in other communities in El Estribo. Following a series of conflicts with the rest of the community, within three years two of the sisters - including Juan's wife - and the brother had returned to Makthlawaiya with their respective spouses. On their return, they all took up residence with their children. A couple of years later, Juan's wife died and he decided to move to the ranch of Yesamatathla, twenty kilometres west of Makthlawaiya,

⁵⁵ The mother's husband died in 1995.

⁵⁶ One of the brothers lives with his parents-in-law in House 32. Other examples include Houses 8, 9 and 10, and Houses 12, 13, 14 and 16.

where he could live with one of the grandchildren he had raised. In early 1996, the other sister who had returned from El Estribo also died and, when I last saw her husband, he was continuing to live in Makthlawaiya with his married children. One of the sisters had remained in Palo Santo with her children, most of whom had parents-in-law within El Estribo. However, her husband died in 1990 and she subsequently moved out of her house (No. 27) so as to live with one of her sons in San Carlos (House No. 6). Her desire to stay near her children meant that she lost contact with her siblings.

Interestingly, despite the prevalence of uxori-local post-marital residence, the sibling sets that near-reside in San Carlos and Palo Santo demonstrate neither a matrifocal nor a patrifocal tendency, comprising a total of 18 brothers and 18 sisters. I believe that a similar pattern occurs in other Enxet communities and it suggests that, over time, the initial dispersion of brothers following marriage is rectified as marriages mature and parents die. This contrasts with Palmer's (1997:63) observation of the prevalence of co-residing female sibling sets among the Wichí, although Alvarsson (1988:103ff) presents alternative data on the Wichí that contradicts Palmer, suggesting, in fact, a similar situation to that of the Enxet. Couples have the option of living near to the siblings of either spouse, with their choice depending on a mixture of social, affective and economic factors which are discussed in more detail in the following chapters. The existence of this option means that it is rare for a complete set of siblings to be near-resident. While some may co-reside in one community, others may be found in a number of different communities, perhaps near their spouses' siblings or with other kin.

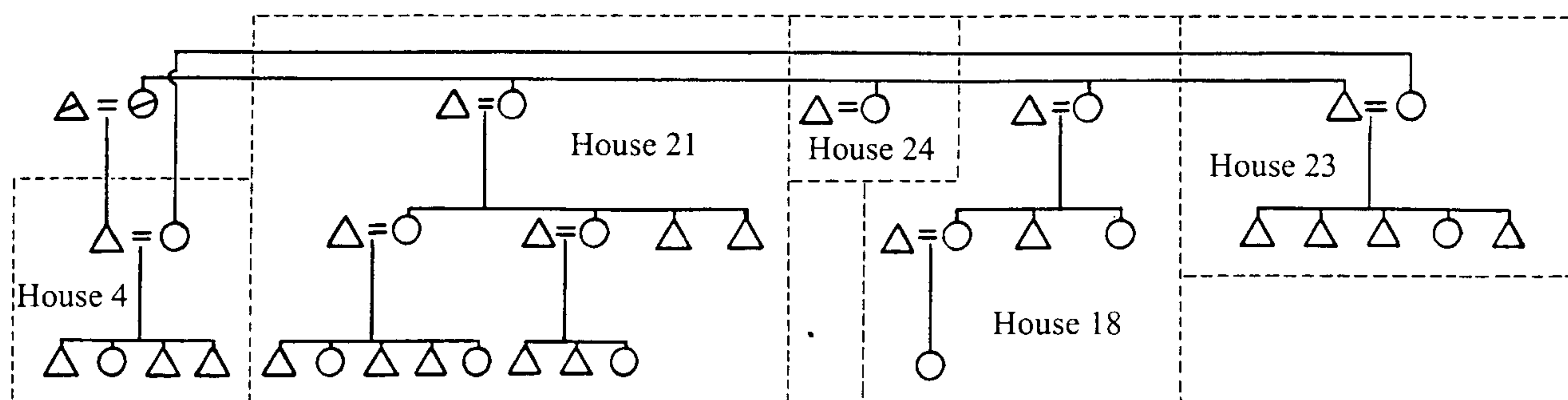
To a certain extent, the dispersion of siblings can be minimized by the intermarriage of two sets of siblings. Within San Carlos and Palo Santo there are two examples of partially intermarrying sibling sets: Houses 29 and 30 and Houses 32 and 36.⁵⁷ In such cases, both spouses are able to co-reside with their respective siblings in one community, but, since it is rare for more than two siblings to contract marriages in this way, a number of the siblings of each spouse continue to live in other communities.

However, an over-concentration on the parent/child and sibling relations misrepresents the Enxet concept of kinship and their use of kinship terms. People are also interested in residing near to the wider set of "close" kin, many of whom, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, are referred to by terms reminiscent of the parent/child

⁵⁷ Houses 12 and 16 were another case of intermarrying sibling sets until 1994 when the wife in House 16 died.

and sibling relationship: for example, a person's MZ can call him or her *hatté* - "my child" - while "cousins" employ sibling terms to refer to each other. Indeed, as I also explained, an MZ, or, indeed, any another sibling of a parent, may have played a full role in nurturing a child, while "cousins" are often raised together in the same household. Later in life, the memory of these "loving" relations can be reflected in residential patterns as "close" kin decide to live near to each other and a number of examples can be observed in Palo Santo and San Carlos. For instance, the owners of House 4 - Velásquez and Eusebia - used to live near to the siblings in Houses 18, 21, 23 and 24. Velásquez's mother, who had died many years earlier, was the elder sister of the siblings and he had originally moved to El Estribo to be with them. In fact, he and his MB in House 23 (who was younger than him) had been jointly raised by their grandmother. Subsequently, they both married a pair of sisters, thus strengthening the links between the two households. Only recently did Velásquez move his house to its present location so that he could have more land and be closer to a water-hole (see Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4. Residents of Houses 4, 8, 21, 23 and 24



5.3 Conclusion

The above description of settlement patterns began with a question about whether spatial order could be found in Enxet communities. It should be clear by now that such order is elusive and I suggest that, if too much stress is placed on a search for spatial order, there is a danger of misrepresenting the indigenous understanding of social relations. Although the study of settlement patterns is important - providing, as it does, crucial background information with which to understand social relations - we need to recognize that settlement patterns and social relations are not synonymous. For instance, I know numerous examples of people - at times, even siblings - who, despite the proximity of their households, rarely talk to each other. Similarly, there are just as many examples of people who live far apart yet maintain very close relations.

Furthermore, notwithstanding my stress in this chapter on the relationship between kinship and choice of residence, I need to backtrack somewhat and admit that this focus can also present a distorted picture of the indigenous conception of social relations. As I pointed out in Chapter 4, Enxet kinship is mutually implicated with “love” and, in effect, rather than wanting to live with and relate to their kin, the Enxet want to be with those they “love.” Therefore, although the Enxet can refer to everyone in a community as kin, they can also describe them as “those of us who ‘love’ each other” - *nelásekamaxkoho*.⁵⁸ In practice, the majority of those they “love” tend to be kin since the memory of “love” from childhood continues to play a significant role in constituting the day-to-day social relations - and residential choices - of adults. Yet, as I have already pointed out, “love” must, whenever possible, be practised if relationships are to be re-created and, for this reason, those who are not kin can become kin while those who became kin in childhood can, in effect, lose that status. For this reason, Enxet social relations and settlement patterns are never static and, in the rest of the thesis, I will attempt to present a richer and deeper understanding of the dynamics of Enxet social relations, giving priority in my presentation to the discourse of the Enxet themselves.

⁵⁸ In Chapter 10, I will consider the term *nelásekamaxkoho* in more detail

6. THE CONTEMPORARY ECONOMY OF THE ENXET

A remarkable feature of the programme of land acquisition undertaken by the Anglicans, Mennonites and Franciscans between 1979 and 1989 - which was described in Chapter 1 - has been its legitimization of a dramatic reduction in the amount of land under the direct control of the southern Enxet. Prior to the colonization of their land the southern Enxet could claim a territory of over two million hectares. Yet, nowadays, the land under their control corresponds to only 4% of their former territory and, in addition, many ranches forbid hunting, gathering and fishing by indigenous people. However, while there are still a number of land claims on-going and the existing legislative framework within Paraguay provides support for the rights of the indigenous people to their wider territories, government policy is based on a belief that the Enxet already have sufficient land, a view backed up by the landowners and even by some influential non-governmental organizations. But, as we shall see, one practical result of the tremendous reduction in the Enxet people's access to land has been the impossibility of surviving purely from their traditional subsistence activities.

In this chapter, I will focus on an examination of the productive activities of those Enxet who are resident on indigenous colonies, concentrating especially on the colonies of El Estribo and Makthlawaiya. I will commence by demonstrating that indigenous colonies are extremely overpopulated and suggesting that the term "work-camp" may be a more appropriate description for them than "indigenous settlements." I will then argue that, despite the many apparent changes in the economy of the Enxet, their underlying strategy of ensuring diversification in their productive activities has remained unchanged. This allows them to maintain a practice of "immediate consumption" and, within this context, I will question the argument propounded by Woodburn (1982) that activities such as agriculture and stock-raising - which he classifies as "delayed return" - are incompatible with an egalitarian social organization. Finally, I will suggest that, despite the apparently obligatory nature of the insertion of the Enxet into the labour market, we should not lose sight of the fact that they do not seek a maximization of economic returns and that autonomy of choice and a striving for a particular type of contentedness must be considered when trying to understand Enxet productive practices within the market economy.

6.1 The Creation of Indigenous Work-Camps

Although Wallis (1986) insists that existing Enxet colonies represent “considerable extensions” of land, the reality of the situation is considerably different.¹ Most Chaco indigenous colonies are well below the minimum required for indigenous settlement and, although no ecological studies have been undertaken to determine the area needed by indigenous people, considerable evidence exists to back up my assertion. To begin with, Paraguayan legislation stipulates that the area of indigenous colonies should be calculated on the basis of a *minimum* of one hundred hectares per family.² Yet, most indigenous colonies in the Chaco comprise much less including El Estribo which, with 430 families, has only 22 hectares per family while Makthlawaiya, with 170 families, has only 23 hectares each available.³ Both colonies comprise, therefore, less than 25% of the minimum demanded by law and, in the case of El Estribo, its proximity to three other Enxet colonies provides an even less favourable scenario. Given that, in 1993, Paz del Chaco had 10,909 hectares between 210 families, Armonía 4,700 hectares and 81 families, and Nueva Vida 1,000 hectares among 112 families, when combined with El Estribo it can be calculated that the four colonies comprise 26,083 hectares on which at least 833 families are resident⁴ (see Map 1.2 for the location of the colonies). Consequently, there are 31 hectares per family, less than a third of the minimum required by law. In addition, Stahl (1993) suggests that the indigenous people of the region need at least two hundred hectares per family which indicates that the land shortage is even worse than suggested by comparison with the legislation.

My personal experiences reinforce the conclusion that indigenous colonies are far too small. In 1985, prior to its settlement, El Estribo was well known for the abundance of its fauna and, when I first reconnoitred the land, I encountered an impressive range of wild animals, including herds of carpinchos and flocks of rheas. Yet, within a short time of settlement most of the animals had been slaughtered or had escaped elsewhere and, nowadays, only rarely are wild animals spotted. Fishing resources within the colony are also extremely limited and, whenever fish or eels are reported, they are rapidly exhausted. Edible plants are also generally lacking and the *áxa* palm which, prior to settling on El Estribo, was a staple part of the Enxet diet, is

¹ Both Renshaw (1988) and von Bremen (1987) appear to agree with Wallis. The former suggests that only two hectares is required for an “operational holding” in the Chaco (Renshaw 1988:33) while the latter omits to mention insufficient land as a reason for the non-residence of indigenous people on their colonies.

² See Article 18 of Law 904/81, the *Estatuto de las Comunidades Indígenas* (Congreso Nacional 1981).

³ Cf. Tierraviva (1995) and Kidd (1995c; 1997e).

⁴ Source: ASCIM (1993:12f).

almost entirely absent. Consequently, although a small population could subsist on El Estribo by hunting, gathering and fishing, it is nowadays impossible for everyone.

Neither is agriculture a viable alternative. To begin with, it also needs to be taken into account that agriculture in the Chaco is an extremely risky enterprise given the unpredictable fluctuations in rainfall and the damage that can be caused by pests. Furthermore, less than 10% of El Estribo is apt for farming which offers only two hectares per nuclear family, well below the area required for a profitable landholding especially when the need of a fallow period every four years is taken into account. The area of land required can be calculated from the income generated by El Estribo cotton producers during the 1993/94, 1994/95 and 1995/96 seasons. The average income, per hectare, of the top 50% of farmers was US\$218 while the average income of the top 10% was US\$373. Only by using the production figures of the top 10% does cotton cultivation compare favourably with wage labour. Since, between 1993 and 1996, the average annual wage of an Enxet employee on a Mennonite farm was US\$1,500, it is possible for the most successful farmers on El Estribo to obtain the equivalent of a year's wages by planting four hectares of cotton. Yet, this is a somewhat optimistic comparison since, even under favourable conditions, it is unlikely that the majority of indigenous cultivators could reproduce the production figures of the top 10% of farmers.⁵ A better comparison would be with the average income of the top 50% who would need to plant almost seven hectares to gain the equivalent of one year's income from wage labour. This is well beyond the area of land suitable for farming on El Estribo and, even in the unlikely event that people could obtain sufficient credit to cultivate such a large area, the labour required would be beyond the capacity of a nuclear family.

There are no other production alternatives that would permit indigenous people to subsist on their overcrowded colonies. For instance, El Estribo could hold no more than 1,700 cattle⁶ which would provide only four cattle per family while its carrying capacity for bee-hives is 600 which would offer less than two per nuclear family, well below requirements.⁷ In addition, the insecticides used on cotton make honey production incompatible with cotton cultivation.

We can, therefore, conclude that it is not possible for all the inhabitants of indigenous colonies such as El Estribo to subsist from their land given the prevailing

⁵ Cf. Renshaw (1986:155) who states that a family of seven would find it difficult to live off five hectares.

⁶ In this calculation, I assume improved water resources but no large-scale deforestation.

⁷ A reasonably well-maintained commercial bee-hive provides an annual income of approximately US\$100.

conditions of over-population. To survive, people have to leave their colonies and seek employment on nearby ranches and farms owned by Paraguayans and Mennonites. Indeed, between February and July 1996 an average of only 66% of the inhabitants of the communities of Palo Santo, San Carlos and Veinte de Enero were present at any one time.

This overall figure obscures the fact that different people are absent at different times⁸ - a topic that I will deal with later in this chapter - but, nonetheless, they reinforce the conclusion that the Enxet colonies are overpopulated.⁹ And given the degree of population movement that is generated by this overpopulation, it would seem inappropriate to refer to the colonies as indigenous *settlements*. Instead, they fulfil a role of work-camps, providing cheap labour for the ranching and farming establishments of the area. Ranch-owners no longer need to be responsible for the welfare of entire indigenous communities resident on their ranches but only for those families that they employ. When indigenous people do not have jobs, they are able to live on their colonies, obtaining some minimal level of subsistence from the resources available. Whenever employers require workers for more seasonal work such as weeding, harvesting or planting pasture, they are able to find them on the colonies and return them there once they are finished. Although the creation of work-camps was not the intention of the missionaries who acquired the colonies for the Enxet, it has certainly been the result and neither the Paraguayan government nor the landowners are interested in changing it. It is a strategy that has been successfully employed elsewhere and the over-supply of labour enables employers to suppress wage levels.¹⁰

6.2. Subsisting from Diversity

Having established that there is insufficient land on indigenous colonies, I will now describe the nature of the contemporary Enxet economy on those colonies. Prior to the colonization of the Chaco, the economy of the Enxet was based on hunting, gathering and fishing combined with small-scale horticulture and stock-rearing.¹¹ A person would cultivate a number of small gardens in different areas, apparently as a means of spreading risk given the unpredictability and variability of rainfall in the Chaco and the highly destructive pest life.¹² Numbers of domestic animals per

⁸ Cf. Renshaw (1986:141ff).

⁹ It also needs to be borne in mind that many people survive because of the money they receive from their "close" kin who are working outside the colony and by using money that they themselves bring back from jobs.

¹⁰ See, for example, Wolpe (1975:247f), Meillassoux (1981:117f) and Altman (1987:8).

¹¹ See Renshaw (1986; 1996) for a description of the pre-colonial indigenous economy in the Chaco.

¹² See, for example: Hawtrey (1901:287), Grubb (1911:77f), Metraux (1946:250), and Renshaw (1986:110f; 1988:348).

community varied according to the size of the population but many had over one hundred sheep, fifteen horses and fifteen cattle.¹³ Essentially, therefore, their economy was based on practising a diversity of activities, a strategy that permitted a degree of insurance against adversity. If one activity was not possible to practise or was unproductive, another would bring in the daily subsistence. And, if everything else failed, one of the domestic animals could be slaughtered¹⁴ or food could be consumed that had been kept in storage.¹⁵

Despite their insertion in the market economy, the Enxet continue to follow a similar strategy of diversified production. As I will show, stress is placed on the immediate consumption of produce, even by those who are significant farmers. I will illustrate the degree of diversity in the contemporary economy by describing each of the main productive activities of the Enxet residents of El Estribo and Makthlawaiya and by signalling the periods of the year in which they can be realized.¹⁶

6.2.1 Hunting¹⁷

Hunting is known as *nempakwayam* but is often also referred to as *[-]teyásekha*, or *[-]wegkyameykha*, both of which are terms used to express the concept of “wandering around.”¹⁸ At least 33 species of animals are hunted and eaten by the Enxet including deer, peccaries, wild pigs, alligators, ant-eaters, tapirs, pumas, ring-tailed bears, carpinchos, armadillos, iguanas and certain snakes, as are more than 30 varieties of bird, the largest of which are the rhea, storks and flamingos.¹⁹ However, the pressure on resources means that hunting is an infrequent activity within El Estribo although it is much more common in Makthlawaiya where the lower population density of the surrounding area and the possibility of entering neighbouring ranches provides more abundant fauna.

Hunting can be practised throughout the year, although the availability of animals varies according to the seasons. For example, the period of deepest floods between January and April can lead to a concentration of animals on higher land,

¹³ Cf. Henriksen (1889:56), Robins (1889:135), Stirling (1890:223), Grubb (1893:103), Freund (1894:78), Pride (1901:52), Aylwin (1902:58) and Susnik (1981:151).

¹⁴ Cf. Grubb (1911:66), Renshaw (1986:129f; 1988:349) and Kidd (1992:47).

¹⁵ The Enxet, for instance, used to process meat into a form of dry flour, known as *áneq*, which was stored in bags made from rhea skins and could be kept for up to three months. See also Renshaw (1986:90), Arenas (1981:60f) and Gordillo (1992:81ff) for information on other storage techniques in the Chaco although Grubb (1911:189) appears to suggest that the Enxet did not practise storage.

¹⁶ Gordillo (1992:115ff) provides a description of the annual cycle of the Toba economy.

¹⁷ See Renshaw (1986:62ff) for a discussion of hunting in the Chaco.

¹⁸ Cf. Overing (1992:182).

¹⁹ The Enxet also eat the eggs of many species of birds.

while during droughts, usually between June and September, they can be more easily found near water holes. In addition, as the swamp waters recede between March and June, large numbers of birds, such as the stork, the flamingo and the jabiru, can descend on the remaining, drying pools to consume the fish trapped there, and can be hunted at night with sticks. A large number of people surround the birds and, on a signal, simultaneously switch on their torches, thereby startling the birds which, before they escape, are clubbed to death.²⁰ However, the animal that is most frequently caught in Makthlawaiya is the armadillo, which is most prized during the winter months when it is at its fattest. Between September and January, following hibernation, large numbers of iguanas are caught for the sale of their skins, although the meat is also consumed. Only those with trained dogs can hunt the iguana and an income of US\$10 per day is common, although some especially good hunters can obtain more than US\$40.

Indeed, whenever the market value of an animal is deemed attractive, the response of the Enxet is enthusiastic.²¹ During the 1980s, rhea feathers and alligator skins fetched good prices and once, in Makthlawaiya, more than 200 alligators were killed in less than a week. Between 1990 and 1995, the residents of El Estribo and Makthlawaiya sold large numbers of poisonous snakes to Koreans in Asuncion, who used them in the production of alternative medicines. However, in recent years - with the exception of the iguana - the trade in skins, feathers and live animals has almost ceased due to restrictions put in place by the government.

A small number of people in Makthlawaiya occasionally kill cattle belonging to neighbouring ranches or to Paraguayan ranchers who are pasturing their land on the colony. Since these ranchers pay well below the market rate for renting pasture and deceive the Enxet whenever they can, many Enxet believe that the illicit killing of the cattle is one way of ensuring some form of fair rent.²²

6.2.2 Gathering

Gathering is described as “looking for things” - *[-]tegye aksok* - and, as is illustrated by Table 6.1, at least thirty-four plants and trees are consumed in some way by the Enxet. Compared to the pre-colonial period, gathered produce contributes only a small proportion of the daily diet since it has been replaced, to a great extent, by

²⁰ Grubb (1911:83f) describes a similar technique for hunting birds.

²¹ Gordillo (1992:151) also mentions that the market influences what the Toba hunt.

²² Renting indigenous land is illegal in Paraguay, so neither the Enxet nor the ranchers have any legal recourse for their grievances.

Table 6.1 The time of the year when the Enxet consume wild plants²³

PLANT	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PART EATEN	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE
Melápog	?	Fruit					X	X	X					
		Lower stem	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ketekma	Opuntia retrorsa	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mépopáma	Cleistocactus baumannii	Fruit					X	X	X					
Sakmaske	?	Fruit					X	X	X					
Heyente	Monvillea spegazzinii	Fruit					X	X	X					
Hepyaknahe	?	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yátapyaknahe	?	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Aksolpayhekyak	?	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Akpet	Cereus stenogonus	Fruit					X	X	X					
Teyt	Prosopis ruscifolia	Fruit					X	X	X					
Tewes	Prosopis alba	Fruit					X	X	X					
Ékyáha	Prosopis nigra	Fruit					X	X						
Yeyt	Bumelia obtusifolia	Fruit							X					
Nósa	Zizyphus mistol	Fruit					X	X						
Pakateyneg	Prosopis vinalillo	Fruit					X	X						
Anséta	Passiflora cincinnata	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Anwet ²⁴	Jacaratia corumbensis	Fruit						X						
Kentem	Bromelia serra	Fruit					X	X	X					
		Lower stem	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yamhag	Aechmea distichantha	Fruit					X	X	X					
Pomxek	?	?	X											X
Áxa	Copernicia alba	Fruit				X	X	X						
		Heart	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pa'ag	Trithrinax biflabellata	Flower	X	X	X	X	X							
		Heart	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yamáxa	?	Fruit							X	X				
Kyáye	Morrenia odorata	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yegwokmo	?	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mehek	?	Fruit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Antáwa	Capparis retusa	Fruit					X	X	X	X				
Méyek	Solanum hieronymi	Root	X											X
Makya	?	?											X	X
Kat heg	Nymphaea amazonum	Root	X	X	X									
Hópápa	?	?	X	X	X									
Lápogkopyese	?	Root	X	X	X									
Ekho	Typha dominguensis	Pollen			X	X	X							
Hálamak	?	Lower stem	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Fruit					X	X	X					

²³ The scientific names in Table 6.1 were obtained from Arenas (1981).

²⁴ During droughts, water can be obtained from the root of *anwet*.

manufactured foodstuffs. Nevertheless, in El Estribo large quantities of *algarrobo* (*teyt*, *tewes* and *ékyáha*) are collected in November and December, while in January and February women concentrate their attention on *antáwa*. These fruits can be stored for up to four months although, in Makthlawaiya, they contribute relatively little to the diet because of the scarcity of good trees. In contrast, the residents of Makthlawaiya consume palm hearts from the *áxa* palm all year round while, in El Estribo, it is entirely absent. In general, other plants are far less abundant and quickly exhausted so that they are only occasionally gathered. Table 6.1 illustrates the time of the year that the different plants can be consumed.²⁵

6.2.3 Fishing²⁶

Fishing is known as “looking for fish” - *[-]tegye kelasma* - and I know of nineteen species of edible fish, of which the most appreciated are eels and mud-fish. Due to limited water sources, its practice is restricted within El Estribo, although it can be undertaken at any time of the year by using a hook and line in waterholes or in the lakes of the neighbouring colony of Paz del Chaco. Between March and May, when the water level falls in the Riacho San Carlos, it is possible to catch eels and mudfish with a harpoon and people also fish on Mennonite landholdings if they can remain unseen.

In contrast, Makthlawaiya comprises mainly swampland and has tremendous resources for fishing. Although some fishing is possible all year round, between January and February, when the swamps are at their deepest, fishing is more difficult. However, as the water level falls, the possibilities increase significantly: shallow water and mud - commonly experienced between April and June - are perfect conditions for catching eels and mudfish while nets can be used once small bodies of water filled with trapped fish have appeared.²⁷ In both cases, large catches can be made, often in less than an hour, and people can return home almost overburdened by the weight of fish or eels.

²⁵ See also Arenas (1981) and Renshaw (1986:86ff).

²⁶ See Renshaw (1986:79).

²⁷ Individual nets are constructed from two sticks, about a metre in length, which are tied together at the ends in the form of a mouth. A net, about a metre deep, is tied along each stick, and people fish by opening the mouth and diving underwater. The speed of their dive catches the fish in the net which is then closed while underwater.

6.2.4 Agriculture²⁸

Rather than one term describing the whole agricultural process, each distinct aspect - such as ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting - is expressed by a separate word. Within El Estribo, most households cultivate small food gardens which, during the 1995/96 season, were between 0.25 hectares and one hectare in size. Ploughing was undertaken by the colony's tractor, and people paid for its use either by obtaining money from other activities - for example by working for a short time for Mennonites or selling honey - or with money from "close" kin. Indeed, access to a tractor is a crucial factor in determining the size of gardens and, during the previous three seasons, when the tractor had been in a state of disrepair, many households did not bother to cultivate while others had only small plots that they dug by hand.²⁹

Gardens are sown during two main periods. Following winter, people plough and plant as soon as the first significant rainfall arrives, which may be any time between August and November. Then, for a month or two, and after each successive rainfall, people continue to sow. The most popular crops are sweet potato, manioc, maize, beans, pumpkin and watermelon and they are usually consumed between January and April, with the exception of manioc which is rarely ripe before May (although it is usually exhausted by June). Then, in March and April - and taking advantage of the last major rains before the commencement of the dry, winter season - many people re-plant sweet potato over much of their garden which can then be harvested in August and October.

Commercial agriculture is also practised in El Estribo and, during the 1995/96 season, fifty-four families cultivated a total of seventy-two hectares of cotton. While six paid for everything with cash, forty-eight families from the communities of Karandá and Veinte de Enero co-operated together to obtain a large loan from a Mennonite in Lolita. In addition, Karandá and Veinte de Enero planted ten hectares of communal cotton, again taking advantage of the Mennonite's credit. The cotton was harvested in March and April, and the average income per family was US\$220. However, as Table 6.2 indicates, profits varied tremendously: for example, four families failed to repay their credit, eighteen earned less than US\$100, while seven received over US\$500, with the most productive farmer earning US\$1,100. These figures can be put into perspective by comparing them with the US\$1,500 average annual wage of an indigenous employee on Mennonite ranches and the national

²⁸ See Renshaw (1986:94ff).

²⁹ A small number of people managed to persuade Mennonites to plough for them.

minimum wage of US\$2,405 per year. For most people, therefore, cotton was not a particularly fruitful endeavour since most received substantially less than the equivalent of two months minimum wages.³⁰

Table 6.2 Income from cotton in Karandá and Veinte de Enero during 1995/96.

INCOME (US\$)	NUMBER OF FAMILIES
Less than 0	4
0-100	18
100-250	12
250-500	7
More than 500	7

In fact, on selling their cotton many people received almost no cash. This was because, when they commenced the harvest, they persuaded the Mennonite to give them food on credit so that they could harvest “with tranquil *wáxoks*.” However, the food received by those with small harvests exceeded the value of their crops so that, once it was sold, they were still in debt to the Mennonite. He responded by retaining the profit from the communal garden - some US\$1,500.

In Makthlawaiya, gardening is almost insignificant, in large part because, within the colony as a whole, there are little more than fifty hectares suitable for agriculture. No tractor is available and, as a result, most people have gardens that are smaller than ten metres by ten metres and only five or six gardens exceed a tenth of a hectare.

6.2.5 Stock-rearing

Domestic animals are known as *[-]tóso*, a term that combines the verb “to eat” - *[-]tó* - with the substantive form of the causative suffix *[-]so*. Literally, therefore, the term can be translated as “one’s causing to eat.” Stock-rearing is very small-scale and undertaken by only a few families. In early 1996, in El Estribo, twelve families owned a total of forty-two cattle, there were fourteen sheep between three families, while two men were the owners of a total of twenty-five goats. A few had horses, although no-one possessed more than six, and the community with the greatest

³⁰ Given that most producers in Karandá and Veinte de Enero had a significant proportion of their cotton harvested by Enxet employees, this would have reduced their income by approximately 15%.

number was Alegre with forty. Similar numbers of domestic animals can be found in other Enxet colonies, at least in those not managed by Mennonites. For example, in Makthlawaiya, eight people were the owners of a total of forty-one cattle, two people possessed horses and there were a number of donkeys. In Espinillo, which was settled in February 1996, forty-eight cattle were distributed between seven people, one man had nine goats, ten men owned twenty-one horses and three others had a total of five donkeys. Most households keep a number of hens.

The most cattle owned by a single person was twenty-two (in Espinillo) and no one else had more than fifteen. To obtain an income, cattle are either sold live for between US\$150 and US\$250 or are slaughtered so that the meat can be sold to fellow community members, with some being retained by the owner. Sales can take place at any time of the year and are usually determined by the owner's circumstances and requirements.³¹

6.2.6 Other production undertaken within indigenous colonies

Individuals acquire income from a range of different activities that are undertaken within the colonies. Bee-keeping is relatively popular and, in early 1996, approximately 10% of the adult male population on El Estribo plus a handful of women owned bee-hives. Most had one or two hives each, although a couple of men owned ten while, in Makthlawaiya, five men owned a total of ten bee-hives.³² Bee-keeping requires a small investment of labour and even those who do not take particularly good care of their hives can earn over US\$80 per hive, per year. Each hive is normally harvested three times between October and March so that the income is spread over half the year. In addition, wild honey can also be collected and sold although, due to over-exploitation, worthwhile hives are rarely found in El Estribo.³³

Timber exploitation is also a common activity and the most popular commercial trees are quebracho³⁴ (*yátamáset*) and palo santo³⁵ (*mémog*) which are used for fence posts, although palo santo can also be sold to a factory in the Mennonite town of Loma Plata which extracts its resin for export. In the year

³¹ I will discuss the commercialization of cattle in Chapter 13.

³² Bee-keeping had been introduced by the Anglican Church in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was a popular activity. There are many more bee-hives in the colonies of Sombrero Pirí and Espinillo and, although I do not have exact figures, some people own more than twenty.

³³ Although there are many species of native honey-producing bees and wasps, nowadays the most prevalent bee is the African bee - *yanyohéna* - which, according to the Enxet, began to appear in the region in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is much more productive than the native varieties, producing over ten litres per hive compared to less than a litre by the autochthonous species.

³⁴ Possibly *Schinopsis balansae* (Arenas 1981:236).

³⁵ *Bulnesia sarmientoi* (Arenas 1981:218).

following the initial colonization of El Estribo, the indigenous settlers extracted most of the palo santo, only stopping once they realized that it was about to be exhausted.³⁶ Nowadays, timber extraction in El Estribo is restricted to the winter months when other productive options are limited and is undertaken by only a small number of people. Those who use axes can earn up to US\$30 per day but two or three people own chainsaws and can obtain in excess of US\$200 per day.³⁷ However, the extraction of valuable trees frequently provokes conflicts within communities and, as a result, people rarely do it for more than two or three weeks since the other community members will eventually stop them. Producing firewood for sale to the Mennonites is much less conflictive since only dead or non-valuable trees are used. Again, though, it is an activity undertaken during the winter by only a few people and rarely generates more than US\$5 per day.

A variety of other small-scale productive activities are carried out on the colonies. In Makthlawaiya there is a carpenter who produces furniture for the surrounding ranches. A number of people are involved in small-scale commerce: on each colony there are usually two or three indigenous-run stores while a few individuals dedicate themselves to the sale of one product such as alcohol, bread or fizzy drinks.³⁸ And, finally, a few cattle owners produce cheese which, when sold, brings in US\$3 or US\$4 per day.

6.2.7 Wage labour

Wage labour is understood as a form of “work,” a concept that is expressed, in Enxet, by the term *[-]tamheykha*, a word that can be translated as the “doing of [something] repeatedly.”³⁹ As I have already suggested, wage labour is of tremendous significance for the internal economy of indigenous colonies since, at times, more than half the economically active adult male population can be employed by Paraguayan or Mennonite landowners and institutions.⁴⁰

Taking El Estribo as an example, three categories of employment can be identified. The first is as a government employee and, in early 1996, ten men had jobs as teachers⁴¹ while one was employed as a nursing auxiliary by the Ministry of Health.

³⁶ See Renshaw (1986:198f) for an explanation of the reasons behind the environmental damage caused by Chaco indigenous people.

³⁷ Only one person in El Estribo had a chainsaw in 1996, although people often collaborate with Paraguayans who provide chainsaws.

³⁸ Intracommunity commerce will be discussed in Chapter 13.

³⁹ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁰ See Kidd (1997a) for a detailed description of the working conditions of the Enxet.

⁴¹ The teacher in the community of Para Todo'í was from Armonia and is not included in these figures.

They earned between US\$200 and US\$400 per month - receiving an extra month's wage in December⁴² - and were able to live in El Estribo, only travelling to Asunción at the end of each month to collect their wages.

The ranching and farming establishments of the region also employ indigenous people full-time but require them to live in accommodation provided by their employers.⁴³ They are only able to return to El Estribo for one or two days every couple of months and for the Christmas and Easter festival periods.⁴⁴ During my fieldwork, of a total of 86 men of working age in San Carlos and Palo Santo, 38 - that is 44% - were employed in this way - mainly by Mennonites - and earned, on average, US\$125 per month.⁴⁵ However, since, throughout the month, they were given provisions on credit by their employers, the cash they received on pay-day was often less than US\$50. Wages tend to be even lower on Paraguayan-owned ranches and, as a result, indigenous ranch-hands frequently receive almost no cash at all at the end of the month.

The final category of work is short-term and employers often look for large numbers of labourers for periods of between three days and three weeks. Between November and May, Mennonite and Paraguayan farmers employ the Enxet to weed and harvest their cotton and, during the winter, they are often required for forest clearance. After a heavy rain, up to fifty people can be employed for three or four days to plant pasture and the mode of obtaining workers is for employers to travel to colonies in tractors or lorries to persuade as many Enxet as possible to accompany them to their farms.⁴⁶ A decision on whether to accompany the employer depends on the circumstances of each individual. In Palo Santo and San Carlos, because of their large proportion of permanent employees and relatively productive gardens, short-term work was not that significant during the period of my fieldwork, although, during February and March, there were, at times, less than 50% of the population present in the communities. In contrast, in the community of Alegre - which had less permanent employees - many more people depended on short-term work and, on the 8th of May 1996, only forty-eight community members were resident - 31% of the

⁴² Employers are under an obligation to pay thirteen months wages per year, and the thirteenth month is known as the *aguinaldo*. However, it is almost unknown for Mennonites to pay this extra month's wage.

⁴³ There are a small number of men in El Estribo who live close enough to their employers to be able to return home each night.

⁴⁴ If a wife lives with her husband on a Mennonite farm, she is often given poorly paid domestic work.

⁴⁵ If government employees are taken into account, it can be calculated that half the men of working age in Palo Santo and San Carlos were in permanent employment. This is a much higher figure than most other communities where short-term employment is more prevalent.

⁴⁶ Both men and women (as well as older children) are employed in the weeding and harvesting of cotton and the planting of pasture, while only men gain employment in forest clearance.

population - since fifty people were absent for ten days harvesting cotton for a Mennonite. Similarly, between the 22nd of May 1996 and the 3rd of July 1996, only 37% of the inhabitants of Veinte de Enero were in their homes as many were clearing forest for a Mennonite. However, they had returned home by the 7th of July and so the proportion present in the community had risen to 78%.

Income from such seasonal work, while not substantial, is usually greater than the earnings obtained in full-time employment, especially during cotton harvesting when the whole family can be employed. Most people are able to harvest between thirty and seventy kilogrammes of cotton per day⁴⁷ and, since most employers pay around US\$0.13 per kilogramme, an average yield of fifty kilogrammes brings in US\$6.50 per day. This is slightly below the minimum wage of US\$7.00 per day but, if a husband and wife both work, they can obtain an average of US\$13.00 per day, a good income for the Chaco. If they are helped by their children, their income can increase further and, in two weeks, an average family can earn US\$156 which compares favourably with a full-time employee's average earnings of US\$60 over the same period.

During the winter, when food shortages are most severe, men often go looking for short-term work. However, because little work is available and the supply of labour is high, wages are low and some Mennonites give jobs purely out of compassion. Work may last from a few days to a month and men often leave their families behind in the colonies as they are uncertain whether they will obtain a job. For instance, during the winters of 1993 and 1994 an average of less than 45% of economically active males were present in the community of Veinte de Enero compared to over 70% of the rest of the population.

The involvement of the inhabitants of Makthlawaiya in the labour market follows a similar pattern, although they mainly work on Paraguayan-owned ranches. Also, instead of travelling to the Mennonite colonies to pick cotton, in recent years community members have been sought out by farmers from Eastern Paraguay. In fact, during the months of March and April, less than 40% of the population tend to remain in the colony.

⁴⁷ Gordillo (1992:128) notes that the Toba can pick between 60 and 80 kilogrammes per day.

6.3 “Delayed Return” and Immediate Consumption

The Enxet, therefore, are heavily immersed in the labour market and, according to Renshaw (1988) this can be explained by their “economic morality.” He claims that: “the Indians of the Chaco tend to choose those modes of economic integration that are compatible with their own system of moral values, even though at first sight they may appear to be disadvantageous” (1988:335). His analysis is based on Woodburn’s (1982) discussion of “egalitarian societies” in which he creates a dichotomy between “immediate return” and “delayed return” economies. The former are economies in which, “people obtain a direct and immediate return from their labour”⁴⁸ (1982:432) while, in contrast, “delayed-return” economies imply a temporal disjunction between labour input and consumption. According to Woodburn (1982), egalitarian social organizations are only compatible with immediate return economies since, he claims, delayed return economies are characterized by the need to organize labour over the long-term and accumulate resources which, by implication, leads to the creation of hierarchies.⁴⁹ For Renshaw (1988) the “immediate return” nature of Chaco economies derives from the indigenous people’s key moral values of egalitarianism and generosity which promote the sharing of surpluses rather than their accumulation.

Renshaw regards wage labour as perfectly compatible with the moral values of Chaco indigenous people. Whether it is received as cash or in kind, it is consumed or shared immediately since people know that future subsistence will continue to be provided by the employer. No accumulation is possible and Renshaw (1988:345) concludes that the product of wage labour is, “treated in almost exactly the same way as the produce of most day-to-day hunting, fishing or gathering.” As will become apparent in the following chapters, this understanding of wage labour is consistent with my own description of the Enxet economy but where Renshaw becomes more controversial is in his insistence that the indigenous people of the Chaco *prefer* wage labour to living on their own land.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Woodburn (1982:432) defines “immediate return systems” in the following way: “People obtain a direct and immediate return from their labour. They go out hunting or gathering and eat the food obtained the same day or casually over the days that follow. Food is neither processed nor stored. They use relatively simple, portable, utilitarian, easily acquired, replaceable tools and weapons made with real skill but not involving a great deal of labour.” Cf. Meillassoux (1973:192ff) who regarded all hunter-gatherer activities as yielding an “instantaneous return.”

⁴⁹ As Woodburn (1982:443) states, delayed return economies depend “for their effective operation on a set of ordered, differentiated, jurally-defined relationships through which crucial goods and services are transmitted.”

⁵⁰ Gordillo (1993) also offers a critique of Renshaw.

Renshaw assumes that indigenous settlement on colonies is synonymous with farming and, in line with Woodburn's (1982:433) assertion that, "all farming systems, unless based on wage or slave labour, must be delayed-return for those doing the work,"⁵¹ Renshaw dismisses both agricultural production and stock-rearing as incompatible with indigenous moral values. He states that, "agriculture, particularly as practised in the Central Chaco, requires a level of accumulation that tends to conflict with the emphasis on sharing" (1988:349). It is because of this conflict, he argues, that indigenous people abandon their colonies in favour of wage labour, despite the fact that they are often severely exploited.

However, I would question whether farming is necessarily incompatible with "immediate consumption," an egalitarian social system and the moral values of Chaco indigenous people. Ingold (1986:213f) offers a significant re-assessment of Woodburn's model in which he notes that various kinds of time-lag should be recognized in "delayed-return" activities:

One kind is between the initial investment of labour in establishing the conditions for natural growth and reproduction of plant or animal resources, and their eventual harvesting. Another is between the construction of instruments of production and their use in resource extraction. And a third is between extraction or harvesting and consumption.

Ingold points out that, although an activity may be "delayed" in one respect, it could be "immediate" in another, and this would appear to reflect the nature of Enxet agricultural production. Although there is a delay between the initial investment of labour in preparing and planting a field and the harvesting of a crop, once a crop has been harvested it is consumed or distributed almost immediately or, at most, within one month.⁵² In addition, any income from cotton rarely lasts more than a month.⁵³ Renshaw (1988:349) erroneously assumes that for agriculture to be successfully practised, "there has to be sufficient produce to cover the needs of the household from the time that the harvest finishes until the next season's gardens are ready for harvesting." In reality, agriculture is embedded in a wider diversified economy that enables Enxet farmers to consume immediately their agricultural produce since, when there is no food in the garden, they can subsist by undertaking a range of other

⁵¹ Woodburn (1982:433) classifies farming systems as "delayed-return" because, "the yield on the labour put into crop-growing or herding domestic animals is only obtained months or years later." See also Renshaw (1988:349).

⁵² Forrest (1987:311), Rosengren (1987:75) and Belaunde (1992:172) also note the immediate disposal of agricultural harvests among the Kalinya, Matsigenka and Airo-Pai.

⁵³ See Chapter 13.

productive activities. Agriculture, therefore, does not require the accumulation and saving of surpluses and, consequently, it is not in conflict with the egalitarian and “loving” values of the Enxet. Indeed, throughout lowland South America egalitarian social organizations are often found among peoples who depend on some form of horticulture.⁵⁴

Therefore, Renshaw’s assertion that the indigenous people of the Chaco *prefer* wage labour to living on indigenous colonies is highly questionable. A desire to follow their moral values is not the reason why Chaco indigenous people enter the labour market instead of living on their own land. As I have explained, agriculture and a range of other productive activities that indigenous people can undertake on their own land are not incompatible with indigenous values and the practice of immediate consumption within the context of a diversified economy. Therefore, wage labour is not chosen on this basis. Instead, two factors explain why so many indigenous people leave their land to look for jobs. The first is the lack of available land and, as I discussed earlier, it is impossible for Chaco indigenous people to survive on the small areas of land that have been obtained for them by Missions and the Paraguayan government. A certain proportion must, therefore, leave their homes to seek some form of employment. Yet, the lack of land does not determine *who* looks for work and it is here that the second factor comes into play. In line with their stress on personal autonomy, each individual is responsible for deciding what they want to do. And, in choosing which productive activity to undertake, a key consideration is one’s own affective comfort, in other words, the maintenance of a tranquil and “sweet” (ie. content) *wáxok*.

6.4 Personal Autonomy and Productive Choices

The value placed on respecting the personal autonomy of others means that no one should be obliged to do anything against their will. No person, either in the context of the household or the wider community, is responsible for organizing the labour of others and, instead, each individual chooses what to do although, in arriving at a decision, he or she must marry an awareness of personal responsibility towards “loved” others with a desire to undertake activities that are constitutive of a “sweet” *wáxok*.

⁵⁴ As Overing (1989b:161f) has pointed out, although “there are hierarchical aspects to the social organization of all amerindian groups, ... hierarchy must be understood through the more encompassing institutions of equality, and not vice versa.”

The importance of individual preference has been encapsulated by Overing (1989b) in the term “the aesthetics of production.” She notes that, among the Piaroa, people tend to “specialize” in the activities that they enjoy most: for example, some men hunt daily while others prefer to make artefacts or fish (1989b:165). Indeed, “the affluent community for the Piaroa was the one that could take into account on a daily level both flexibility in schedules of work and individual preferences for the specific tasks themselves.” A congruent situation is found among the Enxet, even within the context of the contemporary capitalist economy.

Making one’s own decisions and taking pleasure in one’s tasks are constitutive of a tranquil and “sweet” *wáxok*. Paradoxically, this is most evident in the high value placed on leisure. Contemporary Enxet daily life is not a desperate struggle for survival and, even in El Estribo with its limited resources, people do not work particularly strenuously. Effectively, whenever people’s immediate needs are satisfied they spend as much time as possible in leisure activities.⁵⁵ They visit people to chat and drink *tereré*,⁵⁶ and, most afternoons, many people spend a couple of hours playing and watching football and volleyball. A few men may play cards or a traditional gambling game known as *sekes*, while groups of young men can spend many hours practising their singing for the church services. In Makthlawaiya, whenever a large number return from short-term work they can spend days dancing, eating, drinking, playing games and sleeping until their money is exhausted.⁵⁷

As well as spending time in leisure, the Enxet also try, if possible, to undertake productive activities that are enjoyable.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that many activities are not considered to be “work” - *[-]tamheykha* - a concept that, as I explained earlier, is associated with continuous repetition. Hunting, fishing, gathering and collecting honey are regarded as “wandering” or “going for a stroll,” just as they are among the Piaroa⁵⁹ (Overing1992:182). They are pleasurable activities and are made more so by the fact that there are no rules regarding who to accompany on one’s “wanderings” so that people can choose who they most want to be with.⁶⁰ Fishing trips, for example, can be tremendous fun. If the fish are known to be plentiful, ten or more men can fish together, often accompanying each other to the

⁵⁵ Cf. Lizot (1977:512ff).

⁵⁶ See Chapter 10 for a description of *tereré*.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 13.

⁵⁸ Cf. Overing (1993b:55).

⁵⁹ As I explained earlier, the concept of “wandering” is expressed by the terms *[-]teyásekha* and *[-]wegkyameykha*. Cf. Bird-David (1992:30) who states that hunter-gatherers do not consider hunting, gathering and fishing as work.

⁶⁰ Cf. Turnbull (1966:154ff), Woodburn (1980:102f; 1982:438), Meillassoux (1981:16), Altman (1987:122), McCallum (1989:189) and Overing (1988:173; 1993b:52ff).

site. The journey is characterized by animated conversation, the cracking of jokes and laughter which continue even once the fishing is underway. If nets are used, diving under water can cause great mirth and good-hearted banter and, providing that people have been successful, the trip home can be just as pleasurable. Describing such an activity as “work” would be a severe distortion of how the Enxet conceive and experience it.

Each person, therefore, has a great deal of autonomy in choosing their activities and, when deciding to enter the labour market, they are influenced by a range of factors in addition to those that are more strictly economic. For example, some people look for work whenever they feel “fed up” with - *[-]leklakme* - life at home; some enjoy wage labour especially if they can gain employment as cowboys;⁶¹ others want to be “cared for” by “loving” employers; or wage labour can even be a sanctuary for those seeking to escape personal conflicts and a loss of tranquillity in their own communities.⁶²

Nevertheless, people do not always find the correct balance between satisfying the requirements of those they “love” and their own desires. A self-regarding individualism may intrude into their decision-making at the expense of their families’ and households’ best interests. Such selfishness is most apparent when deciding whether to enter the job market and can provoke tensions between spouses. A husband may want to look for work while his wife may prefer to stay with her kin where she feels more comfortable. Often such spouses come to an amicable agreement, perhaps deciding that the husband will seek work alone, but, at times, disagreements may become more serious and can erupt in arguments, threats of divorce and even violence, especially if the husband becomes drunk. However, usually a form of complementarity exists within multiple households, and it is often split along generational lines. One or other of the father-in-law or son-in-law (or son) can find work while the other remains behind. The wife of the man seeking work can, therefore, choose either to stay with the other household members or to accompany her husband.

The Enxet, therefore, are not interested in maximizing production but are more concerned with generating a tranquil and contented affective state in which their personal autonomy is respected. Apart from those with permanent jobs, an individual’s economic cycle can be described as a series of short periods of intense

⁶¹ Being a cowboy is highly desired by many Enxet and, in their dances, the best-dressed men are those in full cowboy regalia which many regard as their “traditional” clothing.

⁶² See Chapter 11.

labour punctuated by long periods of leisure.⁶³ As Gordillo (1993:90) notes, the main interest of Chaco indigenous people is in producing for subsistence and, so long as this condition is satisfied, they prefer to enjoy themselves, if possible in the company of others. Whenever they desire goods that exceed their subsistence requirements - such as clothes, bicycles or tools - they usually seek work with the intention of labouring only until they have earned enough to purchase the items.

6.5 Conclusion

No consideration of the Enxet economy is possible without taking into account the question of their lack of access to land. As a result, they are obliged to depend for their subsistence on wage labour and it would appear, therefore, that there has been a tremendous transformation in their economy when compared with pre-colonial times. Yet, this transformation is, in one fundamental aspect, more apparent than real. Just as in the pre-colonial period, the Enxet continue to practise a diversified economy in which they can choose between a range of activities. This type of economy is perfectly compatible with their moral values in that it continues to permit the practice of immediate consumption. In the following chapters, I will examine the nature of consumption within Enxet communities and try to understand how, despite the entry of money and the market into the internal economy of the Enxet, they can continue to be described as an “egalitarian society.” Furthermore, despite the continuing relevance of traditional moral values such as egalitarianism and generosity, I will also describe how daily life is a constant battleground between other-regarding and self-regarding virtues.

⁶³ Even permanent employees try their best not to work.

7. CONCEPTS OF PROPERTY

An understanding of Enxet economic relations can only be satisfactorily achieved if it is based on a rich understanding of their concepts of property. Yet, conceptualizing indigenous property rights is not a straightforward task if the long debate it has stimulated within the fields of hunter-gatherer and indigenous American studies can be taken as evidence. A useful starting point, therefore, is to define what we mean by the concept of a property right. Barnard and Woodburn (1988:13) define it as a:

“...particular type of association between a person and a ‘thing.’ The type of association is one which involves a measure of socially recognized control over the ‘thing’ and which necessitates some restrictions on other people’s control of the same ‘thing.’ So, in fact, property rights (whether held individually or jointly) are held in opposition to those who do not hold such rights.

They continue by stressing that: “However closely I am identified with something that is mine, it is not in the normal sense my property (or, more correctly, I do not have property rights in it) unless some other people are in some way restricted in their use of it” (1988:13). Ingold (1986:229) suggests a similar definition and states that a person’s control over an object can only be recognized as property ownership if: 1) others recognize it as a right, 2) control is exercised not only during those moments that the object is being used, and 3) there are restrictions on who can use it. Taking these definitions as a benchmark, I will examine Enxet concepts of property, considering, first of all, durable goods and domestic animals before dealing with food.¹

7.1. Durable Goods and Domestic Animals

Linguistically, the Enxet have two ways of expressing ownership of durable property. The first is to employ the word [-]agkok which, I described in Chapter 4, can express emphasis, as in the term “it really is.” Following the same logic, in the context of a property right [-]agkok could be understood as signalling an enhanced association between owners and their possessions. The person associated with the object is indicated by the prefix so that, for example, *yantésesek ahagkok* means “my furniture” while *Pedro apagkok* signifies “it belongs to Pedro.” However, just as the use of “my” or “our” in English does not necessarily imply ownership, neither does

¹ I will consider property rights in money and land in Chapter 13.

[-]agkok.² For instance, the expression “*María ámay agkok*” - “María’s path” - does not signal María’s ownership of the path but indicates that it is a path along which she frequently travels. Nonetheless, in other contexts *[-]agkok* clearly indicates that an object is held to the exclusion of others, in the sense of a property right as explicated by Barnard and Woodburn (1988) and Ingold (1986).

Ownership can also be indicated in certain words by the use of prefixes. Therefore, *selnakta* means “my kit,” *selmeykha* means “my tools,”³ “my trousers” are *seletcheso eyáyak*⁴ (literally translated as “that into which I insert my legs”), *seletcheso emagkok* - “that into which I insert my feet” - means “my shoes,” while *sektaxno* - “that which I enter” - is “my shirt.” Ownership of most domestic animals is expressed by the term *[-]tóso* although horses and donkeys are referred to as *[-]yanté* - “mounts.” The prefixes indicate the identity of the owner: for instance, *weyke sektóso* means “my cow” while *akkyanté* is “his mount.” However, as with *[-]agkok*, a prefix does not always specify ownership but may indicate some other form of association. For instance, *éxagkok*, which means “my home,” does not necessarily imply that the house I live in belongs to me.

Durable property is, in general, individually owned among the Enxet, a situation common to many other indigenous peoples.⁵ Even spouses do not usually share property. They have their own tools, utensils and clothes while other objects - such as radios, bicycles, furniture and clocks - are usually recognized as belonging to one or the other.⁶ Similarly, domestic animals, whether sheep, cattle, horses, chickens, pigs or dogs, are also personally held. Within a household, each individual knows which are his or her animals and even children can be the owners of cattle or horses. When spouses divorce they each take their own property with them.

Nevertheless, despite the prevalence of individual ownership there are no linguistic barriers to expressing the concept of joint property. For instance, *egagkok* can mean “ours” while *nelmeykha* can be translated as “our tools.” Therefore, we

² As Barnard and Woodburn (1988:13) point out, we can refer, in English, to “my name” but that does not mean that “my name” is my property.

³ The prefix *sek[-]* indicates the first person singular “my.” However, by using *sel[-]* the word becomes plural.

⁴ The prefix *sel[-]* in *seletcheso* and *e[-]* in *eyáyak* both indicate the first person singular.

⁵ See, for example, Ingold (1986:223), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:25), Myers (1988:55), McCallum (1989:200) and Overing (1993b:47). In the Chaco, individual ownership is also reported by Metraux (1946:300), Seelwische (1974:156), Renshaw (1986:182) and Alvarsson (1988:208). However, examples of joint ownership have been reported: Endicott (1988:120) notes that the basic tools of living are jointly owned by Batek spouses while Gordillo (1992:113) believes that tools belong to the Toba domestic group, a situation that would contradict information from elsewhere in the Chaco.

⁶ Cf. Seelwische (1974:156) and Renshaw (1986:183f).

should not be too dogmatic in insisting on individual ownership as it can be contested and negotiated. This sometimes occurs between married couples and I have heard one spouse describe an object as “ours” - *egagkok* - while, on a separate occasion the other spouse has referred to the same object as “mine” - *ahagkok*.⁷ Conflicts between individual and joint ownership can also arise over putatively community owned property, a topic that I will deal with later in this chapter. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of objects are personally owned, a situation that is entirely consistent with the stress on personal autonomy. Indeed, as Myers (1988:55) suggests, a claim to personal ownership may, perhaps, be understood as an expression of that autonomy.

How do people gain ownership of durable property? In the literature on lowland South America indigenous peoples a “labour theory of personal ownership”⁸ is commonly reported whereby individuals own what they produce.⁹ However, discovering a similar neatly expressed theory among the Enxet proved to be an impossible task and, whenever I asked people why a specific object belonged to them, I was usually met by looks of incredulity as if the answer were self-evident. If pressed, people offered a variety of explanations which included: *sekma* - “I bought it;” *sekyanmagkásó* - “I paid for it;” *selané* - “I made it;” *sekwetakxo* - “I found it;” *segkyéso* - “I was given it;” and *sekwawé* - “I received it;” among others.¹⁰ The range of terms indicates the existence of a multitude of “theories” of appropriation among the Enxet and it would be analytically questionable to reduce ownership to an investment of labour.¹¹

I would also question the validity of the “labour theory of personal ownership” among other indigenous peoples as a unique explanation of property rights. It would appear, from the literature, that among many indigenous people an individual’s right to property is not restricted to those objects that he or she produces and that congruent rights are held over objects obtained by other means, especially manufactured goods. Therefore, I would like to examine first of all the theoretical justification proposed for the “labour theory of ownership.” The most common explanation is that the investment of labour creates a metonymical relationship between producers and their

⁷ Such a situation can commonly arise with the corrugated zinc plates that are used for roofing.

⁸ See Belaunde (1992:101).

⁹ See, for example: Thomas (1982:54), Santos Granero (1986b:121f), Overing (1986b:150; 1989b:166; 1993b:47), Rosengren (1987:74), McCallum (1989:200ff), Gow (1991:102) and Belaunde (1992:101). Similar ideas have been reported by Ingold (1986:225f) and Barnard and Woodburn (1986:16).

¹⁰ I have written the verbs without an indicator of a past tense which, strictly speaking, should be there. If something happened before today one adds *axta* to the verb and if it happened today one adds *xeyk* (or *excheyk* if the verb ends in a vowel).

¹¹ Cf. Gray (1997b:110f).

products. Renshaw (1986:184), for example, insists that this is the case in the Chaco and describes how durable property is seen almost as, “a part of its owner.” His reasoning is echoed by McCallum (1989:201) who, in the context of the Cashinahua, remarks that, “things are aspects of the person who owns them” and by Ingold (1986:224) who, more generally, states that, “the tools that a man makes for himself, and constantly employs in the course of everyday life, may come to be treated as extensions of his person.”

There are two main arguments used as evidence for this apparent metonymic relationship, the first being the destiny of objects on the death of their owner. Both Renshaw (1986:185f) and McCallum (1989:201) assert that personal property is buried with the deceased.¹² Consequently, Renshaw (1986:186) argues that Chaco indigenous people are, “intent on affecting a separation between the living and the dead, and that the personal property of the dead is viewed as partaking in the essence of the owner.” It needs, therefore, to be destroyed because it presents a danger to the living.¹³ However, the Enxet themselves offer a different explanation for how they deal with property on the death of its owner.

While, in the traditional context, it was perfectly feasible to bury a person’s entire property,¹⁴ nowadays individual Enxet have far too many possessions. As a result, only a small bundle of personal goods are thrown into the grave, apparently as little more than a token gesture.¹⁵ During one burial I attended, the possessions of the lady who had died were placed outside her house in a box so that people from the community could rummage through them, picking out and handling affectionately the objects that particularly reminded them of the deceased which they then passed on to others to look at. People were free to appropriate whatever they wanted although only non-kin and distant kin took advantage. The household members themselves kept nothing and explained it by reference to “sadness” - [*-lapwayam*]. They said that if they were to see the deceased’s possessions they would be reminded of her and would become sad.¹⁶

The other evidence offered by Renshaw (1986:184) for the putative metonymical relationship between people and their possessions is the apparent

¹² The destruction or burial of property on the death of the owner is commonly reported throughout lowland South America. See, for example, Rivière (1969:222), Alvarsson (1988:214), Gow (1991:184f), Belaunde (1992:101), Taylor (1993:662) and Gray (1997b:110).

¹³ Cf. Loewen (1966).

¹⁴ Cf. Grubb (1911:122).

¹⁵ Cf. Rivière (1969:222).

¹⁶ Cf. Renshaw (1986:186) and Gow (1991:184ff).

inalienability of personal possessions that are given as gifts among Chaco indigenous people. However, he provides little ethnographic support for his assertion, relying instead on Seelwische's (1974:156) work on the Nivaklé in which it is stated that spouses, on separating, hand back any gifts that they have received from each other. Renshaw concludes that gifts are never entirely alienated from the giver and proceeds to generalize this assertion to the whole of the Chaco. Similarly, he argues that rights to domestic animals are, to some extent, inalienable. Citing Seelwische (1974:156) once more, he explains that, when one Nivaklé sells an animal to another, any off-spring are considered to belong to the seller. He concludes that, "the act of giving or selling is never seen to imply ... complete alienation" (Renshaw 1986:185).

Support for Renshaw is found in the work of McCallum (1989:203) who, in attempting to explain the significance of gift-giving, stresses the metonymic relationship between the giver and an object, stating that, when given, "the item stands for the relationship between giver and receiver." Similarly, Ingold (1986:225) remarks that when tools change hands as gifts among hunter-gatherers, "their possession can no longer be exclusive." He continues: "As long as a vital link is maintained between the owner and the thing given (and it is because of this link that the thing counts as a gift), the 'hold' of the recipient will be added to that of the donor, but will not replace it." In both explanations the stress is on the object's continuing identification with the donor and would appear that both authors believe that a complete alienation of a gift from its donor is impossible.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Enxet do appear to conceive of the possibility of the complete alienability of an object from its giver although, overall, the notion of alienability appears to be somewhat ambiguous.¹⁸ I asked various Enxet about the practice of spouses returning gifts to each other on separating and, not only had no one ever heard of it, they found it very strange. This would, therefore, appear to cast doubt over one of the main pieces of evidence used by Renshaw. Indeed, in general terms, once an Enxet gives a gift it becomes the property of the receiver and, therefore, alienated from the donor. When our neighbours in Makthlawaiya made a poncho for my daughter Sarina, once given it was always referred to as *Sarina agkok* - "Sarina's." Even when it was being made, the verb [-]elané - "to make" - was invariably employed with the addition of the suffix [-]so which indicated that it was being made for Sarina, such as, "*Sarina selanésó*" - "I am making it for Sarina." In effect, the future alienation of the poncho was made explicit during its production and

¹⁷ McCallum (1989:203), however, appears to contradict herself when she states that a thing received as a present can also become an aspect of the person receiving it.

¹⁸ Cf. Belaunde (1992:136).

people continue to use the same verb construction to refer to the maker of the poncho. They say: “*Maruka élanésó axta*,” “Maruka made it for her” rather than a simple “*Maruka élané*,” “Maruka made it.”

The alienability of property is also seen in the practice of older people who, when convinced they are about to die, begin to give away their possessions to their close kin. During the summer of 1988/89 an old shaman/pastor in Makthlawaiya, who was convinced of his imminent demise, asked me to take his blankets and chairs - which my wife and I had given to him - to his son in El Estribo, assuring me that he would no longer require them. However, by the time the winter arrived he was still fit, though somewhat cold, and my wife and I felt impelled by his plight to buy him another blanket. When he eventually died in January 1990, his kin in El Estribo were not at all worried about keeping the blankets and chairs. Despite their recognition that the objects had once belonged to the old man, a definitive alienation of the property from its original owner had occurred.

Renshaw also offers no evidence from his own fieldwork to support his argument that domestic animals are inalienable and, among the Enxet, once sold, an animal, plus any off-spring, become the property of the buyer. Not even fathers who give cattle to their children have rights to the off-spring and I know of a number of children who could not even be persuaded to sell or slaughter their animals. One girl in Para Todo’í (El Estribo) would place an exorbitant price on her animals whenever someone tried to buy them and her grandfather spoke approvingly of her “strong *wáxok*.”

Radical transformations of ownership with no hint of inalienability are common among the Enxet and, given the sparsity of evidence offered by anthropologists in support of a metonymical relationship between individuals and their possessions, perhaps the theory itself needs to be re-evaluated. In fact, a clue as to why the theory has been so influential in anthropological writing may be obtained from Renshaw’s (1986:184) statement that it is his own *belief* that the relationship is metonymic,¹⁹ which suggests that the theory was not derived from indigenous discourse. In fact, Ingold (1986:224ff) has described how the “labour theory of personal ownership” arises from Western intellectual thought as evidenced by the following three hundred year old statement from John Locke (1978 [1689]:18):

¹⁹ Specifically, Renshaw (1986:184) states: “The relation between an object and the owner is, *I believe*, a metonymic one.” (The stress is mine).

He that is nourished by the Acorns he pickt up under an Oak, or the Apples he gathered from Trees in the Wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. No Body can deny but the nourishment is his. I ask then, When did they begin to be his? When he digested? Or when he eat? Or when he boiled? Or when he brought them home? Or when he pickt them up? And 'tis plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That *labour* put a distinction between them and the common. That added something to them more than Nature, the common Mother of all, had done; and so they became his private right.

Although Locke specifically referred to food, it is the principle involved that is of interest. In fact, Letourneau (1892) repeated the same argument in his work *Property: its Origin and Development*, seeing “in the manufacture of artificial instruments the genesis of an idea truly unique to man, namely that of *private* property” (in Ingold 1986:224). As Letourneau (1892:38f) himself wrote: “The articles have been in some sort confounded with their creator,” which clearly implies a belief in a metonymic relationship between an object and its creator.

Given the apparent absence of an explicit indigenous discourse on this putative metonymic relationship, we should not dismiss the possibility that anthropologists have projected a Western theory onto indigenous philosophy. This is not to say that an indigenous conception of a metonymic relationship is non-existent, but I am merely pointing out that the evidence to support the assertion is absent. Instead, it would appear that an ontological theory of property ownership is a part of Enxet culture “that goes without saying” and, since they appear to have no need for such a theory perhaps we should avoid creating our own theoretical projections *a la Taylor*.²⁰ We need go no further than an acceptance of the existence of some form of linkage that develops between people and their property, one that is widely recognized and allows people control over their possessions to the exclusion of others. This is consistent with Barnard and Woodburn’s (1988) description of property as an association between a person and a thing and is reminiscent of Myer’s (1988) use of the term “identification.” Indeed, as I indicated, an “enhanced association” is the essential meaning of the possessive [-]agkok, one that can be created not only by an investment of labour but also in a number of other ways such as by purchasing, receiving, finding and even through use. As will become apparent when I discuss the topic of borrowing in Chapter 12, the existence of different means of achieving ownership can even lead to confusion regarding property rights over borrowed objects.

²⁰ See my discussion of Taylor (1996) in Chapter 1.

However, notions of property alienation are not entirely unambiguous as is illustrated by the following example. Jorge, when visiting his son in the Mennonite town of Loma Plata, received a bicycle from the young man as a gift. He returned with it to El Estribo and, some weeks later, sold it to a son-in-law, keeping the money for himself. His son did not complain which suggests that, on handing over the bicycle, full ownership was transferred. A year later Jorge received another bicycle from the same son and, on his return to El Estribo, he was adamant that it belonged to him, describing it as “*ahagkok*,” in other words “mine.” Nevertheless, when, a few weeks later, his son asked for the bicycle to be returned, Jorge handed it over without any protest. Indeed, he explained that it had never belonged to him anyway.

Similarly, rights to animals are not always clear-cut and, in certain circumstances, they can become somewhat ambiguous and contested. For example, when a young man from San Carlos (El Estribo) purchased five sheep from his Mennonite employer, he left them in his home community for his parents to look after while he continued working for the Mennonite. After three years, the identity of the owner of the sheep - which, by then, had risen to thirteen in number - had become somewhat confused. The parents were adamant that the animals belonged to them because they had cared for them but other members of the community were divided in their opinion. Those who had a close relationship with the parents agreed that the animals were theirs, while others - often those who were jealous of the parents’ success - insisted that they belonged to the son. I do not know the opinion of the son but, when one of the sheep was butchered, it was the parents who made the decision, stating that they “really wanted meat.” It would be tempting to interpret the parents’ apparent appropriation of the animals as the result of their having nurtured them. Indeed, the word *[-]takmelcheso*, which describes the action of “caring for” domestic animals, can also be employed to express the nurturing of children.²¹

These examples suggest that property rights can be contested, especially within the context of a “loving” relationship. In fact, this parallels McCallum’s (1989:201) experience with the Cashinahua. She points out that the alienability or non-alienability of an object depends on the relationship between the transactors, upon whether or not they are co-residents and/or kin. A similar ambiguity also exists among the Enxet although, rather than conceiving it as dependent on co-residency or kinship, it would be more accurate to regard it as contingent on the degree of intimacy in the relationship. Because of his close relationship with his father, Jorge’s son experienced little difficulty in requesting the return of the bicycle, even though,

²¹ See Chapter 4 for further information.

strictly speaking, he had relinquished ownership when he gave it away. The son was not held back by a sense of “restraint/timidity” - [-]*jennawagko* - nor did he need to strengthen his *wáxok* when asking. In turn, Jorge was not moved to contest his son’s re-appropriation because of the “love” - [-]*ásekhayo* - between them which was combined with a desire to maintain tranquil relations. If Jorge had denied the request, his son could have responded by drinking alcohol and becoming “angry.”

Therefore, durable goods and domestic animals are usually held as private property and this association between people and their property can be generated in a number of ways. Any ambiguity that exists in ownership should not be taken as evidence of the existence of a metonymical relationship between people and their possessions, as has been suggested by a number of authors. Instead, it is usually because two people generate an association with a single object in different ways: for instance, one person may buy an animal which is then cared for by someone else. If the rights of one person are contested by another, a decision on who the owner is can come down to a combination of the relative “strength” of their *wáxoks* - in other words, who is more insistent and exhibits less “restraint” - as well as the willingness of one party to cede to the other because of the “love” they have for them.

7.2. Food Ownership

Although anthropologists are generally in agreement over the prevalence of the concept of private ownership of durable property among indigenous people, theories on indigenous concepts of food ownership are much more diverse. They range from the idea that food is personally owned²² to the notion that it is held by the collective.²³ In addition, a compromise theory proposes that, although food is held by individuals, it is done so on behalf of the wider community. Consequently, it is said that the rights of individuals are restricted to the distribution of food and do not extend to being able to deny distribution.²⁴ To better understand the Enxet concept of food ownership, I will consider each of the above theories in turn, commencing with the notion of food as communal property which Renshaw (1986:187ff) has insisted is characteristic of the indigenous people of the Chaco.²⁵

²² See, for example, Rivière (1984:89), Endicott (1988:115), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17), Overing (1989b:166), Belaunde (1992:155, 176) and Gray (1997b:115).

²³ See, for example, Loewen (1966), Seelwische (1974:156) and Renshaw (1986:188ff).

²⁴ See, for example, Dowling (1968:505), Price (1975:12), Ingold (1986:227ff), Myers (1988:58) and McCallum (1989:204).

²⁵ Loewen (1966) provides support for Renshaw by stating that the Enxet have communal food ownership, as does Seelwische (1974:156) for the neighbouring Nivaklé.

Renshaw claims that the intimate association between Chaco indigenous people and their property does not extend to consumable items and that food “cannot strictly speaking be possessed by individuals” (1986:188). Instead, he continues, food is usually destined for consumption by all members of the “extended kin group or residential nucleus” and beyond. He bases his ideas mainly on linguistic evidence that suggests that some Chaco languages lack a possessive form for consumable items. For example, he explains that an Ayoreo will employ a phrase such as “my killing, the peccary” when referring to an animal he has hunted while agricultural produce can be referred to as “my bringing, the squash.” I have noted a similar linguistic construction among the Enxet: a successful hunter refers to a deer he has killed as “*popyet seyakhé axta*” - “the deer that I killed;” a woman that has gathered *algarrobo* could say, “*ékyáha sektegya 'a axta*” - “the *algarrobo* that I gathered;” while bread bought in a shop could be referred to as “*kelpasmaga selma axta*”²⁶ - “the bread that I bought.” Yet, in contrast to Renshaw, I do not accept that such linguistic evidence disproves the existence of notions of individual appropriation of food.²⁷ Indeed, the linguistic expressions themselves could, in fact, be presented as evidence of individual appropriation.

In each of the sample sentences provided, the focus is on the means by which the food was obtained: for example, the deer was killed by the hunter while the bread was bought by the shopper. It could, therefore, be argued that, rather than focusing on a lack of a direct possessive form, we should stress the way in which the linguistic construction highlights the action by which appropriation is achieved. In a sense, it encapsulates some of the logic behind the “labour theory of personal ownership” by indicating that it is people’s actions that establish their property rights over food. Nevertheless, it needs to be clarified that appropriation is not just achieved through labour. For example, a person can become the owner of food by purchasing it or by receiving it from someone else, which could be described by the expression “*ápetek sekxawé axta,*” - “the meat that I received.”²⁸ In fact, it is not uncommon to find that, among indigenous peoples in general, food can be appropriated by other means than through labour: among the Batek of Malaysia it is the owner of the blowpipe who becomes the owner of the kill (Endicott 1988:115), while among the !Kung it is the owner of the arrow²⁹ (Marshall 1976:358). It would appear, therefore, that the “labour

²⁶ *Kelpasmaga* refers to a type of hard bread that Paraguayans call a *galleta*.

²⁷ Renshaw (1986:188) does, though, warn that such linguistic evidence should be treated with caution.

²⁸ In English, of course, we can use a similar expression. When people talk of “the fish that I caught” we fully understand that the fish belong to them.

²⁹ Note, however, that Testart (1987:291) points out that, among the !Kung, the hunter chooses which arrow to use and, therefore, it could be argued that it is the hunter who decides who receives the meat. For other examples see: Price (1975:12), Myers (1988:58), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17), Testart (1987:292) and Belaunde (1992:186).

theory of ownership” is too narrow a concept to explain adequately how food is transformed into individual property. Instead, we should recognize that appropriation can be achieved in a number of ways. Among the Enxet, stress is placed on the action of the prospective owner: he or she kills the animal, buys the food, receives the gift or cultivates the crop. At the moment of appropriation, food becomes the personal property of the appropriator, and it is significant that, in Enxet - and in contrast to Renshaw’s assertion - the generic word for food - [-]tó - requires a possessive prefix: sektó means “my food,” ektó is “her/your food” and aptó “his/your food.”

However, what rights are entailed in this appropriation and could it be defined as ownership according to the criteria laid down by Barnard and Woodburn (1988) and Ingold (1986)? Certain authors, while accepting the principle of individual appropriation of consumable items, argue that this does not imply full ownership in a western sense. Instead, as Dowling (1968:505) contends, the rights entailed in appropriation are essentially those of distribution and not of deciding whether distribution will occur. McCallum (1989:204), referring to the Cashinahua, puts it another way: “the consumables that men and women make or bring back - such as women’s manioc and men’s game animals - are possessed only to be given away in the social process.” By following this line of reason one could conclude that indigenous people are obliged to share in that they have no option but to redistribute their food.

The most elaborate justification for this theory has been provided by Ingold (1986) and has already been summarized in Chapter 1. To recap briefly, Ingold’s main point is that the means of subsistence - that is, land and natural resources - are held in common (sharing *in*). Therefore, “far from exercising rights of enjoyment, *as against the world*, over the means of subsistence, as does the pastoralist ... or the agriculturalist ..., the hunter-gatherer enjoys exclusive rights to the *custody* of the means of subsistence, which he holds *on behalf of the world*”³⁰ (1986:229). Consequently, what seems at first sight to be individual possession is, in fact custodianship, “because the enjoyment of essential resources is common to an unbounded collectivity” (1986:229).

However, the evidence from the Enxet - and, indeed, from the wider literature - appears to offer Ingold little support. His theory suggests that people are obliged to share their entire stock of food and he insists that, in times of scarcity, “generalized reciprocity proceeds to the point of dissolution of domestic group boundaries”³¹

³⁰ The emphasis is in the original.

³¹ Cf. Ingold (1980:149).

(1986:231). Indeed, he goes on to say that: “In situations of economic collapse, it is the intra-domestic relations between husband and wife, between mother and child, and between parent and grandparent, that take the strain” (1986:231). However, among the Enxet, people usually only share a surplus and, if a household possesses no more than its immediate requirements, only rarely will food be shared with others. For example, if one armadillo has been killed it will usually be consumed by the hunter’s household while, if there are two or three armadillos, some meat may find its way to other houses. A congruent situation of limited sharing during scarcity is widely reported in the literature³² and very little ethnographic evidence exists to support Ingold’s assertion, although Price (1975:14) does suggest that, in scarcity, sharing practices vary between different peoples: among some, food sharing increases while, among others, it decreases.³³ Yet, even if such variation between peoples were true, Price’s remark would still be sufficient grounds for rejecting Ingold’s assertion as a universal truth. The fact that, in many “egalitarian” societies, individuals or households can, when food is limited, decide not to share is evidence of a right of ownership that incorporates the ability to exclude others.

Ingold (1986:227) also attempts to support his theory by arguing that, since an individual is merely a custodian of the collectivity’s food, the taking of food that has not been offered or formally requested cannot be regarded as theft. Instead, the misdemeanour is one of failing to recognize the owner’s privilege of disposal. Other anthropologists seem to hold the same opinion and Endicott (1988:117) describes how the Malaysian Batek believe that taking food without permission from a hoarder is not considered to be stealing.³⁴ However, other anthropologists describe quite different situations. Belaunde (1992:101) states that the Airo-Pai consider theft to be a very severe offence and there appears to be no doubt that the concept of theft exists among many similar peoples. Yet, stating that theft exists is insufficient. We also need to comprehend what indigenous people mean by the term “theft.” Specifically, is it thought to be the illicit appropriation of an object or is it, as Ingold suggests, the mere denial of the right to distribute?

³² Goldman (1963:82), Siskind (1973:85ff), Marshall (1976:357), Siffredi (1977:53, 58), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:281), Henley (1982:76, 85), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17), Endicott (1988:116), McCallum (1989:208), Gordillo (1992:113), Viveiros de Castro (1992:105f), Campbell (1995:148) and Ellis (1996:149).

³³ Lee (1988:267) also provides some support for Ingold (1986) when he states that if there is any food at all in a hunter-gather camp then it is shared among everyone. However, his remark seems to contradict Marshall’s (1976:357) observations on the !Kung among whom Lee also worked.

³⁴ At times, however, there is some apparent semantic confusion regarding terminology. Siffredi (1977:49), for example, suggests that “theft” is acceptable among the Chaco Chorote people if someone refuses to share and that it should be regarded as a compensatory mechanism. However, Siffredi is not clear about which term the Chorote employ to describe this “theft.” If it is merely the verb “to take” then Siffredi may have a point but, if the word used implies a misdemeanour (ie. “theft”) then it would be difficult to sustain her argument. I will return to this point in the main text.

The Enxet verb for “to steal” is [-]meñexma and it is clearly differentiated from the verb “to take,” [-]ma. Grubb (1911:210) reported that, in pre-colonial times, theft was rare and, even today, very few people steal from other Enxet. Yet, it only requires one or two habitual thieves to change the whole atmosphere in a community and for theft to be regarded as a major problem. During my time among the Enxet I was aware of many instances of stealing, though only by a small number of people.

The Enxet regard theft as a denial of “love” - [-]ásekhayo - and as associated with a relationship characterized by “hate” - [-]taknagko.³⁵ It is understood to be “wrong,” a concept that is expressed by the term kapéwomo,³⁶ “to be not straight.” Indeed, it is almost inconceivable for “knowledgeable” people whose wáxoks are under control to steal from those they “love” and, as I will show in Chapter 12, it is entirely unnecessary since, if someone is in need, they only have to ask their close relations for something and it will be given. Those who steal are said to lack “restraint” - [-]ennawagko - and to feel no “shame” - [-]megkakto.

However, although theft is regarded as wrong, any judgements on a person’s actions effectively depend on who it is committed against. Since theft is associated with “hate,” it is unacceptable to steal from those you “love” - or, at least, should “love” - but, when practised against outsiders it is not viewed as particularly serious.³⁷ People who are scrupulously honest individuals within their own communities can steal from “unloved” strangers with little “worry,”³⁸ except, perhaps, for the “fear” - [-]eyeye - of being caught. For instance, an old pastor used to tell me with great enthusiasm how, when he was younger and living in Makthlawaiya, he would frequently steal and kill the cattle belonging to the Mission and the neighbouring ranches. He insisted that his wáxok only became disturbed once he was caught but, by feigning contrition, he received only a light punishment.³⁹ Such stories of theft from outsiders - and there are many - are recounted as humorous tales to eager audiences and no one regards the “thefts” as “wrong” - kapéwomo. Instead, the perpetrators are held in some esteem.

³⁵ Cf. McCallum (1989:206) and Belaunde (1992:181) who suggest that theft expresses a lack of kinship.

³⁶ [-]péwomo is the verb “to be straight” while ka[-] is a shortened version of the negative form of the female third person singular pronoun prefix. The longer version, which is rarely used, would be megka[-].

³⁷ Cf. Sahlins (1974:199).

³⁸ “Worry” in this context would be translated as tamhaha [-]wáxok, “one’s wáxok moves” which also refers to a disturbed wáxok.

³⁹ In fact, the thief was punished by having to work for two months for food but no pay. However, he regarded it as an extremely favourable outcome since he could guarantee his subsistence for that period.

Yet, Enxet who are on the receiving end of a theft are quite clear that it is “wrong.” People can, for example, describe themselves as “angry” - [-]l^ó - “sad” - *yentexek* [-]wáxok⁴⁰ - or “fed up” - [-]leklakme - after suffering theft, and I have even known the loss of food to cause some people to weep. In fact, Pride (1913:177) reports that one Enxet who habitually stole from his people was eventually executed by them. Given these scenarios, it seems non-sensical to argue - as Ingold does - that the Enxet only consider the loss of the opportunity to share to be the misdemeanour. Instead, theft implies a loss of private property and the same emotions are felt irrespective of whether the object is durable, consumable or a domestic animal.⁴¹

The fact that the theft of food can occur among indigenous peoples is evidence that food is not just held by individuals *on behalf of* the community. Because food can be held as property by individuals - according to the definitions of Ingold (1986) and Barnard and Woodburn (1988) - theft is unacceptable within Enxet communities which should be comprised of people who “love” each other. And, once we accept the existence of full property rights over food our understanding of the practice of sharing can be enhanced. Because people own their food - and do not just hold it in custody - a distinction can be created between a “giver” and a “receiver” and, as I will explain in Chapter 10, an appreciation of this relationship is essential if we are to understand the creation of social relationships in indigenous societies.

However, having argued strongly for individual property rights among the Enxet, I once again need to qualify my remarks by pointing out that it is more common for food to be held by the household. Although at the point of its initial appropriation - either through killing, harvesting, receiving or purchasing - food is regarded as personal property, once individuals return to their own households any food they bring with them becomes the property of all the household members. In effect, individuals hand over their food to the rest of the household in a process that can be defined as “pooling.” Sahlins (1974:188ff) describes pooling as an essential characteristic of the household economy.⁴² He defines it as a, “*within* relation”⁴³

⁴⁰ *Yentexek* [-]wáxok means, literally, “heavy wáxok.”

⁴¹ Interestingly, Myers (1988:57) makes a similar point to Ingold (1986) by asserting that theft denies the “proprietor” the opportunity to give an object to another. However, while Ingold suggests that this, rather than the loss of property, is the misdemeanour, Myers believes that the denial of the chance to share is *in addition to* the loss of property.

⁴² As Sahlins (1974:188) admits, he was indebted to Polanyi (1944; 1957; 1959) for many of his ideas on pooling and “reciprocity.” The concept of pooling has frequently been ignored by those anthropologists studying hunter-gatherer economies who have tended to concentrate on Sahlins’ proposed spectrum of reciprocities, from generalized reciprocity to negative reciprocity. However, given that Sahlins also ignores pooling in his visual depiction of spheres of reciprocity (1974:199), it is not surprising that anthropologists have been guilty of the same omission.

(1974:188), as a, “social center where goods meet and thence flow outwards” (1974:189) and contrasts it with sharing,⁴⁴ which he characterizes as a, “*between* relation, the action and reaction of two parties”⁴⁵ (1974:188). In essence, pooling implies the conversion of personal ownership of food into collective ownership, although, in this context, the boundaries of the collectivity do not reach beyond the household.

Once food has been pooled, access to it is free and unrestricted among household members.⁴⁶ This is reflected in the construction of the word “food” - [-]tó - which, in daily conversation, usually carries the first person plural prefix, “our” as in *nentó*. If household members desire food, they can take whatever they want without asking permission of anyone. Usually, though, they feed from a common pot which is prepared by the women of the household. As a number of anthropologists have pointed out, commensality generates intimacy⁴⁷ which is expressed by the Enxet as “love.” Furthermore, Belaunde (1992:205) has suggested that eating together on a daily basis creates “sameness” among the Airo-Pai who believe that the attributes of a person (physical and moral, negative and positive) are passed on through food and so to eat food prepared by another is an act of trust. A similar notion has been reported by Ellis (1996:138f) for the Tsimane while Overing (1996b) has stressed the creation of a “community of similars” among the Piaroa.

While I have heard no explicit discourse from the Enxet regarding the transmission of an individual’s essence through food to others, as I explained in Chapter 5, the term [-]hawóxama, meaning “co-resident,” is a composite word comprising [-]hawó, which can be translated as “the same as” and [-]xama⁴⁸ which means “one.” It clearly suggests that those who live together should be similar to one another and the term closely echoes the Piaroa term for “co-resident” - *tütæ itsotu* - which Overing (1996b) translates as a “plurality of singular similarities to which I belong.” She explains that the idea inherent in the term is that those who live together become “of a kind” so that a safe “community of similars” is formed in which any

⁴³ The stress is in the original.

⁴⁴ Sahlins (1974:188) refers to “sharing” as “reciprocity.”

⁴⁵ The stress is in the original.

⁴⁶ As noted among other indigenous peoples - see, for example, Alvarsson (1988:206f), McCallum (1989:279) and Ellis (1996) - visitors to the household are treated as household members and are therefore incorporated into the pooling circle. However, visitors who have been resident for only a short time do not have the same unrestricted access to food as more permanent household members, probably because they have not achieved a sufficient degree of intimacy.

⁴⁷ For example, see: Belaunde (1992:201), Overing (1996b) and Ellis (1996:138f).

⁴⁸ *Xama*, meaning “one,” usually does not require a prefix and, in pronunciation, any stress is placed on the first “a.” However, it can also be used with a prefix such as in the term *egxama* which means “one of us.” When used with a prefix, the stress appears on the second “a,” as it does in [-]hawóxama, and for this reason it is written with a prefix in the text.

individual is both differentiated from yet identical to all the others. It is likely that such a concept is encapsulated by the term [-]*hawóxama*.

The concept of pooling has occasionally been explicitly invoked by anthropologists to describe intrahousehold economic relations in lowland South America and among similar peoples elsewhere.⁴⁹ Usually, though, it is ignored despite the fact that there are clear indications in the ethnographic record that its practice flourishes. Within the Chaco region, for example, pooling would seem to be a widespread phenomenon.⁵⁰ Alvarsson (1988:205) states that, among the Bolivian Wichí, “whenever anyone of the *nowettheley* (household/cluster) finds or acquires any kind of food, or gains money from employment or sales and transforms this money into food, this is shared between all members.” He adds that, “the *nowettheley* usually functions as a socially and economically independent unit,” that whenever a family member needs food that is stored, he or she can take as much as required, and that food is prepared by all members of a “cluster” who then eat together (1988:208f). Similarly, Seelwische (1974:155) notes that, among the Nivaklé, “all food products are at the disposal of the community, the community here being taken to mean the clan or extended family comprising an elder couple, the families of their married daughters, and any elderly or single people who may be attached to the family group.”⁵¹ It should be apparent that Seelwische’s definition of a “community” would be applicable to many Enxet households.⁵²

References have been made by anthropologists to practices that may also indicate the existence of intrahousehold pooling among indigenous peoples elsewhere in lowland South America. Among the Pemon of Venezuela, for example: “Food belongs to the household as a whole, and no member would contemplate withholding it or barring other household members’ access”⁵³ (Thomas 1982:54). Henley (1982:74) describes how, among the Panare: “Each adult woman has her own hearth on which she prepares the food brought back by herself and the other members of her hearth group. Once the food is prepared, the male members of her hearth group may come to her hearth and sample a portion of the meal.” Similarly, among both the Piro and the Airo-Pai, it is within the household that people most commonly eat together

⁴⁹ See, for example, Crocker (1985:80) and Gibson (1988:174).

⁵⁰ Cf. Metraux (1946:300).

⁵¹ My translation.

⁵² See also Renshaw (1988:345f) and Siffredi (1975:63).

⁵³ Thomas (1982:53) also notes that: “The boundaries of food sharing on a daily basis are fairly strictly limited to the household.” This comment is similar to Goldman’s (1963:77) observation that the house is the primary food sharing unit among the Cubeo, while youngsters are free to draw on the household larder (p.80).

from the same plates or pot.⁵⁴ These examples certainly suggest some form of intrahousehold pooling, although it is not possible to estimate the extent of the practice within Lowland South America as a whole.

The recognition of the existence of intrahousehold pooling means that my earlier insistence on the personal ownership of food needs to be modified. Prior to entering the household food is personally owned but, once it has been pooled, it becomes the property of all the members of the household. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the notion of exclusivity of ownership since outsiders have no right to food that belongs to a household. As I will explain in Chapters 10 and 12, their access to the food depends on the goodwill of the owners and the respective “strength” of their *wáxoks*. Therefore, while it would be incorrect to view personal and collective ownership as incompatible, we need to recognize that the extent of the collectivity is limited. It is not, as Ingold (1986) and Renshaw (1986) insist, the wider community that has rights of ownership over food, but either the individual or the household. Consequently, it may be useful to use the terms “private” or “exclusive” ownership to refer to indigenous property rights over food at the level of the individual or the household as set against the wider community. In this way the distinction between “giver” and “receiver” is still maintained.

The concept of pooling can help clarify the debate on gender roles in the distribution of food and the creation of social relations among Lowland South American indigenous peoples. However, I will leave a discussion of this topic until Chapter 10 where I will deal with the topic of sharing. Instead, I will consider briefly how the Enxet have dealt with the imposition of the Western notion of communal property.

7.3 Communal Property Rights

Although durable property has traditionally been almost exclusively personally owned, in recent years - and especially since their settlement on indigenous colonies - the Enxet have had to begin to deal with communal property. Missionaries and development programmes have given communities such things as equipment, infrastructure, furniture, money and domestic animals with the specific instruction that they belong to everyone. Yet, although the intention of the givers has been to enhance community well-being, these gifts have provoked some of the most

⁵⁴ Gow (1991:137) and Belaunde (1992:201).

divisive conflicts experienced by the Enxet and have become major threats to community tranquillity.⁵⁵

In the following discussion, I will suggest that one underlying cause of these conflicts is the tension between the traditional concept of personal ownership and the newly adopted concept of communal ownership. To begin with, though, I should clarify that the Enxet have no problem in understanding the concept of communal ownership. As I explained earlier, it can be expressed linguistically with little difficulty since the possessive [-]agkok can be used in the plural such as in *egakok* - “ours.” Alternatively, people can refer to objects as *comunidad agkok*, in other words, as “belonging to the community.” Furthermore, the Enxet have no problem in recognizing that certain objects belong to the community, a fact that fulfils the first of Ingold’s (1986:229) criteria in his definition of a property right. However, it is the second of Ingold’s criteria that is more problematic. He states that *control* must be exercised over an object for it to be accepted as property and, as we shall see, it is the community’s potential lack of control that introduces ambiguity into communal ownership.⁵⁶ It is when individuals or small groups of people assert their personal control over communal possessions that conflicts over ownership begin.

One cause of the contested control of objects between individuals and communities is the fact that property rights are a form of association between an object and a person (or people) and, as I explained earlier, there are a number of ways of achieving an association. Individuals can, therefore, use this ambiguity to challenge community ownership by stressing their personal association with an object. However, to do this they need to possess “strong” *wáxoks* so that they can act without “restraint,” thereby placing their personal interests over those of the wider community. A community can only contest this personal claim to ownership if another individual is able to similarly “strengthen” his or her *wáxok* and, by acting on behalf of the community, oppose the person attempting to appropriate the community’s possession. This is accomplished by presenting the community’s association with the object as pre-eminent and, if the circumstances are right, the community may be able to re-assert its control. However, publicly opposing another individual is extremely difficult since it can bring two people into conflict and destroy the tranquillity of their *wáxoks*. It is, therefore, not undertaken lightly and, indeed, in any dispute over property rights it may take a long time before people are able to “strengthen” their *wáxoks* sufficiently to challenge an overly individualistic person.

⁵⁵ Cf. McCallum (1989:273f).

⁵⁶ Cf. McCallum (1989:272f).

We are faced, therefore, with the somewhat paradoxical situation that community ownership can only be asserted by the action of individuals. The absence of formal institutions and the fact that leaders do not have the role of maintaining order within their communities⁵⁷ means that a community can only control its members if individuals are willing to take the initiative to confront others and are simultaneously capable of gaining support for their actions from other community members. The following examples will demonstrate the difficulties that can be created by the competition for control over community possessions. I will show that, for a community's ownership to be effective, it should not just be theoretically recognized but must also be exercised in practice.

For seventy-nine years, the Anglican Mission maintained total control of Makthlawaiya, building up an impressive infrastructure and implementing a large number of development projects for which a great deal of equipment was obtained. However, in 1986 a decision was taken to begin handing over the Mission to the indigenous community, a process that culminated, in 1991, in the transfer of the land title. During much of that time I co-ordinated the Mission's work on Makthlawaiya and initiated a gradual process of handing over the mission station's infrastructure and equipment to the "community." As far as my colleagues and I were concerned, this should have not been at all problematic and we were surprised to find that our good intentions propelled the community into a period of great conflict, much of which was derived from contesting claims to the community's equipment and infrastructure.

Whenever we handed something over to the community, an individual or a small group of people would assert their right to it by claiming some kind of association. For instance, the bakers claimed the bakery, the carpenters the carpentry and the milkman a large brick cowshed, all on the basis of having worked in these enterprises during the previous years. The bakery will provide one example of the dynamics involved in the conflict between the rights asserted by the bakers and those of the community.

The bakers had, originally, been employees of the Mission and were extremely well-paid. Once the bakery had been handed over to the community, they initially tried to run it as an independent business but, despite making a good profit, they used up their gains without purchasing the raw materials necessary for further production. At first, the Mission gave them credit but, when this was not repaid, they were refused

⁵⁷ Cf. Levi-Strauss (1967:53), Rivière (1969:231), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:293), Thomas (1982: 138, 169f, 179f), Crocker (1985:25), Renshaw (1986:284), McCallum (1990:424) and Gow (1991:210).

any further loans and, as a result, lost interest in making bread. They decided, instead, to sell the baking equipment but, when other members of the community became aware of this, one of them, in a community meeting, took the initiative to ask the bakers if it was true. His question received the backing of the rest of the participants in the meeting and the bakers denied the “rumour.” Soon after, though, and under the cover of darkness, they sold an expensive dough-mixing machine to a local Paraguayan for a very cheap price. Although other community members disapproved of what had happened, no one made any attempt to recover the money on behalf of the community, and it was, anyway, quickly spent. A little later, the bakers removed the corrugated zinc plates from the roof of the large oven that the Mission, at great expense, had installed some years earlier, again selling them to the Paraguayan. Then, finally, and over a period of days, they patiently dismantled the oven brick by brick before selling the bricks to another Paraguayan. No one from the community made any effort to stop them or to demand that they hand over the money despite continual complaints being heard about what was happening.

The same process occurred with other former businesses of the Mission. Two of the carpenters began to sell off the machines in the carpentry, keeping the money for themselves, while the shoe workshop was dismantled and all the tools were sold by the former shoemakers. The teacher began to sell off desks and other equipment from the school and, when the schoolrooms were rented out to a neighbouring rancher who used them to store provisions for his workers, the teacher kept the rent. As the co-ordinator of the Mission’s work, I received many complaints from people who were evidently displeased at what was happening and who sought clarification about whether these things had indeed been handed over to the “community” as a whole. Despite my reassurance that they had, no one confronted the culprits but, instead, they tried to persuade me to intervene as this would have avoided their coming into conflict with the perpetrators and “disturbing” their *wáxoks*. When I refused, nothing was done to stop the sales of community property.

However, another reason for the inaction of community members was that a large number of them were acting in the same way and, for a time, it almost appeared as if there was an on-going race to see who could sell the most things. For instance, eight men were each given two of the community’s oxen to “look after” but, within a short time they had been sold. Others took down the wire that had been used for fencing the ranch and either used it for their own gardens or sold it. Ploughs and other agricultural implements were sold by individuals and, within a short period, the community’s total stock of property was significantly reduced. In effect, numerous

individuals asserted *de facto* personal property rights and no one was willing to oppose them and stand up for the rights of the community.

The only exception occurred when one of the bakers made an arrangement with a Paraguayan to sell him the roof of the community's former co-operative. This was the largest building in Makthlawaiya and its roof comprised more than three hundred corrugated zinc plates. However, it was still used by the community for dancing whenever it rained and two families had taken up residence in it. In addition, its disappearance would have significantly altered the appearance of the village. When the Paraguayan arrived to remove the roof, he was stopped by the baker's father, who was also one of the community leaders. By confronting the Paraguayan, the leader was able to avoid coming into direct conflict with his son. Indeed, it was much easier for him to deal with the Paraguayan than with his son since his main role as a leader was to deal with outsiders. Knowing that he had the backing of most of the members of the community, he was able to "strengthen" his *wáxok* and deal harshly with the Paraguayan without anybody complaining. As the Paraguayan was not "loved," there was no need to show "restraint" when confronting him and the leader's display of "anger" was looked on favourably by the rest of the community. Afterwards, though, nobody ever spoke with the baker about what he had done. The sale of the corrugated zinc plates had been stopped and, therefore, no one saw a need to come into conflict with him.

One final example concerns a tractor which the Anglican Mission handed over to the members of the colony of El Estribo in 1987. Although the missionaries clarified that the tractor belonged to everyone, for some reason they decided to transfer the title of the tractor to only one of the leaders, a man called Emilio.⁵⁸ Although Emilio was recognized by the community members as responsible for "caring for" the tractor, he himself used his possession of the title to assert his personal control over the machine. For instance, during two consecutive growing seasons he hired out the tractor to a Paraguayan who, for a very reduced fee, was able to plough over two hundred hectares of his and his neighbours' land, as well as using the tractor for a variety of other tasks. Emilio kept the money for himself and, during the whole period, the residents of El Estribo were unable to use their own tractor and, as a result, very few gardens were cultivated. It took two years before a small number of colony members eventually took the initiative to oppose Emilio and, in a community meeting, a decision was taken to remove the tractor from his house and put it under the care of someone else. However, by that time he had already sold off a

⁵⁸ At the time of the transfer of the tractor I was in the United Kingdom and was, therefore, not involved in deciding how to hand it over.

hydraulic excavating implement for US\$1,500 - for which he had no title - without anyone making any attempt to recover the money.

Nonetheless, Emilio fully recognized that the tractor belonged to the community, as indicated by his inability to refuse anyone from El Estribo the use of it whenever they asked. Yet, this led to another problem in that, despite the fact that the community had decided that its members should pay to hire the tractor, people rarely did and were content merely to fill its tank with only as much diesel as they themselves required. McCallum (1989:273f) noted a similar situation among the Cashinahua and explained it by people being unwilling to sacrifice their individual desire in the interests of the community. While this may partially explain why some Enxet refused to pay for the hire of the tractor, the main reason was that most people distrusted Emilio and knew that he would keep the money for himself. In fact, community funds are a common source of conflict among the Enxet since it is almost unknown for those placed in charge of such money to leave it untouched, although the reasons for this vary. Some people act without “restraint” and regard community funds as a source of subsistence for their families, using them at will. Others, though, do strive to “care for” the money but, even if they are successful over a relatively long period, when faced with an emergency - such as the need to pay for a hospital bill - they eventually succumb. Also, those responsible for community money are invariably asked to give loans which they find difficult to refuse since to do so could cause a conflict. People rarely repay such loans and, as a result, funds are quickly depleted. Consequently, the Enxet, whenever possible, prefer to ask trustworthy white people - such as missionaries and anthropologists - to “care for” community money.⁵⁹ I once agreed to this but quickly discovered that I had made a mistake. I was subjected to a stream of visitors asking me for a share of the money - all with apparently good reasons - and, within a few days, I decided to return the money to the “community” where it rapidly disappeared.

By the time the “community” recovered the tractor from Emilio, its condition had deteriorated substantially and, within a short time, it was inoperable. For three years it remained untouched as different community members attempted to find the funds for its repair. Eventually, they managed to swap it for a much smaller tractor that belonged to a Mennonite and which had no legal title. A tractor committee was formed and another community leader - Eugenio - was given responsibility for authorizing the tractor’s use and “caring for” the tractor fund. In a community meeting he had argued that he possessed a “strong” *wáxok* and would, therefore, resist

⁵⁹ Cf. McCallum (1989:243).

the temptation to spend the money himself. In addition, he would be capable of refusing loans to people and denying them the use of the tractor without prior payment. During the meeting, people were privately unconvinced that he would do this but agreed to his having the responsibility for the tractor since to deny him would have meant confronting him in the meeting. Eugenio had a reputation for becoming easily “angry” and any opposition to his desires would, undoubtedly, have led to an outburst. He was also a shaman which made people even more wary of “angering” him.

For two years, though, Eugenio successfully managed both the tractor and the tractor fund, maintaining the latter at around US\$500. However, soon before leaving my fieldwork it was clear that he was beginning to have problems. He had allowed some people to use the tractor without paying and had permitted over US\$250 of loans which had not been repaid. In a community meeting, another leader - who, himself, wanted control of the tractor - took the initiative to question Eugenio about what had happened to the funds, reminding him that it had been decided that no one could use the tractor without paying and that no loans were to be given. Eugenio responded in a somewhat irritated manner and, in a reversal of the argument that he had used to gain control of the tractor, defended himself by saying that he had given into people’s requests because he had a “soft/unlocked” *wáxok*. Since he was appealing to the moral value of practising “love,” very few people supported the attack against him and the meeting passed on to another topic. To be fair, though, Eugenio was one of the few people with responsibility for community property who did not treat it as if it were his own.

The presence of one or two people with “strong” *wáxoks* who are prepared to act without “restraint” can cause havoc in Enxet communities by appropriating community property for themselves. Nevertheless, due to the contested nature of ownership, it is unlikely that their control over such property can be maintained in the long run. Once someone else is willing to take the initiative to stand up to them and claim precedence for the community’s right to the object, the community is able to repossess the object - as long as the other community members give visible backing to the action.⁶⁰ However, this inability of individuals to maintain long-term control over community possessions partially explains the speed with which individuals sell such objects. By converting communal possessions into money which can be easily hidden and quickly spent, individuals ensure for themselves the full benefit of any objects and bring about a *de facto* annulment of the community’s ownership. Indeed, even

⁶⁰ See also Chapter 13 for a discussion of a struggle for possession of a community-owned corral in Makthlawaiya.

when I offered communities legal backing to regain property that had been sold by individual members they never took advantage of the opportunity, preferring instead to draw a line under any episodes and to give priority to a tranquil community life over economic gain.

7.4 Conclusion

Although there is a strong tendency towards the personal ownership of both durable property and food among the Enxet, this is not all-encompassing and there are many examples of joint ownership, whether by the household, small groups of people or the community. Indeed, there are also many examples of ownership being somewhat ambiguous with effective control over an object depending on such factors as the relative “strengths” of people’s *wáxoks*, their willingness to act with or without “restraint,” and the extent to which they “love” others. However, the key point is that both durable goods or food are held by the Enxet to the exclusion of others and, in this sense, the association of the Enxet with these goods can be said to fulfil the definitions of property proposed by Ingold (1986) and Barnard and Woodburn (1988). As a result, a clear distinction is made between “givers” and “receivers” and, as we will see in the following chapters, this is crucial in enabling us to understand social and economic relations among the Enxet and, indeed, in assessing the extent to which *obligation* can be said to enter into the sharing process.

8. MARITAL RELATIONS

In Chapter 7, I examined the property rights of men and women and noted that durable property and domestic animals are usually held individually by men and women. In contrast, food, although it is individually owned at the point of initial appropriation, is pooled once it enters the household and becomes the joint property of all household members. The aim of this chapter is to continue exploring the nature of the economic relationship between Enxet spouses. I will initially review three distinct anthropological conceptions of the character of economic relations between spouses in lowland South America before moving on to consider the specific case of the Enxet. I will demonstrate that, although Enxet marriage is, ideally, predicated on a philosophy of “companionship” and “love,” in practice many marriages are problematic and can be characterized by relations of demand.

8.1 Conceptualizing Indigenous Marriage

One influential anthropological conception of marital relations is predicated on the understanding that the husband/wife relationship is inherently hierarchical. Meillassoux (1981:21), for example, has argued that the institution of marriage has been imposed by men on women as a means of controlling them. He asserts that within “egalitarian” societies, “women are put to work under male protection and are given the least rewarding, the most tedious and, above all, the least gratifying tasks such as agriculture or cooking” (1981:29). Rivière (1984:92) follows a similar line for lowland South America by suggesting that men control women by obliging them to work longer hours in food preparation than is actually necessary.¹ Furthermore, he describes the economic relations between men and women as characterized by men’s alienation of the finished products of female work which they use for ritual and political purposes from which, he contends, women are excluded.² However, Overing (1986b) paints a very different picture of gender relations in the Guianas, viewing them as much more egalitarian. Indeed, she suggests that many anthropologists in Lowland South America have been predisposed to discovering gender bias and, as a

¹ In two later works Rivière (1987; 1989) appears to modify his position. In the first of these works, he makes a sharper distinction between Tukanoan and Guianan indigenous societies than he does in his 1984 book. He states that time-consuming manioc preparation is necessary among the Tukanoans because their virilocally resident women are more difficult to control than the uxorilocally resident women of the Guianas. Therefore, much simpler manioc preparation can be used in the Guianas. By 1989, he appears to have modified his position even more by stating that he “basically agrees” with McCallum’s (1988:560f) contention that men do not dominate women in lowland South America. Instead, he argues that, “men in many parts of lowland South America attempt to control women,” but, “despite the social mechanisms available to them in this endeavour by no means always succeed.”

² See also Rivière (1987:187f). In Chapter 10 I will discuss gender roles in the development of social and political relations.

result, care should be taken in interpreting the results of a range of investigations in the region.³ For example, Lea⁴ (1987) has questioned the assumption, as made in Maybury-Lewis (1979), that male domination is a central value among the Gê of Central Brazil.

Following Overing's (1986b) work, two further approaches place more stress on the putative egalitarian or complementary nature of indigenous marital relations.⁵ The first is seen in the work of Gow (1991) who suggests that Piro marital relations should be conceived of as predicated on a system of mutual obligations between husband and wife. Men, for example, satisfy women's demands for game while women satisfy the desire of men for sex.⁶ Indeed, Gow (1991:128) describes the relationship of demand between husband and wife as the central feature of Piro marriage and notes that it is the only relationship in Piro society that is characterized by mutual demand.

A different approach is taken by authors such as Belaunde (1992) and Ellis (1996) who focus on love and friendship as the key characteristics of indigenous marriage. Airo-Pai spouses are expected to look after each other and enjoy giving each other gifts (Belaunde 1992:126ff). Although spouses can demand from each other, any relations of demand are understood within a wider context of a bestowal of caring. Similarly, a successful Tsimane marriage is based on friendship and characterized by a couple who appreciate each other's company and are able to work together well (Ellis 1996:70). Marriage within these societies could, therefore, be defined as a "giving" relationship.⁷

³ Works that appear to incorporate a male bias include: Chagnon (1968), Bamberger (1974), Harner (1972), C. Hugh-Jones (1979), S. Hugh-Jones (1979), Turner (1979a; 1979b), Arhem (1981), Taylor (1983), Rivière (1984), Lizot (1985), Mentore (1987), Shapiro (1987), Rosengren (1987), Townsley (1988) and Descola (1994). Male bias may be observed, for example, in the application of certain western terms to describe indigenous societies such as "head of the family/household" when referring to the husband (eg. Rivière 1984:93; Descola 1994:126).

⁴ In McCallum (1989:34ff).

⁵ Rivière (1984:92) accepts the complementarity of male and female subsistence activities but insists that it masks the inequality that exists between the sexes.

⁶ Gow (1991:125) warns that the mutual demands for meat and sex should not be mistaken for an exchange of meat for sex, as suggested by Siskind (1973) in her analysis of the economy of the Sharanahua of the Purús.

⁷ Cf. Gibson (1985:394).

8.2 Companionship

The Enxet practise monogamous marriage⁸ and their marital relations most resemble the egalitarian “giving” relationship described by Belaunde (1992) and Ellis (1996).⁹ Its essential character is encapsulated by the term [-]xegexma which can be best translated as “companion.” Although the term for “spouse” is [-]táwa,¹⁰ people frequently refer to their spouses as *sekxegexma* - “my companion” - especially those who have been married for some time. [-]xegexma itself is derived from the verb [-]xega which means “to go” Therefore, when a husband speaks of his wife (or *vice versa*) as *sekxegexma* it evokes a notion of a companion on a journey.

It is only within the context of the marriage relationship that men and women spend time together as “companions.” Outside the household, men normally accompany men while women accompany women and this tendency can be observed in many aspects of daily life. Small groups of men may hunt or fish together while women also gather fruits with companions of the same sex. During church services men sit on one side of the building while women sit on the other and, when watching football matches or during festivals, men and women again congregate separately. Even when drinking *tereré* men and women prefer to remain apart from each other.¹¹

However, a married couple behave in a quite different manner. Spouses share the same beds and, in the early hours of the morning, they sit together around the fire chatting and drinking *tereré*. Although, in households of multiple married couples, everyone may sit around the same fire, each couple usually sits slightly apart from the others and, if there is sufficient *yerba maté*, they drink from their own receptacles¹² While food is usually cooked in a common pot, spouses tend to eat together, clearly separated from the other married couples.¹³ Young children may eat with their parents but could just as well share with their grandparents or their parents’ siblings. Spouses also undertake certain household tasks together; for instance, the husband often helps

⁸ See Grubb (1911:214). In fact, Grubb notes that he came across only one case of polyandry among the Enxet, and that was of a woman who had two husbands living in different communities. Nevertheless, her conduct was condemned and, in the end, she was forced to content herself with only one husband (1911:216). Susnik (1977:232), whilst agreeing that monogamous marriage was the norm, insists that some “chiefs” practised “bigamy.” However, she appears to have arrived at this conclusion by misinterpreting Grubb’s (1911) observations.

⁹ Renshaw (1986:230) has described the husband/wife relationship among the indigenous people of the Paraguayan Chaco region as egalitarian.

¹⁰ See Chapter 4.

¹¹ See Chapter 10 for a description of *tereré*.

¹² *Yerba maté* is the herbal tea that is used to prepare *tereré*.

¹³ Cf. Belaunde (1992:142).

his wife to collect firewood and water as well as to skin animals.¹⁴ As Belaunde (1992:143) notes for the Airo-Pai, rather than being viewed as a duty, the bestowal of assistance is considered to be an expression of affection (ie. of “love” - [-]*ásekhayo*). Couples also help each other in the garden and often enjoy fishing together. Spouses can often be found sitting next to each other beside water-holes, one or both of them with a line in the water, chatting together in a contented fashion. Rather than seeking to maximize their catch, their main interest seems to be in spending some quiet hours together.

Bathing is one activity that allows spouses to enjoy each other’s company and, in the late afternoon, couples usually accompany each other to bathe in a nearby water-hole, stream or lake. They are rarely disturbed by other community members who seem to know when a bathing area is being occupied, and it is during these periods that they engage in sexual relations.¹⁵ In fact, a spouse is the only person of the opposite sex to see someone’s genitalia.¹⁶

The above activities are aspects of “companionship” and “love” and the economic relationship between spouses is similarly understood within the paradigm of “caring” - [-]*takmelcheso*.¹⁷ As I described in Chapter 6, men and women undertake different economic activities and, ideally, each spouse should, of their own volition, carry out any tasks that are required for the well-being and nurturing of their partner and their household members. Although this ideal view is in line with their stress on personal autonomy, in reality, neither spouse is fully independent and it is during the mornings, when sitting round the fire drinking *tereré*, that they discuss their plans for the day.¹⁸ Attention is given, though, to ensuring that neither spouse should feel obliged to do something since this would be an infringement of their personal autonomy and could provoke strains in the relationship.¹⁹

Certain anthropologists have described the economic relationship between spouses as a form of alienation. On the one hand, for example, Rivière (1984:92;

¹⁴ Although men may help women to collect firewood and water, they go about these tasks in a different way. For example, a woman, while still in the forest, chops firewood into small pieces (30cm. to 50cm. in length) which she carries back to the house on her back. In contrast, a man returns to the house with a large branch of a tree over his shoulder. Similarly, while women transport water in buckets on their heads, men carry the buckets in their hands.

¹⁵ In contrast to the Enxet, Airo-Pai couples only bathe together when resolving disagreements between themselves or after having sex. Daily baths are taken either individually or in the company of same-sex mates (Belaunde 1992:142).

¹⁶ Cf. Gow (1991:122f).

¹⁷ See Chapter 3 and 4.

¹⁸ Cf. Belaunde (1992:143).

¹⁹ Cf. Overing (1986b).

1987:187f) has, as I mentioned earlier, argued that men alienate female produce which they use for political purposes. In complete contrast, Renshaw (1986:188f) asserts that, within the Chaco, it is the man who is systematically disengaged of the product of his labour by his wife (or mother-in-law). Evidently, he has reached this conclusion having observed how men, on returning from the hunt, hand over their catch to their wives (or to other women in the household). Yet, I find it difficult to understand why this should be described as a “disengagement.” My impression is of a man returning from a tiring expedition whose first thought is to sit down, rest and drink some *tereré*. On the other hand, his wife will have been anticipating the arrival of wild meat and will be anxious to begin cooking. Within this context it is entirely natural that, on arriving home, a man immediately hands over his catch and neither party ever construes this as an obligation or a form of alienation. If it were, it would again infringe on a person’s autonomy and threaten to disturb the *wáxok*. Indeed, as I have already explained, food is pooled and belongs to all members of the household, including both the man and his wife. By the same logic, therefore, it would also be incorrect to follow Rivière’s argument that men alienate women of their produce, an assertion that I will explain more fully in Chapter 10 when I deal with the role of gender in sharing.

In addition to the daily handing over and pooling of food, spouses enjoy giving each other gifts as marks of their “love.”²⁰ Women have traditionally made woollen and string articles,²¹ some of which they give to their husbands - such as blankets, ponchos, bags and belts - although nowadays, due to the lack of wool such giving is much less frequent.²² More common is the giving, by husbands, of gifts to their wives, a practice that reflects a husband’s greater access to money through employment. One teacher, for example, during a trip to Asunción to collect his wage, was so taken with a couple of watches that he bought them for his wife and child, on credit, for a total of US\$350²³ (equivalent to a month and a half’s wages). Everyone in the community was aware of what the teacher had done for his wife and child, and commented that it showed how much he “loved” them.²⁴ Among the Airo-Pai, Belaunde (1992:137f) describes how the giving of gifts between spouses, and especially by the husband, is also an important feature of marriage. She goes on to

²⁰ Cf. Belaunde (1992:137).

²¹ String is made from the plant *tamom’a* - *deinacanthon urbanianum* (Arenas 1981:141) - and is known colloquially in Paraguay as *caraguatá*.

²² There is a lack of wool due to a lack of sheep. Some people, though, do manage to obtain wool from the flocks owned by ranches.

²³ Unfortunately, on closer examination it became obvious to almost everyone that the watches were counterfeits worth less than US\$5 each, although the husband refused to accept this.

²⁴ People also described the teacher as “crazy” - *yéhaxma* - for spending so much money on counterfeit watches.

explain that the generosity of a husband is vital to the harmony of the couple and, while this is also true among the Enxet, it is only part of a bigger story. Rather than focusing on the gender of the giver, the Enxet are more concerned with the relative wealth of spouses. They believe that those who have should give to those who have not and, since, in the contemporary economy, it is men who earn the most money, they are in the best position to provide gifts. If a spouse refuses to be generous, when in a position to be so, this can bring strains to a relationship since it would be a demonstration of a denial of “love.”

8.3 Relations of Demand

While the above account describes an ideal way for spouses to interact, the reality of daily existence is much more varied and complicated. The relationship between spouses is dependent on a range of factors including the character of each individual, the condition of their *wáxoks* at any specific time, outside circumstances and the current state of the relationship. Therefore, while some couples clearly have a “giving” and a “caring” relationship, others do not. For instance, some husbands spend a large proportion of their income on drink to the detriment of their wife and children. One man, now a highly respected leader of the community of Yánékyáha told me how, when he was younger, almost all his wages went on alcohol and his wife and children were left without clothes and with insufficient food. He said that it was as if he “hated” them - [-]taknagko - and only when he came to this “realization” - literally “arrived at “knowledge”²⁵ - did he decide to change. Wives in this position find it necessary to depend on other kin, rather than their husbands, for food. This is especially so when a husband goes in search of work by himself and “forgets” to send money back to his wife. Husbands who do not care for their wives could be said to be lacking in “knowledge” - [-]ya’ásekyak - or to “have bad thoughts” - *asamchek elketamso apwáxok*.²⁶

The degree to which “relations of demand” enter into Enxet marriage varies greatly and depends on the extent to which a marriage is permeated by “caring” behaviour. The most problematic economic relations between spouses concern money, an unsurprising fact given the pre-eminence of wage labour as a subsistence activity and men’s preferential access to money. On Paraguayan ranches, because of the low wages, money has been a less serious source of marital tension. Indeed, wives

²⁵ “To realize” is the verb [-]ya’ásegwayam which I explain in Chapter 3.

²⁶ *Asamchek elketamso apwáxok* means, literally, “the searching of his *wáxok* is bad.” When Airo-Pai spouses act improperly towards each other, they are also said to be lacking in “thinking” capabilities (Belaunde 1992:149f).

usually gain direct access to their husbands' money by obtaining credit for provisions from the ranch store which is subtracted from their husbands' wages on pay-day. Frequently, therefore, employees receive very little and can often find themselves in debt.²⁷ In this way, the wives achieve direct access to the product of the husband's labour. However, employment by Mennonites has allowed husbands greater access to money since they are able to obtain larger advances in cash. The most problematic cases, though, are those of government employees such as teachers and nurses. In Chapter 13 I will describe how teachers are capable of exhausting a month's income in a few short days. Such profligacy can cause severe difficulties for their wives and families and wives have to develop techniques to secure some part of their husbands' wages for their monthly necessities. In effect, a process of negotiation occurs that depends, essentially, on the degree of goodwill or "love" on the part of the husband - which, in itself is related to his maturity and "knowledge" - and the "strength" of the wife's *wáxok*. Some wives with "strong" *wáxoks* travel to Asunción with their husbands to collect the wage and can, therefore, ensure that their husbands purchase goods for their families. On one occasion, a wife obtained a third of her husband's wage which she gave to me to take to her mother in El Estribo to look after. She thereby ensured that, on their return home, they would still have money.

Wives who prefer not to travel to Asunción tell their husbands exactly what to buy before they leave, and most comply. One teacher, whose wife was said to have a "strong *wáxok*," was occasionally teased by the other teachers for being "scared" - [-]eyeye - of her since he regularly bought what she requested and took care to return home with substantial cash remaining. On one occasion, though, he exhausted his money and his sister - who, at the time, was staying in our house in Asunción - informed me that his wife would be "angry" - "*kalwok sat*."²⁸ The more mature and "knowledgeable," teachers generally retain a reasonable proportion of their wage which they hand over to their wives. People say that it is their "thought" - *elketamso apwáxok* - that leads them to do this, in other words their own "free will." Other wives ensure their access to their husbands' wages by building up credit in local stores throughout the month which their husbands are obliged to pay on their return home.²⁹

Some teachers' wives, though, receive almost nothing from their husbands. Such husbands spend their wages almost immediately and, in many other ways, treat their wives badly. The women are not "strong" enough to demand a share of their

²⁷ See Kidd (1997a) for more details.

²⁸ *Kalwok sat* is the future, female third person singular tense of the verb [-]lól.

²⁹ See Chapter 13 for more details.

husbands' salaries while their husbands are too weak to resist the temptations of Asunción.³⁰ Such women and their children usually have to depend on their parents and other kin since their husbands are often absent from home for long periods, even when they are supposed to be teaching. People say that such husbands neither “love” nor “care for” their wives and families.

A similar situation arises with the cotton harvest in El Estribo. Since it is the men who receive credit from a Mennonite with which to cultivate the cotton, they too are given the money when the cotton is sold. When receiving their money from the Mennonite in his store in Lolita, “knowledgeable” and “loving” men are more than willing to purchase whatever their wives request although, to ensure that this happens, many women accompany their husbands when payment is made. They immediately begin shopping in the Mennonite stores, thereby leaving their husbands with no choice but to pick up the bill. The importance of being there at the moment of payment was highlighted by one husband who travelled to Lolita a couple of hours before his wife. On arriving at the store, he began to drink and, within a short time, had become intoxicated. He used up all his profit and, by the time his wife arrived, she found that, instead of being able to buy clothes for herself, they were in debt. She became very “angry” - [-]lóló - with him, scolding him in public, and once he sobered up he became “ashamed” - [-]megkakto. He was usually a “loving” husband but drink had caused him to act without “knowledge.” Perhaps because his misdemeanour was committed under the influence of drink, no lasting damage was caused to their marriage.

8.4 Abandonment, the Ultimate Sanction

The ultimate sanction that wives hold over their husbands is that of abandonment, and the ease with which women can leave their husbands is commonly reported throughout lowland South America.³¹ Enxet husbands who do not treat their wives with “love” can suddenly find themselves alone as their wives decide to return to their kin or, if they are already living among kin, go to live with another set of kin in a different community. It can happen at any stage of a marriage although, when young couples are uxori locally resident, the husband is unlikely to mistreat his wife since she would be protected by her family.³² However, the most serious problems between young couples tend to arise when they are absent from their colonies and

³⁰ Such a man could be said to have a “soft/unlocked *wáxok*” - *hápek apwáxok*. See Chapter 13 for more details.

³¹ See, for example, Goldman (1963:53), Leacock (1978:214f), Thomas (1982:92), Crocker (1985:103f), Forrest (1987:322), Gow (1991:128), Belaunde (1992:139) and Dean (1995:94).

³² Cf. Palmer (1997:123).

engaged in wage labour on Paraguayan or Mennonite owned establishments. A young woman who feels “unloved” by her husband can leave him and return to her parents’ house. If the husband wants to recover his wife he must be able to overcome his “shame” at his actions and “strengthen” his *wáxok* so that he can return to his parents-in-law’s house, an act that many find difficult to do.

A woman can decide to leave her husband if he refuses to share his income with her usually because he wastes it on drink. Wives, though, are usually loathe to do this and, before reaching this point, they can invest great effort into trying to persuade their husbands to change by “speaking to” them.³³ It is as if they are attempting to increase their husbands’ “knowledge” so that they begin “to think” in a “loving” manner. However, they often fail although actual separations tend, finally, to be triggered by an angry husband hitting his wife, an action that is interpreted as evidence of “hatred” - [-]*taknagko* - and which paradoxically can be caused by a husband’s resentment of being “spoken to.” It can be felt as a threat to their personal autonomy and, while “being spoken to” may provoke no outward reaction when they are sober - and, therefore, in control of their *wáxoks* and “thoughts” - once drunk they can act without “knowledge” and attack their wives.

A small caveat needs to be added at this point. It is still relatively rare for an Enxet husband to hit his wife, certainly when compared to the frequency with which it happens among Paraguayans.³⁴ It would appear to have been even less common in the past and, in fact, it has probably been more usual for wives to hit their husbands, a characteristic that has been noted among other indigenous peoples.³⁵ For instance, one night, a woman from Makthlawaiya found her drunken husband having sex with a Sanapaná girl. Stealing up behind him, she smashed her torch onto his head and, helped by her mother, they dragged him by the hair to his home where he was made to sleep outside without a mosquito net. During the next few days, as he sat nearby looking sheepish, they made fun of him in front of visitors by describing in graphic detail how they had treated him. However, things soon returned to normal and it was noticeable that the husband did not appear to entertain any thoughts of leaving his wife, as she undoubtedly would have done if he had hit her. Although the wife had reacted “angrily,” the husband evidently recognized that her “anger” was justified and, once sober, even though he was “ashamed,” he decided to accept his humiliation so as to avoid breaking up their marriage.

³³ Cf. Susnik (1977:239).

³⁴ Cf. Maybury-Lewis (1974:86) and McCallum (1989:276).

³⁵ See, for example, Leacock (1978:250), Thomas (1982:172), Gow (1991:136) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:164). Among the Piaroa, all violence is ideologically prohibited (Overing 1986b:150).

It would appear that men can suffer more than women following a separation. Certainly, this was the opinion of a group of women with whom I was conversing when a man passed by whose wife had left him some weeks earlier after he had hit her. “Look at the poor fellow and how he is suffering,” said one, “he no longer has anyone to ‘care for’ him.” “That’s true,” added another, “and if my husband hit me then I would leave him the same day.” A young woman with children does not necessarily find it difficult to re-marry after separating from her husband. Usually, her parents or a married sister assume the responsibility for raising her children, thereby becoming their *de facto* parents, and allowing the young woman to search for another man. It needs to be taken into account that, among the Enxet, it is the women who take the initiative in any sexual relations and, therefore, exercise control over the process of finding a spouse.³⁶ Indeed, in some communities there are divorced women who have decided to marry Paraguayans while, in Makthlawaiya in the last few years, an increasing number have moved to Asunción to find work. Men, in contrast, are somewhat disadvantaged in finding new marriage partners and those who are known to have treated their wives badly may find it difficult to find another spouse. Indeed, there are a number of men who have been divorced for many years and have been unable to re-marry. Their lifestyles consist of continued heavy drinking combined with frequent changes of community or moves from job to job on white-owned ranches.

The trauma of being left alone is often clearly visible in men whose wives have left them, especially once they are drunk. They can begin to weep as they describe how they are “suffering”³⁷ because they are “unloved” and such laments can continue for a number of hours. Once, a woman left her husband and asked me to drive her from Makthlawaiya to her son’s house in El Estribo. As we were passing her house, her husband threw himself onto the bonnet of the car, pleading with his wife not to leave him. It took a number of people to pull him away, yet his wife paid him no heed and refused even to look back as he chased after us. Indeed, it is this fear of being left alone that can bring about changes in the behaviour of some husbands who can begin to treat their wives in a more “loving” manner.

³⁶ See Kidd (1995b:21f) for more detail.

³⁷ ie. [-]yósek.

8.5 Conclusion

Enxet marriage can, therefore, be ideally conceived of as a “giving” relationship predicated on a model of “companionship” and characterized by “love” in practice. It is also essentially egalitarian in nature since neither spouse should dominate the other. Although men and women undertake different tasks, as Leacock (1978:248) points out, being different does not imply inequality.

Nevertheless, a relationship based on “companionship” is an ideal and, although many couples approximate the ideal, others fall short. People cannot always rely on their spouses to be “giving” and so, of necessity, relations of “demand” enter into a marriage. Consequently, the daily practice of marriage is a combination of “giving” and “demand” with the balance between the two varying between couples according to a range of factors. Yet, at the core of a successful marriage is respect for the personal autonomy - in effect, the *wáxok* - of one’s partner. Both Belaunde (1992:150f) and Gow (1991:128) came to the same conclusion for the “giving” marriages of the Airo-Pai and the “demand” marriages of the Piro. Indeed, Belaunde’s (1992:150) comment that, “there is no place for unilateral ‘dominance’ simply because husband and wife are conceived as one dynamic unit constituted by two autonomous individuals” is entirely relevant to the Enxet. Spouses may make demands of each other but, in successful marriages, partners respond positively, realizing that the demands are given within an overall “loving” context and are, in essence, reminders to “give” and to “care.” When a demand becomes an obligation or goes unanswered, it is then that a marriage comes under threat.

The market economy, though, may present a threat to the egalitarian nature of Enxet marriage, mainly because of spouses’ differential access to money. Men are privileged in the job market and development projects tend to concentrate on men while ignoring the needs of women.³⁸ As people become increasingly dependent on access to money for their subsistence and overall well-being, the complementarity of men’s and women’s activities - and the position of women - may be jeopardized as men become the dominant providers. Women are being forced into a position of increasing dependence on men and there is a danger that the observation of some anthropologists that gender relations in indigenous communities are becoming

³⁸ For further reflections on the threat of development projects to the position of Enxet women see Kidd (1995b).

increasingly less egalitarian through contact with the outside may eventually come to pass among the Enxet.³⁹

³⁹ See, for example, Leacock (1978), Buenaventura-Posso and Brown (1980), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:322), Brown (1986), Regehr (1987:189ff), Forrest (1987:357ff) and Rosengren (1987:82, 106).

9. “BRIDESERVICE,” A PRODUCT OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION?

As well as marital relations, the other intrahousehold relationship that is keenly debated within the anthropology of lowland South America is that between the son-in-law and his parents-in-law. Frequently it is subsumed within the concept of “brideservice,” an institution that has been regarded by many investigators in the region as an undisputed ethnographic “fact.”¹ Most critiques of “brideservice” within lowland South America have focused on the nature of its manifestation among particular indigenous peoples rather than challenging its usefulness as an analytical category. I plan to redress this balance by questioning the validity of applying the term “brideservice” to the relationship between the Enxet son-in-law and his parents-in-law and will argue that there is no indication of its existence either as an ideology or as a practice. Indeed, I will suggest that anthropology’s current notions regarding “brideservice” in lowland South America may require re-assessment. There are indications that many anthropologists have not fully taken into account the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in indigenous discourse and practice and, as a result, have imposed on their ethnographic data a notion of “brideservice” that has been derived from other areas of the world. As a result, “brideservice” has been “observed” where, perhaps, it does not exist.

Brideservice is classically associated with post-marital uxori-local residence. A young bridegroom moves into the household of his wife’s parents to whom he is expected to render services. Anthropologists usually choose one of two explanations of why the son-in-law works for his parents-in-law. The first - the “compensation” model - posits that a son-in-law exchanges his services for the bestowal of a woman in marriage. By serving his wife’s kin, a man will eventually obtain the right to remove her from her parents’ home. Men, therefore, gain rights in women while their parents-in-law are compensated for the loss of their daughter.² Indeed, some anthropologists view “brideservice” as a form of “paying” for a wife.³ An alternative explanation has been suggested by Collier and Rosaldo (1981) who argue that gifts of labour presented by grooms to their parents-in-law are not payments but a form of marriage legitimization.⁴ A son-in-law, “hopes to win (and then maintain) [his wife’s

¹ Cf. Shapiro (1984:24).

² This summary is based on Dean (1995:89). For examples see: Overing Kaplan/Overing (1975:135; 1986b:149), Whitten (1976:131), Kracke (1978:72), Thomas (1982:108), Gow (1983 [in Forrest 1987:324f]), Rosengren (1987:122, 127), Santos Granero (1991:173) and Peters (1998:125).

³ Cf. Overing Kaplan (1975:135), Kracke (1978:72) and Thomas (1982:108).

⁴ Although Collier and Rosaldo (1981) reject the notion of payment *vis-a-vis* brideservice, they do state that a man “earns” his wife (p.289). Cf. McCallum (1989:198).

kin's] sympathy for his suit through the establishment of a long-term relation" (1981:290). The services provided by a man to his wife's parents dramatize new commitments and "are enactments of patterned obligations that are likely to be of significance throughout the man's marital life" (1981:287).

Irrespective of the explanation adopted, anthropological representations of brideservice tend to be consistent with the linguistic connotations of the term itself.⁵ Most scholars report an asymmetric relationship in which the parents-in-law occupy the dominant position and a hierarchy is evoked by the language employed in ethnographic descriptions. The son-in-law is said to "work for" his parents-in-law⁶ and to be under an "obligation" to them⁷ or under their "authority."⁸ They may also be said to "dominate" and "control" him or his production (or produce)⁹ and to "exploit" him.¹⁰ The relationship is, at times, represented in almost jural terms as "contractual"¹¹ or as predicated on a set of rights that the parents-in-law hold over the son-in-law's labour and produce.¹² The picture depicted is, therefore, of dominant parents-in-law (or father-in-law) and a subservient (or serving) son-in-law.

9.1 "Loving" and being "Loved" by your Father-in-Law

The use of language evoking images of domination and subordination to describe relations between Enxet parents-in-law and their sons-in-law would be entirely inappropriate. Among the Enxet, there is no ideology of "brideservice" and no word exists to describe the practice. Instead, a variety of idioms are employed to refer to the productive labour of the son-in-law and his relations with his wife's parents. I have to admit that, for many years, I misinterpreted several of the terms used by fathers-in-law to discuss their relations with their sons-in-law and was convinced that they implied some sense of compulsion. [-]ásenneykha is one example and was used, for example, by a teacher in El Estribo whose daughter was about to marry. He explained to me that he would soon start a shop because he would be able

⁵ Cf. Dean (1985:100).

⁶ See, for example, Rivière (1969:208), Arhem (1981:163), Kracke (1984:113), Mentore (1987:521), McCallum (1989:197f) and Campbell (1995:148f).

⁷ See, for example, Rivière (1969:208), Siskind (1973:81), Overing Kaplan (1975:123), Kracke (1978:72), Seeger (1981:167), Henley (1982:127), Rivière (1984:57), Gow (1991:137), Campbell (1995:148f), Dean (1995:89) and Peters (1998:125). For examples outside lowland South America see Collier and Rosaldo (1981:285) and Barnard and Woodburn (1988:14).

⁸ Kracke (1984) and Kensinger (1984:223).

⁹ Kracke (1978:37), Turner (1979b:187), Rivière (1984:87), Mentore (1987:521) and Rosengren (1987:122).

¹⁰ Turner (1979a:168) and Rivière (1984:87).

¹¹ Mentore (1987:521).

¹² Collier and Rosaldo (1981:285).

to “get his son-in-law” to work in the shop - “*wásennaha sat ephayem.*”¹³ I understood him to say that he would be able to “order” his son-in-law to work for him and I was surprised when, immediately following the wedding, the son-in-law left the colony to work in the Mennonite colonies. However, I eventually came to realize that I was confusing the teacher’s hope and anticipation that his wish would be fulfilled with the son-in-law’s future compliance. *[-]ásenneykha*, in fact, implies no sense of obligation and, although a speaker may “tell” - *[-]ásenneykha* - someone to do something, they are under no obligation to obey.

In fact, *[-]ásenneykha* - as with other similar words in Enxet that appear, at first sight, to imply compulsion - is comparable to a request and, indeed, fathers-in-law often use *[-]maxnagko* - which means “to request” - to refer to their sons-in-law’s labour. Or, they can talk of a son-in-law’s “help” - *[-]pasmó* - thereby clearly placing his support within a paradigm of “loving” behaviour. Indeed, verb construction can also indicate the nature of the relationship between parents-in-law and sons-in-law. If it were characterized by a notion of unilateral “service,” parents-in-law would employ the suffix *[-]áso* - which conveys a sense of doing something for someone else - and the prefix *é[-]*¹⁴ - which means “for me.” Yet, whenever I asked parents-in-law about their sons-in-law’s activities they did not construct the verbs in this way. Instead, they would reply, for example, “*ápetek aptegya’ak*”¹⁵ - literally, “he is looking for meat” - rather than “*ápetek étegyásak*”¹⁶ which would have meant “he is looking for meat for me.” In this way, the son-in-law’s autonomy is recognized.

It also needs to be borne in mind that parents-in-law can find it difficult to make requests of their sons-in-law because of the feeling and practice of “restraint/timidity” - *[-]ennawagko*. When a son-in-law first moves into his wife’s parents’ household there is a degree of tension and uncertainty in the relationship due to the lack of familiarity. Consequently, parents-in-law feel “restrained” in asking their son-in-law for something and would need to “strengthen” their *wáxoks* to make a request. Of course, the ease with which parents-in-law can ask things of their daughter’s husband varies from person to person. Not surprisingly, those with “stronger” *wáxoks* tend to find it easier.

It may be for this reason that parents-in-law prefer to make requests of their sons-in-law through their daughters. Often parents visit those daughters and sons-in-

¹³ *Wásennaha* is the first person singular future tense of the verb *[-]ásenneykha*.

¹⁴ In other grammatical contexts the prefix “for me” - *é[-]* - can appear as *sé[-]*.

¹⁵ *Ápetek* means “meat” while *apteregya’ak* means “he is looking for.”

¹⁶ *[-]ásak* is a different way of pronouncing the suffix *[-]áso*.

law who are working outside the colonies on pay-day to ask them for money.¹⁷ Usually, they state that they are going to ask their *daughters* for money even though their sons-in-law are the earners.¹⁸ Because of their close relationship with their daughters, parents feel less inhibited by “restraint” when dealing with her and so find it easier to make requests. Whether she gives the money depends on her own relationship with her husband.

If a request is made of a son-in-law, he is under no obligation to obey since this would infringe his personal autonomy and threaten the “tranquillity” of his *wáxok*. However, even if he does not want to respond positively, he knows that to refuse would be problematic since it would imply a denial of “love.” Consequently, a lack of “restraint” on the part of the wife’s parents can lead to a rupture of the relationship with the son-in-law. Excessive and unwelcome requests can threaten the personal autonomy of a son-in-law and cause him to become “fed-up” - [-]leklakme - with his parents-in-law.¹⁹ It could lead to an eruption of “anger” - [-]lóló - on the part of the son-in-law which may be interpreted as indicating “hatred” - [-]taknagko - rather than “love.” The relationship would be severely strained and a son-in-law could decide to abandon his wife or, alternatively, the couple could move to the husband’s parents’ community. Although Renshaw (1986:225) describes instances, in the Chaco, of sons-in-law who hand over all of their income to their wives’ fathers, it is almost inconceivable to imagine such an extreme situation among the Enxet. In fact, over-domineering Enxet parents-in-law are rare and, instead, people are usually extra vigilant to practise “restraint” as they are loathe to lose sons-in-law.

On the one hand, therefore, are fathers-in-law who feel inhibited in making requests and, on the other, sons-in-law who, similarly, find it difficult to refuse. Yet, through co-residence, intimacy, trust and “love” can grow so that the relationship becomes less characterized by “restraint.”²⁰ It becomes easier for parents-in-law to ask their daughters’ husbands for “help” while sons-in-law themselves are more comfortable about saying no. Nevertheless, a direct refusal continues to be difficult and if a son-in-law does not want to hand over money he will usually search for a plausible excuse. He could, for example, tell his parents-in-law that his employer refuses to pay him and, if he is believed, the relationship will not be undermined since “love” need only be practised if it is feasible. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 12, lying is crucial to the maintenance of good relations.

¹⁷ The sums requested usually amount to 20% to 25% of the monthly salary.

¹⁸ Cf. Renshaw (1986:228).

¹⁹ Cf. Thomas (1982:222).

²⁰ See my discussion of teknonyms in Chapter 4.

Of course, as would be expected within a “loving” relationship, many sons-in-law voluntarily hand over a part of their salary to their parents-in-law. Often, messages are sent on the local radio stations by sons-in-law calling their parents-in-law to visit them to receive some money while others are actively encouraged by their sons-in-law to visit them at the end of each month.

There are examples of men who dominate their sons-in-law but, rather than reflecting a general pattern, such instances are more indicative of a father-in-law’s character, in other words, his “strong” *wáxok*. Such people are likely to treat their own children in a similar fashion and, indeed, in a broader sense, once the relationship between a son-in-law and his parents-in-law has become more intimate, there is little to differentiate it from the relationship between a virilocally resident son and his parents. If the son works outside the colony the parents will also expect him to offer them a portion of his wage in the same way as a son-in-law would.

However, when examining the parents-in-law/son-in-law relationship it is not sufficient only to consider one direction of the relationship, that is the son-in-law’s response to his wife’s parents. We also need to consider how the parents-in-law respond to the son-in-law. And, what we find is that the relationship between the two is characterized more by mutuality than by asymmetry. When working together - for instance in the garden or building a house - rather than just saying that the son-in-law is “helping” - *[-]pasmó* - his father-in-law, people will locate the relationship within the more encompassing term *[-]pasmeykxa*, meaning “co-operation.”²¹ Or, when hunting together they could describe each other as “companions” - *[-]xegexma* - a relationship implying both “love” and equality.

Indeed, it is not true to say that the son-in-law is always the hardest worker or the biggest contributor to the household economy. In some households one finds that it is the father-in-law who works outside the colony while the son-in-law remains at home. In these situations the roles are reversed in that it is the father-in-law who hands over a part of his wage to his daughter and son-in-law. Indeed, the tendency for the son-in-law rather than the father-in-law to look for work is not the result of the former being “ordered” to find work but reflects the fact that younger people are more interested in entering the job market than older people. They enjoy the opportunity to experience new situations and are, anyway, in greater need of cash since their desire

²¹ *[-]pasmeykxa* comprises the verb “to help” - *[-]pasmó* - with the addition of a suffix - *[-]eykxa* - that suggests continuity or repetition. The word is used in the plural so that, for example, *nempasmeykxa* would be translated as “our co-operating together.”

for “luxury” manufactured goods - such as new clothes, tape-recorders and cheap jewellery - surpasses that of older people.

Daughters and their husbands can also be just as effective in “appropriating” their parents’/parents-in-law’s income as the other way round. For instance, Andrés, a widower from Karandá (El Estribo), cultivated cotton in the 1995/6 season and was accompanied to Lolita by his daughter on the day he was to be paid by the Mennonite buyer. Andrés was looking forward to buying a number of things but, by the time he received his money he discovered that his daughter had already built up a large pile of goods on the floor beside the cash register. After paying for her purchases his money was totally exhausted and, when I asked him why he had succumbed to his daughter’s wishes, he replied that he had no choice since she was his daughter. She was said to have a “strong” *wáxok* and Andrés complied with her demands out of “love” but also because, if he had argued with her, he could have been accused of being “angry” and of “hating” her. Maintaining a “loving” relationship and a tranquil *wáxok* was preferable to keeping his money.

In addition, it is noticeable that many sons-in-law, especially when first married, are extremely lazy and, despite their change in status, continue to act like typical young men. If there is sufficient food in the house they can be quite happy just sitting around or visiting their friends, listening to music (from tape-recorders), playing football or volleyball, dancing or becoming drunk. For example, the son-in-law of Jorge, the owner of a shop in San Carlos (El Estribo), spent many months just living off the household’s pool of food. Whenever he needed money, he took work outside the colony for one or two weeks and spent his wages on himself. Jorge rarely asked him for help but, despite the apparently unequal relationship, the two of them maintained friendly relations. Many sons-in-law act in a similar fashion and, in general, there is a tendency for fathers-in-law to work harder than their daughters’ husbands.

In some households the son-in-law can even come to occupy the dominant position. This often happens with older parents-in-law who, of necessity, become more dependent on the productive capacity of their children and their spouses. Yet it can also happen when parents-in-law are still relatively young and vigorous. For instance, in Makthlawaiya a widower shares a house with his daughter, her husband, his son and his wife. The son-in-law used to work on a neighbouring ranch but, in 1994, he left his job and moved back to Makthlawaiya to live with his father-in-law. He established a shop and, within a short period, had become the dominant figure in the household with his father-in-law depending on him for his subsistence. Yet, he

also had a violent temper and, at times, mistreated his father-in-law who, to escape, would often visit his kin in other communities.

Given the situation described above, it would be non-sensical to describe the Enxet father-in-law/son-in-law relationship as “brideservice.” Instead, it needs to be seen within the overall context of intrahousehold relationships in which stress is placed on generating “love,” “caring,” intimacy and conviviality. The in-married son-in-law becomes a [-]hawóxama - in other words, “one and the same”²² - and people in this type of relationship should not dominate or control others but should respect and not threaten the tranquillity of another’s wáxok. They should act with “knowledge” and, indeed, parents-in-law are concerned to increase the “knowledge” of their children-in-law, just as they are of their own children. The incorporation of the son-in-law is clearly seen in the use of the teknonym “father of my grandchildren” to refer to him.²³ By stressing the creation of “love,” the actions of household members are expected to be stimulated by their own “thoughts” - ekxeyenma [-]wáxok. In other words, people act of their own free will and not under compulsion. In fact, parents-in-law are much more likely to make demands of their sons-in-law once they are well-integrated into the household since, the closer and more loving a relationship, the less threatening is a demand to someone’s wáxok.

As I mentioned in Chapter 7, the son-in-law’s handing over of his production to the women of his household should not be regarded as alienation. Instead, it needs to be understood as an aspect of pooling to which all members of the household contribute. Therefore, just as parents-in-law appropriate the produce of their son-in-law, so too the son-in-law appropriates the produce of his parents-in-law. Consequently, rather than being conceived of within an alien model of brideservice, the Enxet parents-in-law/son-in-law relationship can be much better understood within a paradigm of attaining mutuality.

9.2 Imagining Brideservice in Lowland South America

Given the general acceptance by anthropologists of the existence of brideservice - or, at least, many of the features of the brideservice model - among the indigenous people of lowland South America, should we conclude that the Enxet are an anomaly within the region?²⁴ Or, is it possible that the situation I have described

²² [-]hawóxama describes a fellow household member. See Chapter 5.

²³ See Chapter 4.

²⁴ Even within the Chaco region anthropologists tend to assume that brideservice exists. See, for example, Renshaw (1986:225) and Alvarsson (1988:99).

for the Enxet is, in fact, much more common than generally assumed? To answer these questions I will, in the following pages, review the literature on the topic to see whether the conclusions arrived at by anthropologists correspond to the ethnographic information that they provide. Although I recognize that there is an inherent danger in this approach of over-generalizing a vast amount of diverse and complicated information, I hope that by gaining an overall picture some common themes will emerge. I will demonstrate that many of the features noted above for the Enxet are also found elsewhere in lowland South America and I will conclude that the non-existence of brideservice may well be a common feature among the indigenous people of the region. This suggests that the prevalence of the brideservice model in the literature may have more to do with the anthropological imagination than indigenous culture.

Anthropologists tend to adopt one of two distinct approaches when discussing brideservice among the indigenous people of lowland South America. Some, including Kracke (1978), Turner (1979a; 1979b), Rivière (1984), Mentore (1987) and Peters (1998), argue wholeheartedly in favour of the significance and prevalence of the institution, despite the fact that their stance is, at times, contradicted by their ethnographic data.²⁵ In contrast, other anthropologists, including Forrest (1987), McCallum (1989), Santos Granero (1991), Gow (1991) and Belaunde (1992), make strenuous efforts to argue against the existence of brideservice but without taking the final logical step of admitting that it is a fictional practice, at least within the terms of the classical definition. I will use information from both sets of anthropologists as I explore the significance of brideservice within lowland South America.

To begin with, it is remarkable that I have been unable to find in the literature one example of an indigenous term for the institution of “brideservice.” Anthropologists are content to make use of the term “brideservice” without offering any indication of how indigenous people themselves express the concept. Yet, if the institution were as prevalent as suggested in the literature, surely we could expect to find some examples of indigenous names for it.

²⁵ Not all anthropologists actually bother to provide data to support their case. As Forrest (1987:329) points out, Turner (1979a; 1979b) - perhaps the most vigorous proponent of the subjugated son-in-law school of thought - provides almost no ethnographic evidence to support his position. In addition, much of Rosaldo and Collier's (1981) argument - with the exception of Rosaldo's personal data on the Ilongot - is predicated on relatively old observations, many of which appear to be anecdotal in character rather than based on exhaustive field studies. Therefore, the extent to which their data - and, by implication, their conclusions - can be trusted must be in doubt. For example, while Collier and Rosaldo (1981:287) assure the reader that !Kung men, “never escape the obligation to ‘provide for’ wives’ parents,” Barnard and Woodburn (1988:19f) state that “brideservice” among the same people is strictly limited.

Perhaps of greater significance, though, is the fact that indigenous ideological discourses to support an understanding of brideservice as a stable asymmetrical hierarchy are also absent from the ethnographic literature. Instead, the descriptions of relations of domination and subordination between parents-in-law and their sons-in-law which are offered by anthropological analyses often contradict indigenous notions of proper behaviour presented elsewhere by the same investigators. They appear to reflect a theoretical model of brideservice that has been developed by anthropologists and imposed on indigenous people and which does not take into account key aspects of indigenous discourse and practice. Mentore (1987:521), for example, despite insisting on the control of the Waiwai father-in-law over his son-in-law, also describes “the immutable Waiwai custom of absolutely no one being able to command another directly.”²⁶ Even Collier and Rosaldo (1981) - those most vigorous proponents of brideservice - can, apparently, contradict themselves by asserting that a young man is obliged to provide services to his parents-in-law and that “brideservice” provides the foundations for inequality (1981:289) while simultaneously insisting that, in “hunting societies no adult can command the labor or obedience of any other” and that, “ageing men and women in these groups do not enjoy the right to rule or make demands of junior fellows” (1981:289).²⁷

In fact, when anthropologists do present the indigenous philosophy underlying “brideservice,” it is often clear that it contradicts the hierarchical model of behaviour implied by the term *brideservice*. For instance, although Gow (1991:137) refers to, “the economic *obligations* of a [Piro] man to his parents-in-law,”²⁸ he clarifies that a son-in-law’s labour is, “not talked of as a form of payment for the wife, but as the most extreme form of the relation of respect”²⁹ (1991:165). Since the Piro term for “respect” incorporates the notion of “love,”³⁰ it would seem logical to understand the philosophy underlying the Piro son-in-law/father-in-law relationship as predicated on “love” or the growth of it. Similar observations have been made by other investigators: Thomas (1982:101) notes that the Pemon explain that the daughter’s husband “takes care of” his wife’s father; Belaunde (1992:128f) states that Airo-Pai sons-in-law and fathers-in-law are *expected* to “help” and “look after” each other;

²⁶ Cf. Forrest (1987:324) who describes the Kalinya father-in-law/son-in-law relationship as one of “relative inequality” but states that, “the right to command or coerce is absent from all relationships between men in economic situation.”

²⁷ Cf. Viveiros de Castro (1992:118, 376) who, despite classifying the Arawaté as a “brideservice society,” stresses the importance of personal autonomy and the difficulty of giving orders to others (1992:109ff).

²⁸ The stress is mine.

²⁹ According to Forrest (1987:324f), Gow (1983) states that a young man is expected, “to return the gift of a wife with help” over time and “he is not expected to pay for her.” Although he rejects the concept of payment he does seem to accept some notion of exchange.

³⁰ Gow (1991:164).

while Dean (1995:101) reports that, “a [Urarina] bride’s parents will rely on a discourse which portrays their actions towards their son-in-law in terms of parental care and responsibility: coercion is denied both in speech and in behaviour.” Indeed, Belaunde (1992:151) criticizes Collier and Rosaldo (1981) by affirming that, “the cultural values that these authors attach to the economy of ‘brideservice’ are alien to the Airo-Pai.” In fact, the philosophies described above suggest that, rather than being based on a notion of economic *service*, the son-in-law/father-in-law relationship is conceived of within a paradigm of love and nurturing - at least, among these indigenous peoples. Evidently, this notion corresponds closely to the philosophy of “love” that underlies the relationship between Enxet sons-in-law and their parents-in-law.

Therefore, when, in the above examples, a son-in-law moves in with his parents-in-law, I suggest that the stress is not on obtaining compensation for a daughter but on incorporating a stranger into the household. Parents-in-law are concerned with generating intimacy and with transforming the son-in-law into a responsible, loving adult. This is difficult to achieve if a coercive relationship develops between the parents-in-law and son-in-law since the latter’s personal autonomy would not be respected. For instance, among the Matsigenka, if the wife’s parents’ demands become too taxing, her husband may abandon her.³¹

Another significant point that is often forgotten is that the concept of brideservice depends for its existence on the practice of uxoriocal post-marital residence. Indeed, it is possible that certain anthropologists have confused uxoriocality for brideservice. However, among most indigenous peoples uxoriocality - while it may be preferred - is often little more than a statistical tendency.³² For instance, while arguing forcefully in favour of the Waiwai son-in-law’s subordination to his wife’s father, Mentore (1987) does not adequately take into account the fact that only slightly more than half the newly-wed Waiwai couples practise uxoriocal post-marital residence. Nevertheless, this situation leads us to two possible conclusions: either, as Mentore himself suggests, bridegrooms are seeking to escape the “obligations” of “brideservice” by avoiding uxoriocal post-marital residence, or “brideservice” does not, in fact, exist and bridegrooms reside with their wives’ parents for entirely different reasons. Rather than providing compensation for their wives, it may be that, as with the Enxet, uxoriocal residence occurs because young brides are not prepared to abandon their parents’ households and their close

³¹ Rosengren (1987:123). Cf. Townsley (1988:37f), McCallum (1989:189f) and Belaunde (1992).

³² Cf. Rivière (1984:30ff; 1995:199), Overing (1988:188) and Gow (1991:135).

relationship with their mothers.³³ In fact, this explanation is suggested by Henley's (1982:128) comment that, "it is the ties between his mother-in-law and his wife that serve to prevent [the Panare son-in-law] from leaving, even when he is deemed to have fulfilled his bride-service obligations."

Furthermore, there is a great deal of ethnographic information on the dynamics of the day-to-day relationship between sons-in-law and their fathers-in-law that is inconsistent with the notions of compensation and service that are assumed to underlie brideservice. Certain anthropologists have described situations in which the obligation of the son-in-law to work for his parents-in-law is in question. For instance, McCallum (1989:198) states that uxorilocally resident sons-in-law are, "not in a subordinate relationship to their father-in-law. Young men are never ordered directly to perform major tasks, only minor ones. Instead they are expected to volunteer themselves when the father-in-law is considering some activity."³⁴ Similarly, Forrest (1987:324) describes how Kalinya sons-in-law are expected "to volunteer" to help their fathers-in-law while, among the Ye'cuana, "a wise son-in-law foresees his father-in-law's needs, gives what is necessary and avoids being told what to do. He is then free to do what he pleases" (Arvelo-Jimenez 1971:133 [in Forrest 1987:325]). Some anthropologists have reported that, among some indigenous peoples, sons-in-law deny that their relationship with their fathers-in-law is "exploitative" (Dean 1995:101) or "onerous" (Forrest 1987:324). In fact, Collier and Rosaldo (1981:289) admit that in "brideservice societies" in general, "senior adults rarely have the power to demand more than a daughter's husband wants to give in dramatizing his marital claims."

Even those anthropologists that argue most fervently in favour of the subjugation of the son-in-law appear to experience difficulty in finding examples of fathers-in-law who can directly order their sons-in-law to serve them. Instead, they describe a circuitous form of obligation in which the father-in-law indirectly exercises his domination through his daughter.³⁵ A typical example of how a father-in-law would obtain meat from his son-in-law is provided by Mentore (1987:521) for the Waiwai:

³³ See Chapter 5.

³⁴ McCallum (1989:198) states that she is describing the situation once the period of "service" is over. However, since she denies that Cashinahua brideservice is based on the "compensation model" and accepts, instead, the model proposed by Collier and Rosaldo (1981), it is difficult to see how there can be an end to the period of service (see McCallum 1989:197f).

³⁵ See, for example, Rivière (1969:199, 215f; 1984:93) and Peters (1998:125f). Cf. Renshaw (1986:228), Forrest (1987:324), Gow (1991:137) and Belaunde (1992:129).

A common scenario would go like this. Father to mother: “Wife, I am going hunting tomorrow.” ... Knowing her husband will be needing help from a younger man, the mother, while peeling manioc with her daughter, will mention “He is going hunting, my husband.” ... The daughter in turn, in the intimacy of her own house, will quite casually say to her husband “Father is going hunting tomorrow.”

According to Mentore (1987:521), “this statement has a strong effect on the son-in-law” who is placed “in a position to respond with the correct jural obligatory behaviour”³⁶ (1987:522). But why should a request undertaken in this manner be interpreted as indicating control? Instead, its circuitous and restrained character could be given as evidence for the difficulties experienced by fathers-in-law when making requests of their sons-in-law.³⁷ Indeed, rather than evoking an image of control, Mentore appears to describe the type of behaviour that is characteristic of people who are trying to promote harmony in intra-household relations.

In fact, among a number of indigenous peoples examples have been reported of sons-in-law who could be said to be in privileged positions *vis-à-vis* their fathers-in-law. Airo-Pai parents-in-law are said to work harder than their children-in-law (Belaunde 1992:128) while the difficulty in persuading sons-in-law to work has also been noted among a number of indigenous peoples. Santos Granero (1991:234) reports that, “not infrequently [Amuesha] men complain that their sons-in-law are lazy, do little work and constitute a burden rather than a support. In such cases fathers-in-law can do very little to coerce their daughters’ husbands to work more.” Similarly Alvarsson (1988:99) mentions that some Wichí sons-in-law are lazy and can become a burden on their wife’s families while Siskind (1973:80) describes how the Sharanahua son-in-law “often spends a great deal of time lying idly in his hammock, bored.”³⁸

In fact, a number of anthropologists appear to recognize that a hierarchical model inadequately represents the relationship between parents -in law and sons-in-law. Consequently, Santos Granero (1991:234), McCallum (1989:189), Gow (1991:139) and Belaunde (1992:207) suggest that it is best described by terms such as “co-operation,” “mutual aid” and “mutuality.”³⁹ In addition, Rosengren (1987:127) points out that not only do Matsigenka parents-in-law make demands of their son-in-

³⁶ The term *jural* is inappropriate when discussing the social organization of indigenous people in lowland South America.

³⁷ Cf. McCallum (1988:560) and Mentore (1988:561). Rivière (1969:199) states that a man makes a request to his son-in-law through his daughter because of his fear of an angry refusal.

³⁸ Cf. Renshaw (1986:225ff) and Gow (1991:137) who states that “there seems to be little direct advantage in having a son-in-law” among the Piro.

³⁹ Cf. Renshaw (1986:225ff).

law but their son-in-law can also make demands on his parents-in-law. And Rivière (1969:215f) describes how food flows both ways between Trio children-in-law and parents-in-law and, although he states that, “the wife’s parents seem to have a prior right to the game that is brought in by their daughter’s husband,” he also asserts that, “one must not lose sight of the fact that the daughter’s husband has a right to the game shot by his wife’s father” (1969:216).

It also needs to be taken into account that even in those societies where sons-in-law appear to “serve” their fathers-in-law, this does not necessarily mean that it is derived from an “ideology of brideservice.” Instead, it may be no more than a reflection of the type of behaviour that is expected to characterize the relationship between different generations. For instance, among the Kalinya, although sons-in-law should respect their parents-in-law, all young people are expected to respect their elders (Forrest 1987:325). Similarly, Dean (1995:101) notes that the Urarina, “discursively conflate the cultural equation of the role of father-in-law with the status of father,” while McCallum (1989:189) argues that the work of the Cashinahua son-in-law is, “like any work done by a young relative on behalf of, or ‘helping’ an older kinsperson of the same sex.”⁴⁰

9.3 Conclusion

“Brideservice” in lowland South America - at least in many of the examples given above - would appear to be characterized by some of the following features: it has no name; it does not appear to be underpinned by an explicit ideology of compensation or service but, in contrast, is understood within a paradigm of “love,” “caring” and responsibility; in practice, it is more akin to co-operation than unilateral service; it replicates encompassing patterns of inter-generational social relations; and whenever uxorilocal post-marital residence does not occur it cannot happen. If these features are typical, why do anthropologists insist on using the term “brideservice” to explain a relationship that is quite different in character to that implied by the term itself? Rather than accepting Gow’s (1991:137) suggestion that the nature of the son-in-law/father-in-law relationship may vary between the regions of lowland South America, I would like to go further and suggest that among many indigenous peoples - if not all - “brideservice” is a phantom phenomenon. The refusal to accept this conclusion has led many anthropologists to “see” brideservice where none exists and to impose an alien theoretical model on their ethnographic data despite the existence of evidence that indicates a quite different character to the son-in-law/father-in-law

⁴⁰ Cf. Rivière (1969:214).

relationship. Certain aspects of indigenous discourse have been stressed at the expense of others and, given that the practice of brideservice appears to clash with the significance that indigenous people place on personal autonomy, rather than assuming that brideservice is prevalent in the region, a healthier approach may be to view it as a somewhat surprising phenomenon that requires explanation.

It is likely that the economic practices that have been interpreted as brideservice may, in fact, be no more than typical household *pooling*.⁴¹ The son-in-law, rather than being obliged to hunt or work for his parents-in-law, is, instead, only one member of the household who brings the fruit of his labour back home so that it can be pooled and become the common - but private - property of everyone in the household. His father-in-law acts in a similar manner so that both of them practise “love” and, indeed, are motivated - or become motivated - by “love,” by the desire to nurture and care for the members of their household. The son-in-law has to learn to live as a member of the household, as someone who knows how to behave in an appropriate and intimate manner. If this is so, the lack of brideservice among the Enxet does not place them in an anomalous position within Lowland South America but, instead, would classify them as entirely typical. Of course, there are differences between indigenous peoples, but what is often obscured in the ethnographic accounts are the differences that can be found within individual indigenous peoples, even within communities. As I noted for the Enxet, some fathers-in-law are more dominant - because they are more able to strengthen their *wáxoks* - while others are much less so and, indeed, can be dominated by sons-in-law with “strong” *wáxoks*. As anthropologists we need to take care not to focus upon certain individuals within a society who appear to “prove,” either by their rhetoric or behaviour, our own prior theoretical assumptions. Instead, we need to leave ourselves open to the diversity and variety of human behaviour that exists within even small communities.

⁴¹ Cf. Rivière (1969:216) who states that the transfer of game from DH to WF should not be regarded as part of brideservice among the Trio.

10. VOLUNTARY SHARING AND THE GENERATION OF “LOVE”

Sharing is the type of economic transaction that is most commonly associated with hunter-gatherers and the indigenous peoples of lowland South America. Most anthropological studies into the economic relations among these peoples have focused on sharing, often to the detriment of other types of economic transaction, especially those that have been introduced through contact with the market economy. As I discussed in Chapter 1, sharing can be defined as a non-reciprocal donation from one person to another in which there is no calculation of returns. Prior to their insertion in the market economy, it was the predominant form of economic transaction among the Enxet and it continues to pervade their day-to-day social relations.

However, the term sharing encompasses a range of practices and in my analysis I will make a key distinction between two quite different forms of sharing. The first, “voluntary sharing,” can be defined as sharing that is undertaken on the initiative of the giver while the second, “demand sharing,” is characterized by the receiver taking the initiative. As I will demonstrate, these two types of sharing are provoked by quite different motivations and can generate diverse emotional responses in givers and receivers. While voluntary sharing is usually constitutive of “love” and sociable relations, demand sharing can provoke discomfort and exacerbate divisions between people.

Although the distinction between voluntary and demand sharing is somewhat blurred, for analytical clarity I will discuss each one separately. In this chapter I will concentrate on voluntary sharing and will discuss how it is both motivated by and synonymous with “love” - [*-]ásekhayo*. I will also consider the role played by gender in the generation of social and political relationships before moving onto a discussion of the redistribution of food by community leaders. In Chapter 11, I will examine voluntary sharing from a spatial perspective and challenge prevailing anthropological notions about the concept of inside and outside among indigenous peoples. Then, in Chapter 12, I will examine demand sharing in detail.

However, it needs to be recognized that the Enxet are now inserted into the market economy which has, in turn, penetrated their internal economy. Consequently, I will integrate money into my discussions of both voluntary and demand sharing although I will leave a theoretical discussion of the impact of money until Chapter 13

in which I will also consider the wider implications of the introduction of commoditization and employer-employee relations into Enxet communities.

10.1 “Love,” the Motivation for Voluntary Sharing

Voluntary sharing can be described by the Enxet as *[-]mésó aksa*, which can be translated as “one’s giving, with no strings attached.”¹ This expression indicates that no request is made of a giver and that there is no expectation of reciprocity. Such giving is described as motivated by a “thought” or, in other words, by “the mentioning of one’s *wáxok*.”² The stress is, therefore, placed on the freewill of givers who are in no way seen to be responding to demands placed on them by others. “Knowledgeable” people are motivated by “love” - which could, in part, be described as encapsulating an ethic of generosity - and have “thoughts” that give rise to voluntary sharing. As I explained in Chapter 3, “love” is intimately associated with giving so that one should give to those one “loves” and if there is no giving there can be no “love.”

Since their conversion to Christianity, the Enxet have discovered in the Bible a justification for the value they place on generosity so that voluntary sharing is regarded as having been ordained by God. Ironically, such an interpretation has brought them into conflict with the Anglican missionaries who, since the beginning of their work among the Enxet, have attempted to combat the practice of sharing. They put great effort into teaching the Enxet the value of saving and accumulation both through words and in practice and, “set to work to urge upon [the Enxet] the need of securing the rights of those who honestly acquired property” (1911:192).

I can fully appreciate the sentiments of the early missionaries since, in my first years working for the Anglican Church in the Chaco my colleagues and I expounded the same message. I would spend hours discussing with the most promising entrepreneurs the merits of saving money or investing it in other productive activities. One of my favourite suggestions was to acquire cattle which would provide a very generous profit with minimal investment. My listeners usually appeared to be in full agreement and, like Grubb (1911:192) who was convinced that the “communal system” was rapidly dying out, I too believed that my message was having its effect. Yet, both he and I were wrong since the ethic of generosity continues to inform daily life. Indeed, some Enxet would occasionally question my exhortations, pointing out

¹ *[-]mésó* is the verb “to give.” *Aksa* is a term that suggests that there is “nothing attached.” Those receiving food could similarly say, “*[-]xawé aksa*,” - “one’s receiving with nothing attached.”

² ie. *ekxeyenma [-]wáxok*.

that, since I was a missionary, I should follow the Bible's teachings and be generous. However, the values that the Anglican missionaries have expounded are those that they themselves choose to find in the Bible and reflect their belief in capitalism and the market. It is, therefore, no coincidence that politicians, government agents and development workers continue to teach the Enxet the same values as those preached by the missionaries.

Most of my research was undertaken among the group of Enxet who had been subjected to the most intense missionary influence. Yet, even they continue to place a high value on generosity and voluntary sharing. In fact, Renshaw (1986; 1988) has remarked that, in the Chaco as a whole, the pre-contact moral values of indigenous people have proved remarkably resistant to the effects of missionization and colonialism and continue to inform their economic and social organizations. A similar conclusion has been reached by McCallum (1989) in her work among the Cashinahua and she has gone so far as to state that moral values are the aspect of indigenous culture that is most resistant to change (1989:14).³

Yet, it would be wrong to suggest that extraneous values have no influence on indigenous people. Among the Enxet, the transformation in the term *wese* - "leader" - is evidence of some degree of modification. In the past the term referred to the most moral and most generous individual but it is now applied uniquely to those white people who are characterized by their success in accumulating rather than distributing material goods.⁴ Although some Enxet continue to aspire to be *wese*, they now understand the term as signifying a person with many possessions. Indeed, this understanding has influenced how they remember the *wese* of the past in that they always stress their many possessions rather than their generosity. For example, almost the only aspect of *Payseyamtáwa Apwese* - who lived to the south-east of Makthlawaiya in the early twentieth century - that is recalled is the large herd of cattle that he owned. And *Métekyak*, one of the early converts and one of the main leaders of the Makthlawaiya mission community during the first half of the twentieth century, is known as a *wese* because of the large shop he owned. The *wese* of the past are never conceived of as being poor, even though they were apparently the poorest people in their communities due to the fact that they were so generous with their possessions.⁵

³ I would suggest that the indigenous cosmology is, perhaps, even more resistant to transformation.

⁴ See Kidd (1997b; 1997d; 1999a) for a more detailed discussion of the transformation in the meaning of the term *wese*.

⁵ Grubb (1904:65) and Hawtrey (1901:292).

The influence of western values can also be seen in the attitudes of certain people. On various occasions one of the leaders of El Estribo made clear to me his ambition to be a *wese* and he was convinced he would achieve this by increasing his herd of domestic animals, building a large brick house and purchasing a pick-up truck. A man in Makthlawaiya, who wanted to become a *wese*, actually bought a car in the belief that it would help him achieve his goal. Unfortunately the car broke down within a few weeks and he ended up exchanging it for an old motorbike that belonged to a Paraguayan. Yet, not even these people have wholeheartedly adopted western values. On other occasions, the same leader in El Estribo has stressed to me the importance of being generous and has explained that “loving” others is part of Enxet culture - [-]témakxa.⁶

Although the contradictions in what is said can be explained by context and audience, they also indicate a deeper conflict over which values people feel that they should follow. This conflict was most apparent in a suicide epidemic in Makthlawaiya. A number of young men hung themselves and a variety of explanations were given for their deaths.⁷ Some people suggested that they were the result of “sadness” - [-]lapwayam - caused by a lack of “love” from parents or, in the case of one man, because his wife had left him.⁸ Such an explanation was not accepted by those who were accused of withholding “love.” They insisted that the deaths were caused by the intervention of those spirits (*aksok*) that are classified as human - such as the *chóneygmen* or *walé apyepmeyk* - who were supposed to have persuaded the young men to hang themselves while they were drunk. However, it was noticeable that the victims were people who aspired to be like white people, to be *wese*. Yet, since this aspiration could never be attained, it would appear that one way of resolving the internal contradictions and confusion arising from the struggle between two sets of conflicting values, lifestyles and identities was to take their own lives. Furthermore, the fact that the spirits that were accused of tempting the young men were similar to white people in both appearance and behaviour could also be interpreted as expressing the same explanation in a more symbolic manner.

10.2 Voluntary Sharing in Practice

My discussion of voluntary sharing will be concerned, primarily, with the sharing of food including meat from the hunt and domestic animals, gathered fruits, garden produce, purchased foodstuffs and food received from others. Voluntary

⁶ [-]témakxa means, literally, “our way of being/doing/saying.” See Chapter 3.

⁷ Cf. Brown (1986).

⁸ See also Grubb (1911:211f).

sharing tends to occur whenever the giver has a surplus which can take a variety of forms.⁹ For example a hunter may bring home more meat than required by his household for their immediate subsistence either because the animal is big - such as a tapir, carpincho, deer or large pig - or because a large number of smaller animals have been killed, usually armadillos or iguanas. When fishing during periods of abundance, people usually catch far more than they require - probably because the fishing itself is an enjoyable activity - and a large surplus is often available for distribution. Alternatively, when garden produce is ripe, by definition a large surplus is available. Some crops, such as watermelons, cannot be stored for long periods and so are likely to be perceived as abundant. Crops with a greater storage potential - either in the ground, as with sweet potato or manioc,¹⁰ or in the house, as with beans or maize - can be perceived as a surplus over a much longer period. Manufactured foodstuffs are less likely to be abundant since people rarely purchase in bulk, preferring to satisfy only the more immediate needs of their households. And, surpluses can arise when people are given food by others. For instance, people in El Estribo often visit kin in neighbouring Paz del Chaco, returning home with two or three sackfuls of sweet potato.

It is important to recognize that in my definition of “surplus” I have referred to an amount over and above that required by a household for their immediate subsistence.¹¹ This is different to an amount over and above that which could be immediately consumed by a household. People have prodigious appetites and could easily eat more than they require, especially when confronted by the meat of a particularly coveted animal. Yet, they frequently choose not to, preferring to forgo some of their catch so that it can be shared. Moreover, the definition of a “surplus” can also be relative, depending as it does on each person’s perception. The Enxet themselves employ terms such as *[-]xámok* (“many”), *[-]ketse* (“a little”), and *[-]antawok* (“a few”) when referring to the amount of food they have, and the word chosen to describe a set amount of food can vary according to context. If people are reluctant to share with an individual, they could describe a specific quantity of food as *[-]ketse* - “a little” - but, with a person with whom they want to share, the same amount of food could be portrayed as *[-]xámok* - “a lot.”

It is no surprise that people share voluntarily only when they perceive that they have a surplus. As I discussed in Chapter 7, a correlation between more extensive sharing and a larger surplus has been widely reported among other

⁹ Cf. Renshaw (1988:340) and Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17).

¹⁰ Cf. Rivière (1987:181).

¹¹ Cf. Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17).

indigenous peoples and hunter-gatherers. Consequently, when households have only enough food to satisfy their own needs, the level of sharing can be minimal.¹² Therefore, Santos Granero's (1991:246) description of sharing among the Amuesha as "unrestricted generosity" would be inapplicable to the Enxet and, indeed, to most indigenous peoples. Similarly, Ingold's (1986:231) assertion that, during times of shortage, household boundaries are dissolved appears to bear little resemblance to the reality of life among most indigenous peoples.¹³ Nonetheless, the decision not to share beyond the household when there is no (perceived) surplus does demonstrate the priority given to satisfying the subsistence needs of an individual's own household which, in the case of the Enxet, is the site of a person's most intimate "loving" relationships.

As I mentioned in Chapter 7, prior to being pooled in the household, food is personally owned and individual owners are able to make decisions about the destiny of their food without being under any obligation to take it home. Therefore, for example, when a group of companions hunt and kill a deer, the successful hunter usually shares it out equally among everyone. Although the hunter is not obliged to do this, it is certainly expected since a refusal to share would be a denial of "love." The decision to accompany each other in the first place is a statement that a "loving" relationship exists between the hunters who consider each other to be companions - *[-]xege^xma*¹⁴ - and it is, therefore, assumed that any kill will be shared out according to the logic of "love." The decision to split a catch is described as a "thought" and is understood to derive from a hunter's freewill. It becomes even more apparent that the decision to share is the hunter's when the kill is more difficult to divide. For instance, on an occasion when two brothers went hunting together and the elder brother killed three armadillos, he decided to privilege himself by retaining two and giving only one to his younger brother.

A decision not to share would require a very "strong/locked" *wáxok*¹⁵ and a hunter who acted in this way would provoke the antipathy of his companions who may decide against accompanying him again. Nevertheless, some people have confided to me that it is preferable to hunt alone since one can keep the kill for oneself. Such an admission of a desire not to share suggests the existence of selfishness or, as the Enxet would describe it, "*[-]teme [-]agkok [-]agko*" - "being

¹² See, for example, Goldman (1963:82), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:281), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:17) and Campbell (1995:149).

¹³ See also Chapter 7.

¹⁴ See Chapter 8 for an explanation of the term *[-]xege^xma*.

¹⁵ See Chapter 3.

excessively individualistic.”¹⁶ The other-regarding virtues associated with proper personal autonomy can be conquered by selfish desire and in later chapters I will examine how sharing is one battleground in the internal struggle between “love” and “selfishness.”

Individuals can also decide to share their food with others in a variety of ways before reaching their house. When hunters are returning home with their kill, they may decide to hand over a part of it to people they meet on the way. This can also occur when someone returns from a shop or from another person’s house after receiving a large amount of food. They are under no obligation to do so and, again, describe such sharing as a “thought.” Also, garden produce, prior to harvesting, remains the property of the cultivator although, since both spouses usually work in the garden, some degree of ambiguity usually exists over who, in fact, is the owner. Although individual spouses can make their own decisions to share, often both claim rights to the produce and, as will become clear, can also make joint decisions on its distribution.

Voluntary sharing can take a number of forms.¹⁷ Frequently, people take food to the houses of others and, in the case of neighbours, this can take only a few seconds. For instance, in Makthlawaiya many houses are very close together and people often give food to their neighbours, at times merely handing it over before returning home straightaway although, on other occasions, they may spend some time socializing. However, people can also carry food to houses some distance away. In El Estribo, whenever the husband in House 40 of the community of Palo Santo killed a large animal, such as a tapir, his wife would take a portion to her brother and sister in Houses 10 and 12, approximately one kilometre away (see Map 5.1).¹⁸ Meanwhile, her husband would take some meat to his father’s house in Santa Fe, some three kilometres distant.

An alternative form of voluntary sharing is to invite someone to visit one’s house with the promise that they will receive some food. This often happens when there is an abundance of food in the gardens and some invited guests are allowed to harvest for themselves. In effect, they are told to place their own limits on how much to take and, by exhibiting trust, the hosts transmit a powerful message of “love” so that the closeness of the relationship is made evident. Someone who returns home

¹⁶ See Chapter 3.

¹⁷ Cf. Rivière’s (1969:50).

¹⁸ Once, when House 10 received some tapir meat, the brother’s wife took all the meat to her sister in House 9 as they already had sufficient beef and were not particularly enamoured with tapir.

with a large sack of food can be said to be “carrying a really large load” - *[-]patmawo*.¹⁹ Such a comment does not refer to the strength of the person but is an expression of how much they have been “loved.”

Whenever people spontaneously visit a household, they may also receive food from the hosts. If they arrive when a meal is about to be served, they are invariably offered a plate of food. None of the reticence reported for the Cubeo and Tsimane about giving or receiving cooked meals is evidenced among the Enxet (Goldman 1963:81; Ellis 1996:149f). Nonetheless, the giving of meals can provoke a variety of emotions. At times, the hosts can enthusiastically offer to cook for visitors or willingly hand over a significant part of a meal that has already been prepared. This may occur when visitors are unknown to the hosts and I personally had numerous experiences of being offered meals in the homes of people I had never met. Rivière’s (1969:50) comment that, “commensalism is a mutual acceptance of strangers, and a symbol of both trust and unity” is just as relevant for the Enxet as it is for the Trio. When the relationship between hosts and guests is particularly close and characterized by frequent visits, meals are offered with a great deal of informality and ease.

Although, in both cases, commensality is a means of engendering “love” or sociality, the opportunity to offer cooked food to guests can lead to very different outcomes. I have had many experiences of visiting Enxet homes to find people extremely wary of offering me food. Indeed, it is rare for non-indigenous visitors to be offered meals by the Enxet, usually because the hosts are “caused to fear”²⁰ that their offer will be rejected. Since most Paraguayans who live in the Chaco exhibit very racist attitudes towards indigenous people and believe that eating or drinking with the Enxet could infect them with tuberculosis, this fear is not without foundation.²¹ Given that rejecting food can express a refusal to enter into a sociable relationship, if the Enxet suspect that an invitation to eat will not be accepted, they usually refrain from making the offer in the first place.²² In my own case, once people realized that I never refused their offers, they began to treat me with much greater generosity.

¹⁹ *[-]pata* is the verb “to carry something on one’s shoulders” while the suffix *[-]awo* provides emphasis.

²⁰ ie. *[-]yéso*.

²¹ In the Chaco, Paraguayans call tuberculosis the “disease of the Enxet.”

²² The Enxet are adept at changing their behaviour to fit in with the expectations of visitors. When fellow Enxet arrive the welcome is muted. People exchange a handshake and chat in quiet tones. However, when a Paraguayan arrives, the welcome is quite different. People still shake hands but the male hosts will speak to the Paraguayans in loud, jocular tones, imitating the way that Paraguayans greet each other. The Enxet women, though, often hide in the house.

Nonetheless, the correlation between refusing meals and the denial of a sociable relationship should not be over-emphasized since people do, at times, offer food in the hope that it will be rejected. This can happen when visitors arrive just as a meal is about to be served and there is only enough food for the household members themselves. In such situations, a certain reluctance to share is communicated by asking the visitors if they want to eat instead of, as is normal, just placing the food into their hands. Visitors usually sense when they should refuse the meal and do so in a way that indicates their pleasure at the offer while simultaneously presenting a plausible excuse for not accepting, such as the fact that they have just eaten. The host usually insists, but only briefly, before disappearing inside the house with the plate. The episode leaves neither party feeling uncomfortable since the hosts have shown their willingness to share their food while the visitors have done what was expected of them.

One explanation of why meals can be refused without causing offence or discomfort is that food is rarely the only thing on offer to visitors. Much more prevalent is the offer of *tereré*, a beverage that I have already referred to on a number of occasions. *Tereré* is a cold tea made out of the leaves of the *yerba maté* plant.²³ The crushed leaves are placed in a small receptacle - typically made from a cow's horn and known as a *guampa* - around a *bombilla*, a metal straw with a small sieve at its base. Water is poured into the cup and imbibed through the straw. While it can be prepared with hot water - and in this case is known as *maté* - most Enxet prefer cold *tereré*. It is essentially a social drink and is rarely consumed alone. The responsibility for serving lies with the host who passes the *guampa* to each visitor in turn who must drink everything before returning it to the host.

Almost without fail, *tereré* is offered to visitors as soon as they arrive, the exceptions being Paraguayans and other outsiders who, it is expected, will refuse.²⁴ As I mentioned earlier, the Enxet are loathe to place themselves in danger of being rejected and their reasoning can be discerned in their attitudes to Anglican missionaries who they classify into two types: *mehêlanawo* - "those who do not look at us" - and *sêlanawo* - "those who look at us." "Those who do not look at us" are those missionaries who refuse to drink *tereré* with the Enxet and are said not to "love" them. In contrast, "those who look at us" are those missionaries who frequently partake of *tereré* with the Enxet and are regarded as "loving" them. The same terms can be used to classify a wide range of people.

²³ *Yerba maté* does not grow in the Chaco and it is only since the late nineteenth century that it has become part of the Enxet diet.

²⁴ Cf. Henry (1951:208).

Miller (1995) notes that, among the neighbouring Toba, the importance of *maté* cannot be overemphasized, and the same is true of the Enxet. By drinking together in a close-knit circle a sense of conviviality and intimacy is created which is often enhanced by light-hearted chatter. Since the cost of filling a *guampa* with *yerba maté* is relatively cheap, offering *tereré* to visitors implies no great economic sacrifice yet the sociality that it generates is great.

Voluntary sharing, therefore, can take a variety of forms. However, the frequency of sharing with different people in a community can vary greatly. Each person, or household,²⁵ shares with some people more than others and, therefore, continually makes conscious decisions about which relationships to prioritize at the expense of others. When a surplus is large, food can be shared more widely but, since large surpluses are rare, the circle of people to whom food is distributed is usually quite small.

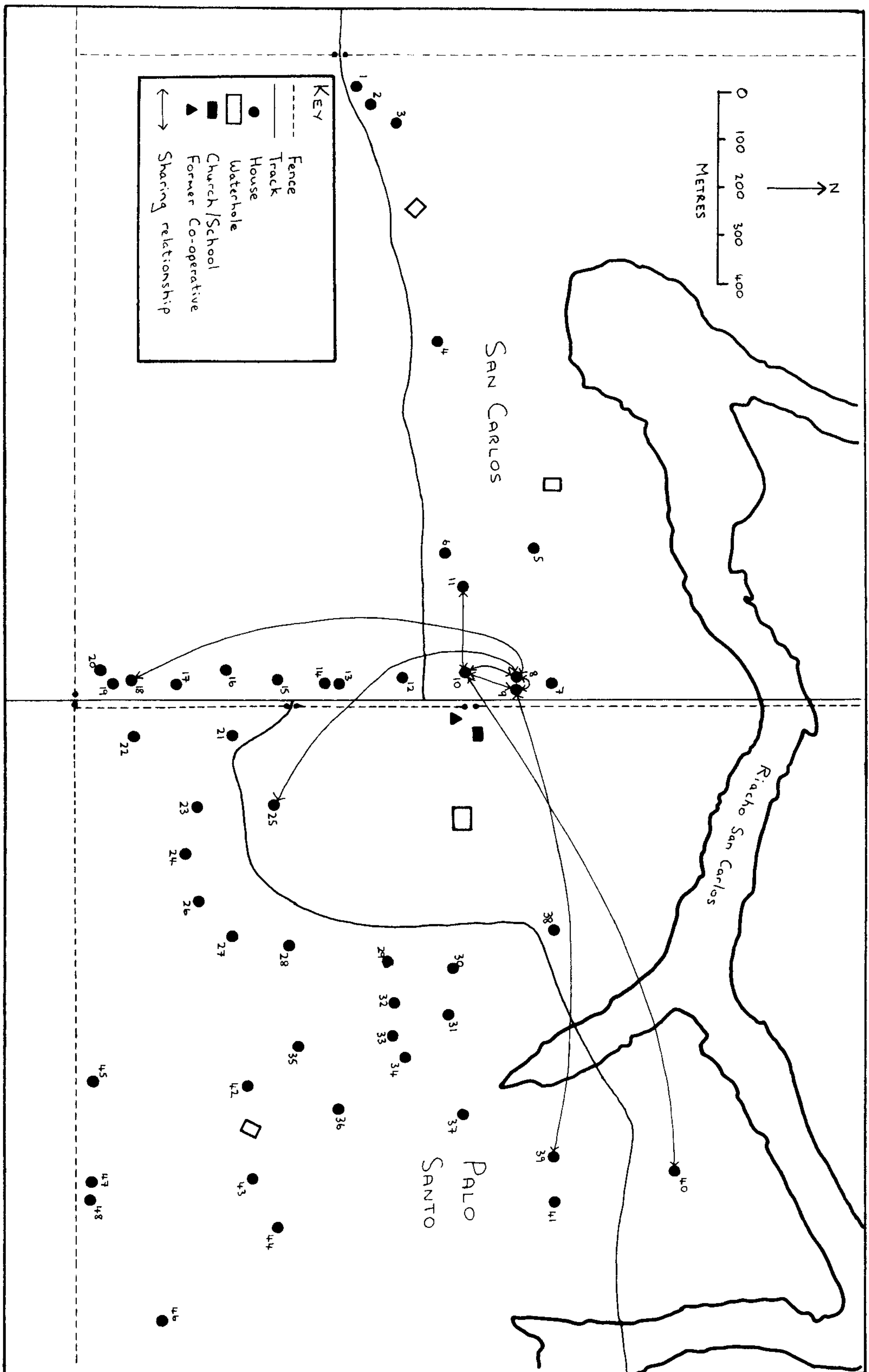
Individuals usually share most frequently with those they consider to be “close” kin and so parents and their children commonly share with each other as do siblings. The sharing practices of three sisters who live in Houses 8, 9 and 10 of San Carlos can illustrate typical patterns of voluntary distribution. Although all three households share food with each other on a relatively frequent basis, they also share with people that were exclusive to each. Those in House 10 share most frequently with their daughter’s household in House 11 and somewhat less often with the husband’s sister in House 40; the couple in House 9 often give food to the household of their daughter who lives with her parents-in-law in House 39; and the couple in House 8 frequently share with the household of the sister’s brother - who live with his parents-in-law in House 25 - with her husband’s FZ and FB in Houses 18 and 23. These transactions are illustrated in Map 10.1.

Changes in the patterns of voluntary sharing between “close” kin are an inherent feature of the developmental cycle of the family.²⁶ When, for example, a daughter and her husband leave her parent’s house to establish an independent household, the two families will stop pooling their food and begin to share. This may result in the parent’s household giving priority to the daughter’s household and lead to a corresponding reduction in sharing with other kin, such as the parents’ siblings. As I mentioned earlier, people constantly make decisions over which relationships to prioritize and this is reflected in the patterns of voluntary sharing.

²⁵ I will discuss later whether sharing is undertaken by individuals or households.

²⁶ See Chapter 5.

Map 10.1. Sharing Relations of Houses 8, 9 and 10 of San Carlos



However, as I suggested in Chapter 4, an over-concentration on parent/child and sibling relations misrepresents the Enxet concept of kinship and social relations. People also share with those who may be genealogically more distant but who, nevertheless, are considered to be “close” kin. People who are related as, for example, MZC may have been brought up in the same household and will refer to each other by sibling terms. Later in life, the memory of such “loving” relations may be reflected in the practice of voluntary sharing as people seek to maintain their relationship. They may even live close together, as was indicated in Chapter 5.

The above discussion could be taken as evidence to support Fortes’ (1983) contention that people prefer to share with “close” kin because of their genealogical link. One would, therefore, expect any map of sharing relations to closely resemble Maps 5.1 and 5.2 in which the sibling and parent-child links within the communities of San Carlos and Palo Santo are illustrated. However, although certain of these links reflect sharing practices, in many cases they do not. In fact, the data that I have presented so far paints only a partial picture and, as I describe sharing practices in more detail, it will become evident that Fortes’ explanation of sharing does not apply to the Enxet.

The Enxet do not voluntarily share with kin because they are “kin.” There are, in fact, many examples of genealogically “close” kin who rarely share with each other despite geographically proximate residences. For example, a brother and sister live in Houses 10 and 12 and, although they are less than one hundred metres apart, they maintain minimal contact with each other due to a long-standing conflict between the brother and his sister’s husband. Another brother and sister in Houses 7 and 43 also rarely speak to each other, in this case because they appear to have drifted apart over the years. Their infrequent sharing reflects the lack of intimacy in their relationship.

“Close” kin who maintain good relations are, therefore, those who share on a frequent basis. In effect, their relationship is predicated on “love,” both that derived from the memory of being raised as children and that which is persistently generated through the sharing of food as well as by other activities such as the drinking of *tereré* and mutual help. But the memory of “love” engendered when a child is not sufficient in itself to structure social relationships in the present. Indeed, siblings who have had little contact with each other over the years - and, more importantly, have not made the effort to maintain their relationship - can characterize each other as “like he/she is not my kinsperson” - “*máxa háwé émok.*” Indeed, one woman who described her brother in this way explained that it was because he never gave her any gifts, despite the fact that he lived next door and had, until two years earlier, been part of her own

household. Relationships, therefore, must be continually re-created and so, when “close” kin live in the same community, they need to engage in voluntary sharing whenever the opportunity presents itself, in other words, whenever they have surplus food. Furthermore, the re-commencement of sharing between kin can serve to re-establish a close relationship.

However, frequent voluntary sharing can also occur between people who would never be classified as genealogically “close.” Distant kin can develop close relationships characterized by voluntary sharing and mutual help if they live in close proximity to each other over a long period, as can the respective parents of a married couple.²⁷ Both sets of parents can begin to visit each other on a frequent basis and be given substantial amounts of food to take home. For example, the children of the couples in Houses 7 and 46 of San Carlos and Palo Santo were married and the two sets of parents often visited each other to receive garden produce, despite having productive gardens of their own. The two fathers also agreed to “co-operate” - [-]pasmeykxa - in cultivating cotton in the 1996/97 growing season.

Other people in affinal relationships can also begin to share with each other on a relatively frequent basis. For instance, in San Carlos and Palo Santo, the BSW of the woman in House 38 lived with her parents in House 10 and, whenever the young wife visited House 38, she always came home with a gift of food. In addition, any time the husband in House 38 killed an animal, meat would be sent to House 10. In Makthlawaiya, two brothers from the community of Los Lapachos married young women from different - and unrelated - households. The elder brother was a prodigious hunter and, whenever his household had surplus meat, such as an extra armadillo, his wife would take it to the younger brother’s mother-in-law. In both cases, the receivers described the relationship as “awanhek seyásekhayo” - “a great deal of love for me.”

Although anthropologists have often stressed the creation of kinship when discussing the constitution of social relationships through sharing,²⁸ among many indigenous peoples sharing can contribute to the development of other types of relationship which can be used to incorporate outsiders but are clearly distinguished from kinship. The Piro, for example, put great emphasis on the creation of close relations between a child’s parents and godparents²⁹ - *compadres* - (Gow 1991:172ff),

²⁷ Cf. Belaunde (1992:196).

²⁸ For instance, McCallum (1989:206) states that, “making people presents of food and things is tantamount to making them kin,” while Belaunde (1992:181) asserts that, “the personal acts of giving and accepting are constitutive of kinship.” Cf. Gow (1991:119).

²⁹ See also McCallum (1989:184).

while the Araweté develop *apīhi-piha* relationships which are characterized by joyfulness and conviviality (Viveiros de Castro 1992:167ff). The Enxet also used to employ a term to describe “friends” who were non-kin and non-affines:

[-]elekhánamap. The relationship is said to have been predicated on “love” - *[-]ásekhayo* - and people who referred to each other in this way would voluntarily share food. The term could have been applied to co-residents or members of other communities, including non-Enxet, in fact any non-kin or affines with whom one shared.

[-]elekhánamap, though, is no longer used by the Enxet, except by a few older people and has been subsumed under the concept of “kin” - *émok*.³⁰ People can still practise sharing with non-kin and, in such cases, people can say that they have become “accustomed” to - *[-]eltámeke* - one another.³¹ As I mentioned in Chapter 4, when my wife and I had lived in Makthlawaiya, we developed close relations with our neighbours with whom we frequently shared food and, by the time we left the colony in 1991, the women began to describe my wife as, “*máxa egyáxeg*” - “like our younger sister.” However, it is evident that there are younger people who are uncomfortable with the idea of referring to non-Enxet friends as “kin,” perhaps because they are increasingly aware of the Paraguayan and Mennonite stress on biological kinship. Consequently, there is a growing tendency to refer to non-Enxet companions - such as those they meet when working for Mennonites - by the Spanish word for friend - *amigo*. Undoubtedly, in the past such people would have been known as *[-]elekhánamap*.

The Enxet description of the set of people with whom they most frequently share is expressed by two terms which encapsulate their conception of the nature of the relationship: *nelásekamaxkoho* and *nelmeyamaxchek*. The root of *nelásekamaxkoho* is the verb “to love” - *[-]ásekhayo* - and the term can be translated as “those of us who ‘love’ each other.”³² *Nelmeyamaxchek* has a similar meaning and is derived from the verb *[-]masma*³³ which translates as “to retain” or “to keep.” When used to refer to people it encompasses such meanings as “to protect,” “to care for” and “to look out for,” all of which imply a concern for the well-being of others.

³⁰ Cf. Belaunde (1992:48).

³¹ Cf. Renshaw (1988:340).

³² *Nelásekamaxkoho* is a substantive, passive form of the verb “to love.” The prefix *nel[-]* indicates the third person plural, while *[-]maxkoho* comprises the suffix *[-]maxchek* - which is both the substantive version of the passive form of a verb and an indicator of the existence of reciprocity in a relationship - and which is modified to *[-]maxk[-]* to accommodate the suffix *[-]oho* which expresses emphasis.

³³ *[-]masma* is the substantive form of the verb “to retain” and, in different grammatical contexts, can be pronounced in other ways including *[-]meyóke*.

Consequently, *nelmeyamaxchek* can be translated as, “those of us who care for each other.”³⁴

The “love” and “caring” implied in the terms *nelásekamaxkoho* and *nelmeyamaxchek*, has, like kinship, both past and present dimensions. As I will show, those classified by ego as “those of us who ‘love’ each other” tend to be kin but, rather than placing importance on the formal links of kinship and affinity, it is instead the memory of “love” given or received as a child that is stressed. However, the memory of “love” is, in itself, insufficient to place someone within a *nelásekamaxkoho* and, as I have indicated, it is also necessary for “love” to continue to be practised and generated. Each individual’s perspective on the membership of their own *nelásekamaxkoho* is dependent on their appraisal of who they actively “love” and who “love” them.

Since “love” is a *practice*, it follows that relationships must be dynamic.³⁵ Patterns of sharing and helping can vary over time and so the composition of a person’s *nelásekamaxkoho* is not constant. Some people may leave the community to find long-term work or a conflict may develop between two individuals which leads to a breakdown in their relationship and a corresponding refusal to share. For example, a teacher in El Estribo established a co-operative store in El Estribo in which he was the largest investor and, therefore, the leading force. His father-in-law was installed as the storekeeper and was given strict instructions by all the investors not to give loans to anyone. One night, though, the teacher became drunk and, needing cash to buy more *caña*, visited his father-in-law’s house to ask for a loan from the co-operative’s money. The father-in-law refused, causing the teacher to become angry and abusive, and he even sought out a machete which he used to bang the walls of his father-in-law’s house. Eventually, the elder man could stand it no longer and stormed out of his house to attack his son-in-law, beating him and tying him to a tree. The two men only lived one hundred yards apart and, until that time, they had enjoyed a relatively close relationship. However, as a result of the fight, and the “hate” and “anger” that it generated, the teacher refused to visit his parents-in-law’s house and only decided against moving to Makthlawaiya because he would have lost his job. He effectively refused to “look at” his father-in-law even though they were neighbours³⁶ and, although his wife maintained contact with her parents by visiting them whenever she could, the degree of sharing between the two households

³⁴ As with *nelásekamaxkoho*, the prefix *nel[-]* refers to the third person plural while the suffix *[-]maxchek* indicates either the passive tense of the verb - expressed in the substantive form - or a sense of reciprocity.

³⁵ Cf. Renshaw (1988:340).

³⁶ Cf. Rosengren (1987:157).

was substantially reduced. After a year, though, during which time the *wáxoks* of the two men were able to calm down, the teacher began, once more, to visit his parents-in-law's house and the previous sharing relationship was re-established.

Thomas (1982:236) states for the Pemon that: "beyond the minimal level of nuclear family and sibling set, each individual defines a unique social field."³⁷ This comment encapsulates the essence of a person's *nelásekamaxkoho* which should be conceived of as ego-based networks of relationships. Even members of the same household rarely have *nelásekamaxkoho* that are perfectly synonymous although they often overlap closely. For example, in late 1995 a conflict occurred between Eligio, in House 23, and his brother-in-law, and neighbour, Gonzalo in House 24. Once, when drunk, Gonzalo began to beat his wife Anuncia, Eligio's sister, and, as soon as Eligio heard the commotion, he ran over to his sister's house to protect her, attacking Gonzalo with a knife. The word "to protect" is [-]*masma*, which, as I explained, is also the root of *nelmeyamaxchek*, one of the terms used by ego to refer to his or her intra-community social relations. In this context, Anuncia, her siblings and other "close" kin in Houses 4, 18, 21, 22, 23 and 24 clearly envisaged each other as part of each other's *nelmeyamaxchek*, "those of us who protect each other," while Gonzalo was excluded and viewed as a threat. The social relations of Gonzalo and Anuncia were, therefore, quite distinct and, in fact, Gonzalo made a number of attempts to move to different communities. Anuncia, though, always persuaded him to return.

Therefore, at any particular time, each person regards a specific set of others as his or her social field so that intra-community relations can only be understood as a mosaic of overlapping sets of social relationships that emanate from each individual within the community and are constantly being transformed. Such social fields may or may not correspond to the spatial distribution of houses within the community.³⁸ Although, as Maps 5.1 and 5.2 indicate, many closely related people live as near neighbours, others who maintain good "loving" relations can often live quite far from each other, at times up to a kilometre. Yet, the lack of proximity need not necessarily affect the relationship since people can still visit each other, often doing so every day. For example, the parents in House 5 maintained very close contact with their children in Houses 1, 2 and 17, visiting each other frequently and sharing food whenever they had a surplus. Often, the contact between the parents and their children was indirect, and I frequently observed the granddaughters in House 17 taking food and other gifts to their grandparents. And, whenever the grandfather was absent, one or two grandchildren would always spend the night in House 5 to accompany their

³⁷ Cf. Santos Granero (1991:43), Belaunde (1992:20, 180) and Overing (1993b:51).

³⁸ Cf. Chapter 5.

grandmother. In contrast, there are many examples of neighbours who rarely, if ever, visit each other and so it would be incorrect to correlate geographical distance with the closeness of a relationship.

My analysis of intra-community social relations as a series of overlapping, constantly changing, ego-focused social fields contrasts sharply with other anthropological portrayals of similar post-colonial agglomerated and “sedentary” lowland South American indigenous communities. They are often described as divided into a number of coherent, bounded and geographically discrete groups of households. A variety of names have been applied to these putative groups including “cluster,”³⁹ “residential nucleus,”⁴⁰ “residential section,”⁴¹ “residential unit,”⁴² “residential group,”⁴³ “family group”⁴⁴ and “extended kin group.”⁴⁵ Such “clusters” are said to be comprised of small numbers of households linked by ties of close kinship and, typically, two types of “cluster” are identified: those formed by parents and their married children and those predicated on sibling sets.⁴⁶ It is suggested that, within “clusters,” the degree of economic and social co-operation between households is greater than between households belonging to different clusters. Three investigators - Forrest (1987:34), Alvarsson (1988:71) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:102) - have followed this theory through to its logical conclusion by providing maps which spatially represent the location of “clusters” within Kalinya, Wichí and Araweté settlements.

However, I suggest that the concept of “clusters” may have led investigators to misrepresent the true nature of social organisation within agglomerated indigenous communities. By naming and representing these putative “clusters” in spatial terms, a unit of social organization has been created and reified which is, in reality, frequently non-existent or, at most, ephemeral and transitory. Descriptions of “clusters” reflect the “bird’s eye,” synchronic perspective of the outside analyst but disguise the real complexity and dynamism of intra-community relations which can only be adequately represented as a series of continually changing and overlapping ego-based social fields.

³⁹ Renshaw (1986:223), Forrest (1987:33) and Ellis (1996:91).

⁴⁰ Renshaw (1986:214).

⁴¹ Viveiros de Castro (1992:100f).

⁴² Reed (1995:79).

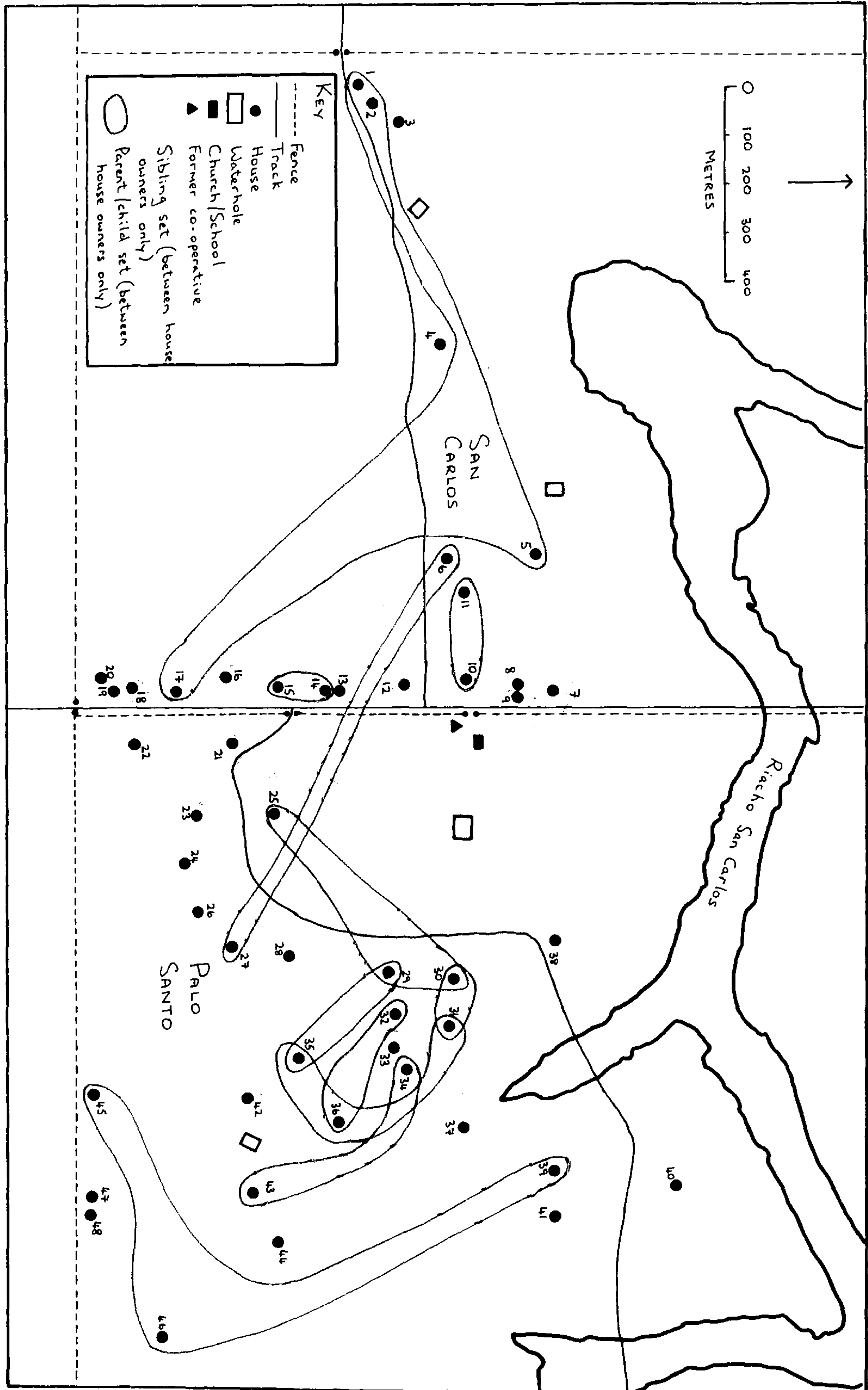
⁴³ Palmer (1997:63).

⁴⁴ Alvarsson (1988:76f).

⁴⁵ Renshaw (1986:214).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Renshaw (1986:232ff) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:100f).

Map 10.2. Sets of Houses in Palo Santo and San Carlos with Owners that are Related as Parents/Children and/or as Siblings



Even at the simplest level of analysis, that of parent/child and sibling relations, discrete, bounded “clusters” of houses are almost impossible to discern within Enxet settlements. Map 10.2 is an attempt to represent spatially the relative locations of those houses whose owners are related as parents and children (in red) and as siblings (in green), and it is evident that there are a great many overlaps.⁴⁷ If all the relations between people who consider themselves to be “close” kin were plotted on a map, the tangle of lines would be almost unintelligible and it would not be possible to identify any “clusters.” Yet, the “untidiness” of my spatial representation can be compared with the clarity and neatness of the community maps drawn by Forrest, Alvarsson and Viveiros de Castro, with Alvarsson showing no overlaps between “clusters,” Forrest only one and Viveiros de Castro three.

An analysis of intra-community social relations predicated on “clusters” privileges the household over the individual, stasis over dynamism, structure over process, kinship over sociality and geographical proximity over interpersonal contact. It almost certainly misrepresents the character of social relations within post-colonial agglomerated indigenous settlements and probably arises from the tendency of researchers to search for an elusive order and to visualize societies from the outside as bounded units sub-divided into further bounded units as if they were a jigsaw puzzle.⁴⁸ To attain an understanding of the perspective of indigenous people, it is necessary to reverse one’s point of view so that relations are visualized from the inside as emanating out from each individual. The adoption of such a perspective would impede the anthropologist’s creation of spatially differentiated, bounded “clusters,” while the mapping of social relations would become, if not meaningless, certainly a task of immense complexity.

The system of voluntary sharing that I have described corresponds closely with Overing’s (1996b) model of generated social relations in which it is the act that creates the social relation.⁴⁹ This contrasts with McCallum’s (1989:203) assertion that, in gift-giving, it is the object that stands for the relationship between giver and receiver. In Chapter 7, I discussed how she bases this assertion on a putative metonymic relationship between a gift and its giver, the existence of which I called into question. Among the Enxet it is the act of giving that creates the relationship rather than the object itself. This stress on practice corresponds more closely with the

⁴⁷ I have not mapped all the parent-child and sibling links but only those between the owners of the houses.

⁴⁸ To be fair to Viveiros de Castro (1992:100ff), he does admit the “fuzziness” of the “clusters” that he creates. Nevertheless, this admission makes his decision to create order by visually representing Araweté “clusters” as somewhat surprising. Cf. Rosengren (1987:141) and Ellis (1996:151).

⁴⁹ See Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion of Overing’s model of generated social relations.

notion that the creation of relationships is a process rather than predicated on structures. While individuals may have in their possession a large number of gifts from other people, the possession of these objects and the memory of their giving is not enough to sustain the relationship. Instead, a relationship needs to be continually regenerated by new acts of giving and so stress is placed on action rather than on objects.

Overing's (1996b; 1999) insistence on the generative nature of indigenous American social relations also contrasts sharply with Fortes' (1983) model of prescriptive altruism which proposes that it is the kinship relation that creates the sharing act. Indeed, throughout lowland South America a series of recent investigations have arrived at the same conclusion as Overing, characterizing the creation of indigenous social relationships as a process.⁵⁰ It is through the giving and receiving of food - and other gifts - that sociality is created and maintained.⁵¹ Furthermore, a decision not to give when in possession of a surplus transmits a strong message that a social relationship is considered not to exist or is not desired.⁵² Indeed, within indigenous communities patterns of sharing are clear indicators of the current state of social relations.

Concepts of property are, therefore, very relevant to an understanding of social relations.⁵³ Full ownership by individuals or households establishes a distinction between donor and recipient so that the act of giving is possible.⁵⁴ If food were owned by the whole community - as has been suggested for Chaco indigenous peoples by Renshaw (1986:187ff) - then the distinction between giver and receiver would disappear and the foundations for the creation of social life would be imperilled.⁵⁵ Ingold (1986) moves a step on from Renshaw by asserting that, although food is ultimately the property of the collectivity, a pretence of individual appropriation is created. In effect, he views the "owner" of food as no more than its custodian who has

⁵⁰ See, for example, McCallum (1989), Gow (1991), Santos Granero (1991), Belaunde (1992) and Ellis (1996).

⁵¹ Cf. McCallum (1989:206), Gow (1991:119), Santos Granero (1991:45) and Belaunde (1982:182).

⁵² Cf. Goldman (1963:84) who notes that, "the Cubeo know very well what non-sharing means: He does not like us," and McCallum (1989:206) who states that, among the Cashinahua, "refusing to give is tantamount to denying kinship."

⁵³ See Chapter 7.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ingold (1986:228) and Belaunde (1992:20f, 181).

⁵⁵ At this point, though, I should register my discomfort with statements such as: "The true 'object' (in the sense of moral purpose) of production is social living itself" (McCallum 1989:16). To me, this statement suggests that indigenous people engage in production with the single aim of creating sociality. Yet, it almost certainly misrepresents the indigenous vision and creates in the reader an image of indigenous people as ideal human beings whose sole purpose is to serve others. In reality, indigenous people produce for a multitude of reasons and, while some are directed towards the promotion of social living, many derive from more self-centred purposes. See also Chapter 12.

no choice but to share (1986:229). Yet, Ingold's model contrasts markedly with the Enxet understanding of voluntary sharing which is predicated on the existence of full ownership of food and the possibility of denying it to others.

The Enxet regard voluntary sharing as impelled by "love" and as arising from the conscious decision of the individual. In effect, it is described as a "thought" - literally, "the mentioning of one's *wáxok*" - and cannot, therefore, be imposed from the outside. Indeed, even the construction of the verb "to give" - *[-]mésó* - highlights the agency of the giver. Comprising the verb *[-]ma* - "to take" or "to have" - and the causative suffix *[-]ésó*, it means, literally, "to cause [someone] to take" or "to cause [someone] to have." Each individual, therefore, makes his or her own decisions about who to share with voluntarily and, in doing so, constitutes his or her own unique field of social relations. If food were owned by the community then the personal motivation that is key to an understanding of voluntary sharing would be absent.

Voluntary sharing is, therefore, a form of giving that is free from a sense of obligation. People share because they want to, and part of the evidence for this desire is that they choose to whom they give their property.⁵⁶ Injunctions, such as the "obligation to share everything with everyone" - which Guemple (1988:140) states is characteristic of the Qiqqtamiut of the east Hudson Bay area - would make little sense to the Enxet. Indeed, it may well be that statements in the literature suggesting that indigenous people share with everyone in their community need to be re-evaluated since it is likely that they are, at the very least, imprecise and, in some cases, they may be genuinely misleading. People may, when a large animal has been killed, share with everyone but, on a day to day basis, when surpluses are more limited, individuals have to decide with whom they will share and with whom they will not. As I indicated in Chapter 7, a review of the literature suggests a close positive correlation between the size of a surplus and the number of people with whom it is shared.

⁵⁶ Endicott (1988:125) makes the comment that, among the Batek of Malaysia, "there is always an element of randomness in who is given a family's extra food." I would reject, though, the idea that sharing is random among the Enxet. Although they may share with different people over time, they make conscious decisions about who to share with. Indeed, elsewhere in his article, Endicott informs the reader that food is normally shared with those in adjacent shelters which suggests a much greater degree of intentionality (1988:116).

10.3 Gender and the Creation of Social Relations

In recent years a debate has taken place among anthropologists of Lowland South America on the role of gender in the sharing of food and whether men or women are responsible for creating social and political relationships. The conventional view, as expressed by, for example, Rivière (1984:92; 1987:187f) and Mentore (1987:519), is that men distribute food for their own political ends through their control over the means of production and women's labour. In agreement with Collier and Rosaldo (1981:281) they claim that "adult men ... appear as the forgers of social relationships."

Increasingly, this viewpoint has been questioned, not least by Overing (1986b:140) who has challenged the universal validity of such simplistic dichotomies as women:men::private:public::domestic:political. Her criticism reflects the increasing evidence within Lowland South America that most sharing is carried out not by men but by women.⁵⁷ Consequently, some anthropologists have begun to stress the role of women in creating social and, by implication, political relationships. Indeed, some appear to allot the dominant role in the production of social relationships to women rather than men. For instance, Belaunde (1992:207), when referring to the Airo-Pai, states that:⁵⁸ "The preparation and circulation of cooked food are in [women's] hands and the inter-female network of food-sharing is at the core of the construction of a 'safe' community of kin." Similarly, McCallum (1989:220) asserts that, for the Cashinahua: "Women are instrumental in the distribution of male and female products, in prestations which strengthen their and their husband's ties with kin and affines," and that, "the meal they serve stands for the making of social life itself." Gow (1991:124) and Ellis (1996:163) appear to propose the same argument for both the Piro and the Tsimane.

While none of these authors suggest that the role of men in social reproduction is irrelevant, they tend to restrict the contribution of men to the production rather than the distribution of food, especially game animals. Women are seen as responsible for transforming male production into a social product and for making the decisions on

⁵⁷ For examples of the role of women in sharing see: Goldman (1963:79), Siskind (1973:81f), Overing Kaplan/Overing (1975:38; 1986b:149f), Kracke (1978:21, 41), Henley (1982:130), Forrest (1987:323ff), Rosengren (1987:76), Kensinger (1989:25), McCallum (1989), Townsley (1988:42ff), Gow (1991), Seymour-Smith (1991:636, 642), Belaunde (1992), Viveiros de Castro (1992:138f), Dean (1995:87) and Ellis (1996). Within the Chaco, the following authors have noted the role of women in the sharing of food: Bernau (1899:188), Henry (1951), Seelwische (1974:155), Renshaw (1986:188; 1988:343), Fritz (1994:108) and Kidd (1995b).

⁵⁸ See also Belaunde (1992:21, 182).

its distribution.⁵⁹ In a reversal of Rivière's and Mentore's argument, men are relegated to a passive role in the creation of social and political relations while women assume the status of protagonists.

Although the gulf between the two positions would appear unbreachable, I would like to suggest that an examination of gender relations among the Enxet could open up the possibility of some form of compromise. Two key issues need to be clarified when trying to determine the respective roles of men and women in sharing: one concerns the identity of the owner of the distributed food⁶⁰ while the other has to do with the identity of the person responsible for making decisions on food distribution. Identifying who is responsible for physically handing over food is of much less significance since they may be fulfilling somebody else's request. In fact, a number of authors have noted the role played by children in carrying food between houses.⁶¹

As I noted in Chapter 7, among the Enxet it is the producer or the purchaser of food who is usually regarded as its owner. When returning home with their "catch," they are responsible for any decisions about whether to share it with those they meet. In this situation, therefore, men and women are in control of the creation of their own social fields. However, once food has been pooled within the household, it becomes the property of all its members. Any subsequent decisions regarding the distribution of the food are taken on the basis of mutuality by a husband and wife who consider themselves to be "companions." Either spouse can take the initiative to share in any particular situation. For instance: invitations to visit someone's home can be proffered by either the husband or wife or both; when receiving visitors, either spouse can offer a meal or insist that the visitors take food home; or, if an animal is killed, both husband and wife are involved in deciding the destination of any surplus. Either spouse can suggest who to give it to and the other will almost always agree either by verbally expressing assent or, conversely, by remaining silent. It would be unacceptable for one spouse to impose a decision on the other. Of course, the actual dynamics of reaching a decision vary considerably between families: in some, the husband is more active in initiating decisions while, in others, it may be the wife. And, it should be recognized that often no explicit decision needs to be made since, on a day-to-day basis, both spouses know who they usually share with anyway. Those receiving food are likely to identify only one of the spouses as the giver, usually their closest relative irrespective of whether it is a man or a woman. Yet, this can change

⁵⁹ See: McCallum (1989:207f), Gow (1991:124ff), Belaunde (1992:207) and Ellis (1996:138f).

⁶⁰ Overing (1986b:149f) makes a similar point.

⁶¹ Cf. Gow (1991:128) and McCallum (1989:208).

over time and, once people develop a close relationship with a kinsperson's spouse, the latter may become the identified giver.

The tendency to name individuals as the givers and receivers can create the impression that the Enxet conceive of economic relations as taking place between individuals. Yet, since food is pooled and belongs to both spouses, we should not lose sight of the fact that transactions occur between households and I believe that this conception is shared by the Enxet.⁶² This is indicated by the tendency of people, after receiving food, to use the first person plural - as in "he/she gave it to us" ("*senméso*") - when referring to themselves. However, this type of linguistic evidence should be treated with caution since statements vary considerably between individuals and between contexts. Indeed, it is likely that the Enxet simultaneously conceive of sharing as being undertaken between both individuals and households.

I would suggest, therefore, that, as far as the Enxet are concerned, it would be wrong to claim that either men or women are exclusively - or even mainly- responsible for food sharing. Instead, decisions on sharing are usually based on the principle of mutuality between spouses which corresponds with the Enxet conception of the spouse as a "companion" (*[-/]xege^xma*). Consequently, both spouses are jointly responsible for the creation of most of their social relations and, while their respective social fields may not be entirely synonymous, they exhibit a significant high degree of overlap.

Moreover, there are indications that a similar process is characteristic of lowland South America in general, which is not surprising given the prevalence of both the household pooling of food and marriage relations predicated on the principle of complementarity. Even in the writing of those anthropologists who stress the role of women in sharing it is possible to discern a significant degree of mutuality in decision-making between spouses. Belaunde (1992:195), for example, points out that decisions on the distribution of raw meat are taken by both Airo-Pai spouses, while she also notes that women give bread on behalf of their families (1992:183). Furthermore, Gow (1991:124), despite his insistence that Piro women make the decisions on food distribution, appears to be contradicted by the only example he offers of the decision-making process taking place, in which it is clear that both husband and wife are active participants. Statements by McCallum (1989:214) and Ellis (1996:150) also indicate that sharing occurs between families or households among both the Cashinahua and Tsimane.

⁶² Cf. Henry (1951:200).

Overing (1986b:140), therefore, is correct when she states that indigenous women are not universally restricted to the domestic sphere and that they can also play a significant political role. However, we need to take care that we do not interpret this statement as indicating an either/or situation with regard to the respective roles of men and women. Assertions that stress the role of one or the other as the fulcrum of the creation of social and political relations may distort the ethnographic evidence. Instead, it may be that a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of indigenous social relations can be achieved only by reclaiming the significance of both spouses.⁶³ Indigenous politics, therefore, can be conceived of as an arena in which the roles of both men and women are critical.

10.4 Redistribution

A feature common to many indigenous peoples in lowland South America is the generosity of their leaders⁶⁴ and this was also the case among the Enxet in pre-colonial times. Their leaders were powerful shamans and were expected to use their power to protect and care for the members of their communities, which included being generous with their possessions⁶⁵ (Grubb 1911:145, 161). I described in Chapter 2 how shamans obtain their power through their knowledge of the outside - in other words, the spiritual beings of the unseen world which they are able to manipulate and control - and the same paradigmatic model also applies to contemporary leaders.⁶⁶ They, too, become leaders because of their knowledge of the outside although, nowadays, the “outside” often refers to the national society. Leaders normally speak good Guarani with some Spanish - the two national languages of Paraguay - and, to a certain extent, understand how national society functions. They develop links with “beings” from the national society - such as missionaries, NGOs, politicians and government officials - and are expected to manipulate these relations for the benefit of their communities.⁶⁷ In effect, they should use their “power” to “love” and “care for” their followers,⁶⁸ and similar notions of leadership are found elsewhere in lowland South America. Among the Cashinahua leaders are expected to “feed” their

⁶³ Cf. Ellis (1996:137).

⁶⁴ Cf. Goldman (1963:151), Levi-Strauss (1967:54ff), Overing Kaplan (1975:64), Kracke (1978:47), Price (1981:694), Seeger (1981:182), McCallum (1989:241) and Belaunde (1992:106ff).

⁶⁵ Cf. Hawtrey (1901:292) and Grubb (1904:65).

⁶⁶ A similar point has been made for other indigenous peoples of Lowland South America by Overing (1986b:138; 1988:171), McCallum (1989:225ff), Gow (1991:229; 238ff), Viveiros de Castro (1992:118, 141) and Gray (1997a:116f).

⁶⁷ See also Kidd (1995:61ff).

⁶⁸ Cf. Hawtrey (1901:292) and Henry (1951:251).

communities (McCallum 1989) while the Airo-Pai employ the similar metaphor of “raising” people (Belaunde 1992).

The expectation that leaders should “love” their community members is implicit in the construction of the verb “to distribute” - [-] *melascho*. Combining the root [-] *mele*, “to be fat” - which is intimately associated with the Enxet notion of well-being⁶⁹ - and the causative suffix [-] *ascho*, it could be translated as “to cause to be fat” if it were not for the existence of another verb, [-] *meláso*, which signifies “to fatten.” In fact, they are both essentially the same word and are only differentiated by the pronunciation of the suffix. [-] *ascho* is reminiscent of the pronunciation of the causative suffix at the turn of the century while, nowadays, the phoneme *ch* has been dropped so that the same suffix is now pronounced as [-] *áso*, as in [-] *meláso*. Interestingly, [-] *melascho* is the only word in the language which has retained the old pronunciation and it has evidently happened so as to establish a clear distinction between the verbs “to distribute” and “to fatten.” The distinction may have become necessary because while, in pre-colonial times, a “distribution” only involved “food,” nowadays it can refer to any object, including food, durable goods and money. Therefore, for [-] *melascho* to have continued to have the explicit meaning of “to fatten” would have been non-sensical, although it is tempting to consider that the essential meaning of “to distribute” is “to cause to live well.” When a contemporary leader distributes goods, he could, therefore, be viewed as enhancing the well-being of the members of his community.

Indigenous colonies are characterized by a lack of resources and large populations and it is impossible for contemporary leaders to produce enough to “love” adequately all their community members. Yet, for a leader to maintain his position he must continually prove his generosity, a strategy that corresponds with the indigenous stress on practice rather than structure. The only way that they can successfully practise “love” among the entire community is to obtain goods from the outside, from those non-indigenous people with whom they have developed relationships. As a result, leaders spend long periods in Asunción trying to obtain goods for their communities and one leader from El Estribo was even named as *representante necesidad* - literally, “needs representative.” Although community members are aware that the goods arriving in their communities do not belong to the leaders - and so it could not be said that the leaders themselves are being generous - people do recognize that the leaders “suffer” on their behalf to obtain them: they use their own money to travel to Asunción, they spend a great deal of time absent from their

⁶⁹ Cf. Susnik (1977:214).

families and friends, and they are often treated badly by the White people they meet. It is this suffering that is regarded as a manifestation of a leader's "love" for his community. In addition, people realize that goods are only acquired by capable leaders who can skilfully "open up" - [-]meykeso - access to them by manipulating powerful white people.

Prior to the fall of Stroessner in 1989, the Enxet had very few groups in national society to which they could turn for "help."⁷⁰ Stroessner, by default, had delegated responsibility for indigenous people to Christian Missions and the only Mission working among the southern Enxet in the 1980s was the Anglican Church. The Enxet, therefore, had the choice of either approaching the Anglicans for "help" or, if they lived on a ranch, of persuading the landowner to assist them, perhaps by killing an old cow. However, since 1989 there has been a proliferation of organizations willing to provide material support to indigenous people.⁷¹ Of greatest significance are the political parties who are interested in the indigenous vote. Under Stroessner, elections were a foregone conclusion and the indigenous vote was irrelevant. However, Paraguay is now nominally democratic and within the Department of Presidente Hayes the indigenous people comprise almost half the electorate. No one can win an election without their support and, as a result, politicians invest a great deal of effort into delivering goods to indigenous communities in an attempt to buy their votes.⁷² Indigenous leaders usually develop a close relationship with one specific candidate and agree to exchange the vote of their communities for a substantial amount of goods. Other organizations targeted by indigenous people include government agencies, NGOs and an increasing number of Missions. Indeed, many Enxet communities have left the Anglican Church to follow Korean or Pentecostal Missions and, since the Korean missionaries tend to be owners of supermarkets in Asunción, they usually take to the Enxet communities as gifts any food that has passed its sell-by date.⁷³

However, my concern here is not with the process of obtaining goods from outside sources.⁷⁴ Instead, my interest is in examining what happens to the goods once they arrive in the indigenous community, in other words the process of "redistribution" itself. A wide range of goods can be obtained by leaders, including

⁷⁰ The goods that the Enxet receive from outsiders are often referred to as "help" - [-]pasmó.

⁷¹ See Kidd (1994; 1997c) for a discussion of Paraguay's indigenous policies post-Stroessner.

⁷² See also Kidd (1995a).

⁷³ Some communities "follow" a number of Missions, although each missionary believes that they are exclusively his.

⁷⁴ See Kidd (1995a) for more detailed discussions of how indigenous people manipulate powerful white people to obtain "help."

provisions, second-hand clothes, tools, domestic animals and money, and, to illustrate how redistribution occurs, I will describe a typical example from El Estribo. I will show that, although the practice of redistribution is implicated with the notion of “love,” it is also a dangerous activity and can easily provoke the appearance of “hate” and “anger.” Therefore, while it can be constitutive of community social life, it can also generate divisions.

In 1996, the two main leaders in El Estribo - Eugenio and Papito - were both actively involved in the search for goods from politicians. It had been originally agreed that each would target different politicians and that anything they obtained would be shared among everyone. In practice, though, El Estribo became politically divided with some communities committing themselves to Eugenio’s candidate while others followed Papito’s. This was partly because of competition between the two, since both Eugenio and Papito wanted to gain as many followers as possible, but it was also imposed by the politicians who demanded lists of those who had agreed to vote for them and would only provide provisions to those on the list. Eugenio’s politician was supported by Palo Santo, San Carlos, Karandá, Veinte de Enero and half of Para Todo’í.

In February 1996, a lorry carrying provisions from Eugenio’s politician travelled to El Estribo but, two hundred metres short of the gate - and six hundred metres from Eugenio’s house - it became stuck in the mud. The news of its arrival spread quickly and, within a short time, seventy men had extracted it from the mud. The driver, though, refused to cross the mud again and so Eugenio suggested that we all carry the food to his house. By late afternoon, the provisions were at Eugenio’s and comprised a total of: 120 five kilogramme bags of rice, 60 five kilogramme bags of pasta, 120 one kilogramme bags of sugar, 60 five kilogramme bags of salt, 60 five kilogramme bags of flour, 60 boxes of soap (with 15 bars in each), 60 five kilogramme bags of *yerba*, and 60 five litre bottles of oil. Representatives from each family in the communities that followed Eugenio’s politician gathered around the food but, since it was becoming dark, Eugenio suggested that we should wait until morning for the distribution of the food so that it could be done properly. No one agreed with him and, instead, people insisted that they wanted the distribution to be completed that evening.

A list of 136 families who were eligible for food was produced but, since that was greater than 120 - which was the number of bags or half bags available - and would, complicate measuring how much each family was due, it was decided to eliminate from the list those families that did not have any member resident at the

time. The new list came up with 118 families and included myself since, despite my protestations, Eugenio insisted that I be counted as a separate family.

A small group of men who had congregated around Eugenio discussed how to carry out the distribution and they decided to give each family a whole bag of rice and sugar and half a bag, box or bottle of everything else. Family size was irrelevant in the calculations and, consequently, I received as much as a family of eight. The first people to receive their food were the community of Palo Santo who were immediately followed by San Carlos. For the first half an hour things ran smoothly but problems soon began to arise as people became “angry” - [-]lóló. The first instance of “anger” occurred when, halfway through the San Carlos list, a decision was made to suspend the handing over of food to the San Carlos people so that those from Karandá, Veinte de Enero and Para Todo’í could receive their share as they had further to return home. A man from San Carlos, who had still not received his food, became angry when the decision was made, opposing it loudly. A little later, another man from San Carlos complained about receiving half bags instead of whole bags and brusquely walked off without anything, although Eugenio gave his provisions to his son who took them home. An old lady and her daughter from Karandá became angry when they discovered that their son/brother was not on the list. He had recently arrived in El Estribo after being abandoned by his wife in Makthlawaiya and Eugenio explained to them that he had been excluded because he did not own a house in the colony. Despite having waited patiently for hours, the two ladies also returned home without any food and, again, Eugenio asked others to take them their provisions. Another old lady from Para Todo’í was refused food because her name did not appear on a list and she responded “angrily” by saying that she would tear down the politician’s election poster.

“Anger” is often employed as a technique for getting one’s own way and people frequently give into others’ requests if they become angry. The *wáxok* of the person against whom the anger is directed can become disturbed and one way of restoring equilibrium is to satisfy the person making the “demand” so that their anger ceases. However, during the distribution of the food, the displays of “anger” were ineffective because Ricardo, another leader, “strengthened/locked” his *wáxok* and refused to give in. Although such a “strengthening/locking” of the *wáxok* to deny someone food is often disapproved of, in this context most people viewed it as perfectly acceptable; their disagreement with the demands being made was manifested in their silence and refusal to support those who were “angry.” It was, therefore, relatively easy for Ricardo to “strengthen/lock” his *wáxok* because he knew that he was representing the viewpoint of most people present.

Another problem occurred with the arrival of a number of families from Alegre who were supporters of Papito's politician and had, in fact, recently received provisions from him. They spoke with Eugenio, insisting that they be placed on the list, and, surprisingly, he agreed. By turning up and demanding provisions, the people from Alegre had acted without "restraint" and it was probably their relatively large number that persuaded Eugenio to give in to them. However, a few days later in a community meeting for San Carlos and Palo Santo, Eugenio announced that he had heard that people in Veinte de Enero had complained about his giving food to those from Alegre. He continued:

"They say that I am "crazy" - [-]yéhaxma - because of what I did. But how can they say this about me. If I give things to people I can't be "crazy." A "crazy" person is someone who doesn't give things to people. I'm going to Veinte de Enero to see about this. They say that I'm crazy because I gave food to the people from Alegre. But it wasn't me who told the people from Alegre to come. They must have heard that the food had arrived. Someone must have told them."

Eugenio also mentioned that he had given in to the Alegre people because he had "restraint" - [-]ennawagko - and had not wanted to speak to them with "hard words." He, therefore, defended himself by appealing to the ethical practices of "love" and "restraint." He had also faced a further problem the morning after the redistribution when some people who had already received provisions returned to his house complaining that they had missed out on certain things. Eugenio gave them what they asked and, in the meeting, defended himself by claiming that he "had no 'strength' in his wáxok" or, in other words, "that his wáxok was not 'locked'" - "méko ekyennakté [-]wáxok." He was, therefore, unable to stop himself from giving it. By admitting his "soft/unlocked" wáxok, he was again indicating that he had acted in "love" and should not, therefore, be criticized. However, at other times, Eugenio justified his leadership on the grounds that he had a "strong" wáxok and, therefore, would be able to speak "heavy" words to Paraguayans. He changed his discourse and the valuation he placed on aspects of human character according to what suited him best at any particular moment.⁷⁵ In fact, during the meeting he was indirectly challenged by his younger brother who said that the leaders should "strengthen" their wáxoks, implying that Eugenio had been "timid" rather than "restrained" in his dealings over the food.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ See also Chapter 3.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 3 for my discussion of [-]ennawagko.

In the end, therefore, the “redistribution” - which was meant to be a prime example of “love” - ended up by generating social conflict, in other words “hate” and “anger.” The problem was discussed in a community meeting held the next week and a number of people mentioned how “the food had caused us to be angry” - “*nento senlókáso*.” In effect, therefore, the reason for people’s anger was externalized and a number of suggestions were offered to resolve the problem in the future. One man proposed that they should stop asking politicians for food so as to remove the cause of their loss of tranquillity. However, this was quickly rejected in place of a suggestion to ask the politicians for more food. It was finally agreed that it was the *lack of food* rather than the food itself that had caused the “anger” and, therefore, an abundance of provisions would be the best solution.

Redistribution is also problematic in that it provides leaders with the opportunity to enrich themselves and deceive their communities. As I suggested earlier, leaders are expected to act with “love” and to use their knowledge of the outside for the benefit of their communities’ members.⁷⁷ Yet, many leaders can act in a selfish manner especially if they believe that they will not be found out. A lack of trust in Eugenio was almost certainly one reason for people insisting that the distribution of the provisions took place straightaway since, if they had been left overnight, some might have disappeared. One particularly illustrative example of a leader deceiving his community occurred in the colony of Espinillo. Carlos, the leader, had obtained a large quantity of second-hand clothing from a charity in Asunción which was transported to his colony by an NGO. Since the truck arrived late in the afternoon, Carlos announced that the “redistribution” would take place the next morning. That evening, as we sat around the fire, Carlos complained to me about how another leader in the community - his sister’s husband - had received goods from Korean missionaries but had kept many of them for himself. He assured me that he would not act in that way since a good leader should “love” everyone in his community. Yet, as he spoke his wife, daughters and daughter-in-law were busy delving into each bag of clothes, removing the most attractive garments for themselves and calling their “closest” kin to the house to receive other choice articles. By the time the “redistribution” took place, the bags had been re-sealed and no mention was made of Carlos’ family’s nocturnal activities.

In Makthlawaiya, every leader in recent years has managed to deceive other community members, especially after receiving money on behalf of the community.

⁷⁷ A similar point has been made for other indigenous people by, among others, Butt (1965/6:178), Kracke (1978:43), McCallum (1989:223), Gow (1991:238), Santos Granero (1986a:662; 1991:229) and Overing (1986b:138; 1988:171; 1992).

Since money can be hidden, it makes deceit easier and, on many occasions, the leaders returned from trips to Asunción - where they had been given the community's money - to announce that they had received much less than expected or to make up some other excuse for its disappearance. Once, the leaders claimed that one of their number had slept with a Paraguayan prostitute who had stolen the money while he was sleeping. Although no one could know the truth, most community members were certain that the leaders had either spent the money or had hidden it. They were rarely challenged since to do so would have required another member of the community to "strengthen" his or her *wáxok* and call a meeting to confront them.⁷⁸ During my time with the Anglican Church, I tried to help the community deal with their "corrupt" leaders and once called a meeting so that they could demand an explanation from them for the disappearance of some money. Many people attended the meeting but we waited in vain for the leaders who were soon spotted ostentatiously drinking *caña* some three hundred metres away. The meeting was abandoned after people explained that it would be a waste of time to hold it since the leaders, now drunk, could easily become "angry."

On another occasion, during the Christmas festival, one leader obtained a cow from a neighbouring rancher that was to be slaughtered and its meat distributed among the whole community. The cow was duly butchered but, during the distribution of the meat, people noticed that the ribs - the most prized part of the animal - were missing. The leader had kept them for a barbecue in his house and, all Christmas, the rest of the community talked sarcastically about the amazing cow with no ribs. However, the leader's appropriation of the ribs was the straw that broke the camel's back and, a few days later, some of the men with aspirations to leadership called a community meeting and deposed him.

Therefore, as well as having the potential to cause "anger," "redistribution" and the apparently "loving" act of obtaining goods on behalf of the community can also tempt leaders to act in their own interests and against those of their people. Therefore, an act that is, on the one hand, generative of "loving" relations can also create social conflict as "anger" and "hate" begin to appear.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 3.

10.5 Conclusion

Voluntary sharing is a significant feature of Enxet community life and is both impelled by and generative of “love.” Indeed, voluntary sharing is an aspect of “love” itself and, as Overing (1996b) suggests, it is a key factor in the creation and re-creation of social living. Therefore, the conviction of certain anthropologists, such as Campbell (1995:150), that sharing does not occur out of love or kindness but only because of obligation would appear to deny a fundamental aspect of indigenous philosophy. People do give because they care and they can only do so because they have full property rights over their possessions, including food.

Yet, voluntary sharing is only one aspect of indigenous economic transactions. As I showed in my discussion on redistribution by leaders, the distance between “love” and “hate” can be minimal and if sharing is not practised properly it can quickly lead to a severe deterioration in social relations. In Chapter 12, I will continue with this theme by considering another form of sharing - demand sharing - and I will explain how lying and deceit are key elements in the generation of a tranquil and convivial community life. Before that, though, I will examine the practice of voluntary sharing from a spatial perspective.

11. THE SONS OF JOB THE PATRIARCH

There has been a tendency within the anthropology of lowland South America to represent indigenous conceptions of the “inside” and “outside” in spatial terms. Rivière¹ (1984:70f), for example, has described the indigenous model of social space within the Guianas as, “based on concentric dualism with us on the inside and them on the outside.”² This image evokes Sahlins’ (1974:199) pictorial representation of spheres of reciprocity in which he presents a continuum stretching from “generalized reciprocity” on the inside to “negative reciprocity” on the far outside.³ Such a concept of social space is closely related to the widely held notion of a nature:culture dichotomy in which culture is associated with the village (the inside) and nature with the forest (the outside).⁴

This spatial model can also be perceived in the work of those anthropologists of lowland South America who are at the forefront of promoting the notion that sharing generates sociality. They stress the construction of a local “community of nurture”⁵ through the sharing of food between its members⁶ and, indeed, Overing’s (1989b:172) assertion that the creation of social life is a *daily* achievement implies that the generation of sociality must be restricted to the local community.⁷ Furthermore, the stress on the local community often leads to a conflation of co-residence and kinship as exemplified by Gow (1991:194) who states: “The [Piro] community is composed of kin because coresidents should act towards each other as if they were kin. Living together and sharing food are what kin are meant to do, so the practical enactment of co-residence and of sharing food makes people interact with each other as kin.”⁸ And, mirroring Sahlins (1974), Overing (1992:193) notes that, “in the view of the Piaroa the community sets the boundary for safe, and therefore *social* relations, beyond which began in varying degrees the *asocial* relations of exchange and foreign relations.”⁹

¹ Cf. Rivière (1969:270f).

² Rivière (1995:199) states that the model of social space that he presents is an ideal and it is likely that he does not regard it as being necessarily reflected in geographical space. However, I have no doubt that his remarks have been interpreted by other anthropologists as referring to geographical space.

³ Cf. Ingold (1986:232).

⁴ Good examples are found in Rivière (1969:259ff), Seeger (1981:67) and Alvarsson (1988:53,163). However, the applicability of the nature/culture dichotomy to the cosmologies of lowland South American indigenous peoples has already been challenged by a number of anthropologists who have argued against a simple spatial representation of inside/outside (Overing 1996a, Descola 1994; Viveiros de Castro 1996).

⁵ Cf. Overing (1992:194) and Belaunde (1992:20).

⁶ Cf. McCallum (1989:207ff), Gow (1991:165), Overing (1992:181) and Belaunde (1992:21, 182).

⁷ Cf. Overing (1992:181; 1993b:52; 1996b).

⁸ Cf. Overing’s (1996b) statement that: “the aim of community life [is] to achieve a safe, yet fertile, ‘community of similars.’” See also Overing (1986b:137; 1992:193f).

⁹ Cf. Overing (1989b:170f).

However, an alternative indigenous conception of the “inside:outside” duality has been presented by Ellis (1996) in her work on the Tsimane. Noting their “taste for movement,” she claims that: “Food sharing for the Tsimane does not illustrate metaphorically or literally the creation of a community of kinspeople whereby all members of community [sic] are subsumed in a social atmosphere of intimacy and mutual feeding” (1996:151). Instead, Ellis describes two distinct aspects to Tsimane sociality. The first is a form of sociality and intimacy which is restricted to, “the smallest unit of co-residence, the household or cluster, and excludes that which lies beyond its boundaries” (1996:151). The wider community is a potentially dangerous arena in which, “a hint of inappropriate mood or presence propels a move away and the subsequent dispersal of the convivial group”¹⁰ (1996:14). Consequently, a second form of sociality is created, “serially so to speak by moving and living between different groups of kin” (1996:68) and it exists along the more disparate strands of a kindred network (1996:144). As a result, the Tsimane are said not to conceive of the “inside” as a physical community but, instead, “the ‘inside’ may be perceived as tendrils or pathways extending from the individual outwards in a series of criss-crossing routes both through an individual’s kindred network and through the intricate mesh of forest paths and waterways throughout the Tsimane territory” (1996:26). Therefore, “physical distance does not always imply the unknown and dangerous for the Tsimanes” (1996:26).

I suspect, however, that Ellis exaggerates the difference between the conceptions of community held by the Tsimane and by other indigenous peoples of lowland South America. While stressing the creation of sociality within the “cluster” she denies its significance in the “community” yet it may well be that what is really happening is a confusion over terminology. For instance, the average size of settlement in the Guianas is thirty people¹¹ (Rivière 1995:198) and I suspect that this is little different to the size of a typical Tsimane cluster which, according to Ellis (1996:20) comprises, on average, three households. Consequently, it is probable that Ellis’s “clusters” and Overing’s “communities” are similar residential units and so, when they describe the creation of sociality within these local “settlements,” they are almost certainly describing identical processes.¹² In fact, Overing’s (1989b:170) statement that, among the Piaroa, “any sense of ‘the social,’ at least in the strong sense of its meaning, was limited to relatively small social units, where a milieu of

¹⁰ Cf. Ellis (1996:156) where she states that: “Rather than masking dangerous potential with an illusory quality of intimate amity, co-resident Tsimanes recognize the need to move away from danger upon its unveiling and threat to preferred states of sociality.”

¹¹ Cf. Rivière (1984:73).

¹² See Ellis (1996:140).

social intimacy could be created,” appears to be the same argument that is presented by Ellis for the Tsimane.

On the other hand, though, Overing, Gow, McCallum and Belaunde tend to de-emphasize the importance of visiting among the Piaroa, Piro, Cashinahua and Airo-Pai. In fact, the visiting of kin who live in other communities is a major feature of social life among these indigenous peoples¹³ and reflects the significance placed on visiting by indigenous people throughout lowland South America.¹⁴ Therefore, if safe social living is only possible within the local community, the above authors need to explain why indigenous people are such enthusiastic travellers to other communities.¹⁵ And, if the creation of social relationships is a daily achievement, why do indigenous people continue to recognize residents of other communities as their “close” kin?

In this chapter I will try to answer the above questions and attempt to develop a synthesis between the approaches of Ellis and Overing. I will show that, while the generation of sociality within the community is important, the Enxet also place great emphasis on re-creating social relations with those members of their kindred - and others - who live in other communities. Therefore, when considering the generation of sociality I will propose that it is important to focus not only on co-residence but also on the wider kindred and I will suggest that the existence of tranquil and convivial communities is dependent on a concomitant commitment to visiting. Finally, I will conclude that indigenous people conceptualize the inside and outside in affective rather than spatial terms.

¹³ See, for example, Overing Kaplan (1975:26f), McCallum (1989:216ff), Gow (1991:165f) and Belaunde (1992:202). Overing (personal communication) has mentioned that the Piaroa frequently visit other settlements during the dry season.

¹⁴ See, for example, Goldman (1963:88), Rivière (1969:239; 1995:199), Basso (1988:83), Kracke (1978:23), S. Hugh-Jones (1979:33), Thomas (1982:53), Rosengren (1987:132), Santos Granero (1991:207), Gordillo (1992:114), Miller (1995:117) and Palmer (1997:77). Visiting is also mentioned among similar peoples elsewhere in the world, for example by: Collier and Rosaldo (1981:295), Wiessner (1982), Myers (1986:43, 111), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:22) and Bird-David (1994:595ff).

¹⁵ Gow (1991:165f) does attempt to argue against the significance of “visiting” by trying to demonstrate that the Piro are antagonistic to the residence of “real” kin in other communities, but his evidence is not particularly convincing. He notes that there is always a “tinge of reproach” in the relationship between real kin who are separated by residence in distant communities but his evidence of this “reproach” is somewhat tenuous since he states that it is never openly voiced but, rather, forms an undercurrent to meetings between kin from different communities (1991:166). Furthermore, Gow does not approach the problem from a different angle by talking about the enjoyment that people may experience by visiting others.

11.1 The Joy of the Visit

Not only do the Enxet create their own unique social fields within their communities, they are also enthusiastic travellers, a characteristic that was also prominent in the pre-colonial period. Grubb (1911:61), for example, noted that the Enxet are, “extremely sociable, and as the sons of Job the Patriarch went to and fro feasting in each other’s houses, so the Indian, when opportunity occurs and food is obtainable, delights to move from clan to clan, feasting and making merry.” Whenever guests arrived in a community a feast would be held (1911:179) and Grubb also noted the excitement that surrounded the arrival of visitors who had been invited for a feast. “At every succeeding arrival the women and girls would run out to meet them, relieve them of their arms, and, laughing and giggling, accompany them towards the camp, where the chief and head men formally met and received them” (1911:182).

Map 11.1. Location of Members of the Kindred of Maruca Caballero

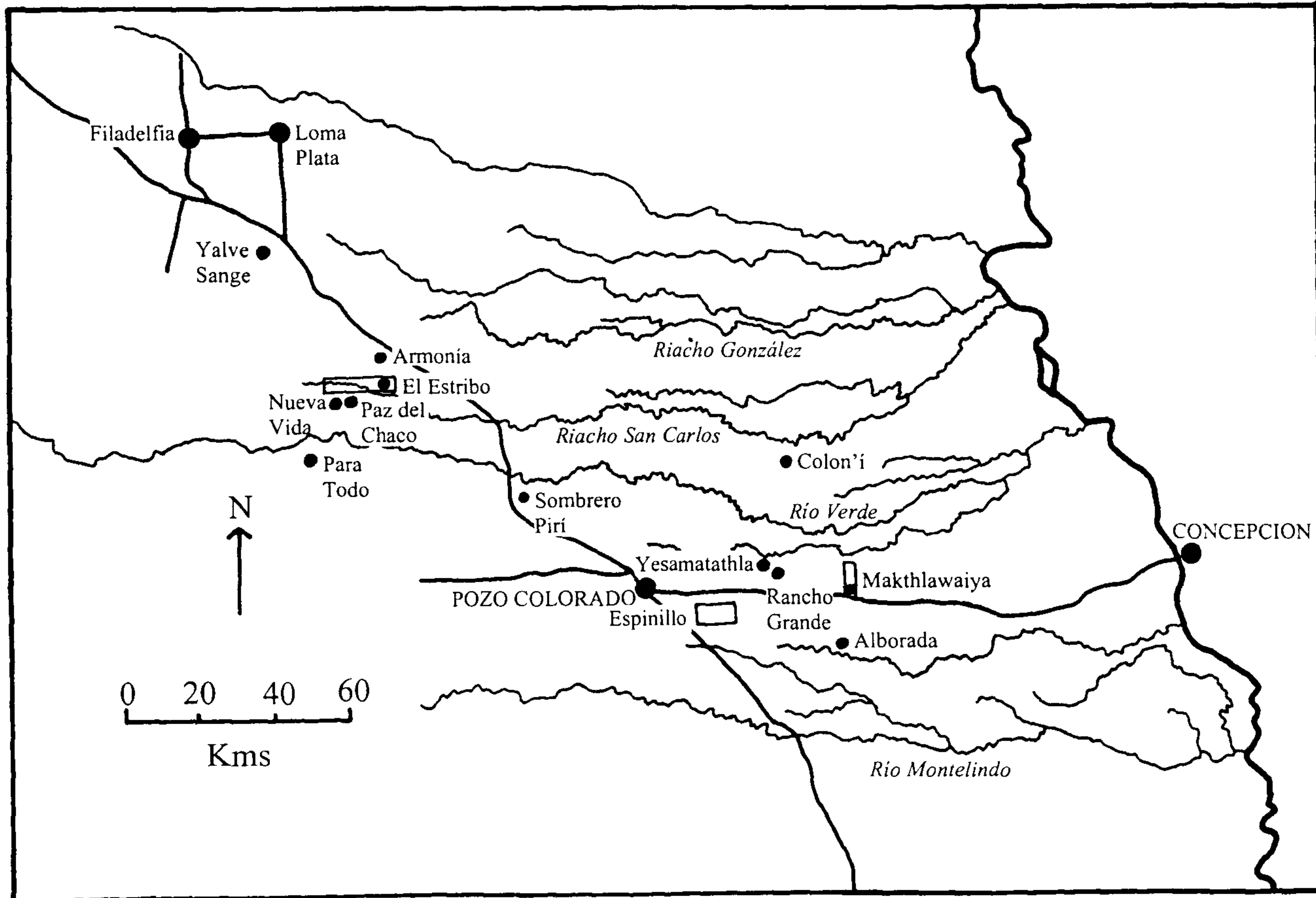


Table 11.1: Residential location of the “close” kin of the children of Maruca Caballero.

COMMUNITY	NUMBER OF KIN
Makthlawaiya	172
Dos Palmas (El Estribo)	97
Palo Santo (El Estribo)	28
Santa Fe (El Estribo)	28
San Carlos (El Estribo)	22
Loma Plata	21
Karandá (El Estribo)	10
Yalve Sanga	9
Colon’í	7
Alegre (El Estribo)	7
Rancho Grande	6
Sombrero Pirí	6
Para Todo’í (El Estribo)	5
Filadelfia	5
Makthlawaiya Portón	5
Paz del Chaco	4
Nueva Vida	4
Alborada	4
Armonía	4
Yesamatathla	3
Para Todo	1

Nowadays, the eagerness to travel is still evident and I already mentioned in Chapter 5 that, at any one time, a large proportion of the inhabitants of indigenous colonies are absent from their homes. Although most are employed on Mennonite or Paraguayan farms and ranches, a significant number can also be found visiting their kin in other communities. A person’s kindred can be found distributed over a wide area in many different communities, as illustrated by Map 11.1 and Table 11.1 which show the residential locations of part of the kindred of a group of siblings whose mother - Maruca Caballero - lives in Makthlawaiya. Three of her children live in Makthlawaiya, whilst the other two live in El Estribo, one in the community of Karandá and the other in San Carlos. Including the siblings themselves, I have identified 448 people who are descended from their grandparents and grandparents’ siblings. As illustrated by Map 11.1, they reside in 21 different communities distributed throughout Enxet territory and the numbers in each community are given in Table 11.1.¹⁶

¹⁶ Given that the five siblings were brought up in Makthlawaiya and lived there until 1985, it is not surprising that the largest concentrations of kin are in Makthlawaiya and in seven of the communities within El Estribo.

Nowadays, the arrival of a visitor, especially “close” kin, can cause, as in pre-colonial times, a palpable excitement among the hosts. Yet, any elation is not immediately apparent. The women still meet any approaching visitors to relieve them of their luggage but greetings are restricted to the obligatory handshake and the comment, “you’ve arrived.” The visitor replies, “I’ve arrived” and both parties make every effort not to demonstrate any outward signs of joy.¹⁷ They avoid smiling and maintain an impressive self-control with few words passing their lips. Even children project an impassive demeanour and I once saw two young children, who had not seen each other for many months, make strenuous efforts to suppress their smiles of excitement and restrict their greeting to a limp handshake. Visitors are invited to sit down and drink *tereré* and only once the drinking has begun do people relax their self-control. Within a short time, the circle - or circles¹⁸ - of *tereré*-drinkers become animated by cheerful conversation and intermittent laughter. As people say, they experience *ekpayhékxo [-]wáxok* - “the spreading of one’s *wáxok*” - which can be translated as “happiness.”

Two terms express how visitors - known as *meyk’a* - should be treated. The first, *[-]ma takha*,¹⁹ means “to catch” - as in catching a ball - and vividly illustrates the non-reciprocal nature of visiting. Guests are the entire responsibility of the host who provides them with all their needs, including the essentials of food, drink and bedding. The other term, *[-]ápekxa*, is said to be the same as “love” - *[-]ásekhayo* - but refers specifically to the “love” exhibited in the action of welcoming and looking after guests. As with *[-]ásekhayo*, *[-]ápekxa* is conceived of as a practice and implies the offering of meals to a guest and the giving of gifts which visitors can take home with them. Santos Granero (1991:45) notes a similar term employed by the Amuesha to describe their relations with visitors - *yema’teñets* - yet, in contrast to the unilateral nature of the Enxet host/visitor relationship, *yema’teñets* implies mutuality, with both host and guest offering each other gifts.²⁰ While Enxet visitors can present their hosts with gifts, this is not a necessary component of the host/visitor relationship and, indeed, since people travel light, it is difficult for visitors to carry any potential gifts.²¹

¹⁷ Cf. Metraux (1946:312).

¹⁸ Male visitors tend to drink *tereré* with the men of the household while the women drink separately.

¹⁹ *[-]ma* is the verb “to take” while *takha* refers to being in the air. Therefore, *[-]ma takha* means, literally, “to take in the air.”

²⁰ *Yema’teñets* also expresses, among the Amuesha, the “offering of food” to a newly arrived visitor (Santos Granero 1991:45).

²¹ However, elsewhere Santos Granero (1991) provides an alternative description of the host/visitor relationship which appears to correspond closely with the Enxet conception of a unilateral relationship. He states: “The Amuesha are great travellers; during their travels they take with them scarcely more than what they are wearing, so they are very dependent for shelter and nourishment on the hospitality of the members of the communities they are visiting. Such hospitality is rarely refused. On the

Nevertheless, both the Amuesha and the Enxet agree that the host/visitor relationship is clearly subsumed under the paradigm of “love” (cf. Santos Granero 1991:207).

Although the Enxet can refer to everyone in the community as “kin,” they also place a high value on their dispersed kindred. People talk with evident pride of their many kin residing in diverse communities, saying “*xámok énamokkok*” - “I have many kin” - with feeling. This is reminiscent of Overing’s (1993b:53ff) definition of a “wealthy” Piaroa as a person with many kin but, whereas Overing emphasizes co-resident kin, the Enxet stress both co-residents and the dispersed kindred. An Enxet with many kin is able to travel widely and be well-received and someone who is welcome in many communities is said to be greatly “loved.” In fact, people often explained to me that their frequent visiting of others - and their concomitant receiving of gifts - was evidence that they were “well-loved.” They would say, “*awanhek seyápekxa, awanhek seyásekhayo*”²² - literally, “much ‘loving’ welcoming to me, much ‘love’ to me.”

Distance is not necessarily a barrier to visiting and people often undertake trips to more distant communities.²³ For instance, many of the residents of El Estribo and Makthlawaiya continue to maintain close links, at times visiting each other two or three times a year. Occasionally, visits can last a number of weeks although three to four days is more normal. Some visits are spontaneous but people can receive invitations with the promise that, if they visit, a cow will be slaughtered to feed them. Visitors are usually incorporated into the household of one of their “close” kin, receiving meals along with the other household members, but they also visit the houses of other kin who are resident in the village where they also eat or are given gifts. When it is time to return home, visitors are usually overburdened with gifts of food and other durable objects. A carpenter in Makthlawaiya, for example, who was visited by his father’s sister and her family, gave them six chairs and a table to take home with them.²⁴ The carpenter explained to me that he had compassion for them²⁵ and that, anyway, he could easily make himself more furniture.

contrary, people go out of their way to provide the best for their visitors. Under such circumstances a travelling Amuesha would refer to his or her host as *amueraña*, in so far as the latter has manifested love, compassion and generosity for someone who has nothing and who cannot - at least not immediately - reciprocate” (1991:207).

²² *Awanhek* means “much” or “many.”

²³ Visitors can be of almost any age, ranging from young men who visit other communities in search of sex and marriage partners to old people who visit their children and grandchildren to be taken care of.

²⁴ The visitors were part of a large contingent of visitors from El Estribo and Armonía who had hired a tractor and trailer to make the trip to Makthlawaiya over Easter.

²⁵ The carpenter described his father’s sister as *ayósek* - “poor/suffering.” See Chapter 3.

However, the large concentration of population that has occurred during the past fifteen years with the settlement of the colonies of El Estribo, Paz del Chaco and Armonía in the vicinity of the work camp of Nueva Vida has transformed the dynamics of visiting. Approximately 50% of the “southern Enxet” live within a few hours walk of each other and, as a result, many kin can be visited within a day, without the need to sleep over. In fact, if bicycles are used, no journey need take more than an hour. It is feasible, therefore, for people to maintain a pattern of frequent visits to non-resident “close” kin and some examples will illustrate the nature of this visiting.

Two brothers, who live in the communities of their fathers-in-law in San Carlos and Karandá respectively, visit each other on an almost daily basis. They regularly help each other in their gardens and in other productive activities and frequently share food. The younger brother has to pass through San Carlos on his way home from the Mennonite stores in Lolita and usually stops off at his brother’s house for a drink of *tereré*, often leaving behind some of the food he has with him, especially fresh bread or beef. The elder brother also gives any surplus food to his brother whenever he passes by and, if the surplus is particularly large, can even take it to his younger brother’s house. In addition, when the elder brother’s daughter had her fifteenth birthday, the younger brother gave money to help purchase a cow that was slaughtered for the occasion.²⁶

Other kin also maintain close relations. For instance, children who have moved out of their parents’ communities to live with their parents-in-law often visit their parents on an almost daily basis. One old lady from Karandá occasionally walks to her sister’s sons’ houses in San Carlos where she is, invariably, given small gifts of food. A mother from San Carlos frequently visits her daughter in Dos Palmas, sometimes staying for a few days, while an old man from Veinte de Enero often travels by horse to his grandson’s house in Alegre, returning with small packages of food strapped to his saddle. People also visit for special celebrations such as weddings, to partake of the meal prepared for guests, while particularly “close” kin can be invited to the house of the bride or groom’s parents to share in the choicest cuts of meat.

People from El Estribo are also frequent visitors of their kin in the neighbouring colonies of Paz del Chaco, Armonía and Nueva Vida, and *vice versa*. For instance, Felipe, who lives in San Carlos and rarely seems to work, is well-known

²⁶ Another brother, from Makthlawaiya, also gave money for the purchase of the cow. In Paraguay, the fifteenth birthday is a significant milestone and the Enxet are beginning to give it greater prominence.

for his visits to Paz del Chaco from where he always returns with substantial food, usually garden produce such as sweet potatoes. He himself appears proud of his success and, on a number of occasions, has told me of the large number of “kin” he has in Paz del Chaco²⁷ and how he is deeply “loved,” as demonstrated by the amount of food he receives. He has occasionally added that he never has to ask anyone for food since his kin always spontaneously invite him to their homes, telling him that, if he turns up, he will receive many gifts. However, others in San Carlos, with whom he has somewhat antagonistic relations, tell a different story, saying that Felipe is never invited, that he always “demands” food from his hosts and that he has no “restraint.” As a result, they say, his kin are “fed up” - [-]leklakme - with his visits. The two opinions reflect, of course, the differing aims of the speakers, with Felipe trying to create a positive image of himself while his detractors intend the opposite in an effort to hinder Felipe’s leadership ambitions.

Nevertheless, it is common to see people returning to El Estribo from Paz del Chaco with substantial gifts of food, and it should be borne in mind that, prior to the colonization of El Estribo, many of the kin on the two colonies had not been in contact for many years.²⁸ Indeed, many had never met and, at the beginning of the colonization of El Estribo, I was able to appreciate the importance placed on establishing a kinship link. For instance, soon after arriving in El Estribo a man from San Carlos met someone from Paz del Chaco for the first time and a central element in their conversation was a discussion of their respective kin. It eventually transpired that they were, in fact, kin to each other, a discovery that the man from San Carlos communicated to me with great enthusiasm.²⁹ Such conversations were often the first step in developing closer relations between the inhabitants of El Estribo and Paz del Chaco and demonstrate how a link of “distant” kinship can be used to initiate a relationship based on “love.” Eventually, many of these people who first met in the mid-1980s came to regard each other as “close” kin and established patterns of frequent visiting.

People often ensure that their visit to a community coincides with a period of abundant food. Many people from Makthlawaiya travel to El Estribo when the watermelon harvest is underway, as they themselves have no watermelons at home.

²⁷ He would say: “*xámok énamokkok*” which means, “I have many kin.”

²⁸ Due to the control exercised by Mennonites over the agricultural production in Paz del Chaco, the gardens there are substantially bigger than those in El Estribo. Consequently, it is more common for people from El Estribo to receive food from Paz del Chaco than *vice versa*.

²⁹ Pride (1913:178f) reported a similar practice on a journey he took to the western part of Enxet territory with two men from Makthlawaiya. In each village they entered, the inhabitants questioned his companions about their kin and, in only one village were they unable to establish a kinship link. Yet, even in this village they decided to call the visitors “nephew” and “younger brother.”

Conversely, those from El Estribo often visit Makthlawaiya when the eels in the swamp are plentiful or when the armadillos are at their fattest.³⁰ One couple from Makthlawaiya even visited the husband's father in Karandá (El Estribo) during the final stages of the cotton harvest so as to share in any profit. They helped with the harvesting for a couple of weeks and, once the cotton was sold, received a proportion of the money.

The maintenance of active links with one's dispersed kindred does not always necessitate visiting. People can send gifts to their kin in other communities and, because I often travelled between communities, I was frequently used as a conduit. I would be asked to take garden produce from El Estribo to Makthlawaiya in my vehicle while, in the opposite direction, I tended to carry meat and, on one occasion, barbecued eels. Money, due to the ease with which it is carried, is another popular gift for "close" kinspeople, but is only sent if the carrier is trustworthy. Since each person trusts only a small number of fellow Enxet with money, missionaries and anthropologists are usually asked to undertake this task.³¹

There is no correlation between the frequency of visits and categories of kin. Instead, people visit those whom they most "love" irrespective of their kinship relation and, indeed, it is through visiting that both hosts and guests re-generate those social relations that they consider to be significant. Moreover, visiting is not restricted to kin but is undertaken by any people who consider themselves to be in a "loving" relationship. This can be illustrated by the experience of Solano, a resident of Makthlawaiya, who used to accompany me on trips I made to the communities of Los Lapachos, Santa Juanita, Aurora and Riachito. Solano had no kin in these communities and, in fact, most of the population of Santa Juanita and Riachito were Sanapaná, while many of those in Los Lapachos were either Sanapaná or Angaité. During our visits we usually stayed in the house of the community leader where we were well-received, being given plenty food. While I engaged in my land claims work, Solano used to visit different households where he would be offered *tereré* and food and, whenever we returned home, he would be given prodigious quantities of meat and animal fat to take with him. Over time, he developed close relations with a number of people in the different communities and, whenever they visited Makthlawaiya, they began to stay in Solano's house. At times, the number of guests would place a severe burden on Solano's resources but he nevertheless would talk

³⁰ As I explained in Chapter 6, both eels and armadillos are highly desired by the Enxet and are scarce in El Estribo.

³¹ People occasionally send letters to their kin in other communities, although they are usually to inform them of some important news or to ask for something. In addition, people also send greetings to each other on the local Mennonite and Roman Catholic radio stations.

proudly about the number of Sanapaná visitors he had. He even began to visit their communities by himself and would refer to his visitors as “like my kin” - “*máxa énámo*kok” - and characterize his relationship with them as informed by “love.”

My wife and I had a similar experience with our next-door neighbours in Makthlawaiya with whom we developed close relations.³² During our residence in Asunción between 1993 and 1995, rarely a month passed without one of our former neighbours paying us a visit, at times staying for weeks on end. They fully expected us to look after their entire needs - which we did - although the women did care for our children and help with the housework. Yet, the relationship was not one-sided and whenever my wife and I visited Makthlawaiya we stayed in their house and they took care of our needs. In fact, during my fieldwork I occasionally stayed in Makthlawaiya for a week at a time and I ate as much as I wanted, drank free beer and wine, and had all my clothes washed and ironed.

Just as people make conscious decisions on which relationships to give priority to within a community, they make similar decisions about whom to visit in other communities. Such decisions are reflected in the frequency of visiting and, through this process, people again create their own unique social fields, but this time outside the community. And, just as intra-community social fields are dynamic and constantly changing, so too are those outside the community.³³ An unexpected encounter could lead to the re-creation of a relationship that may have lain dormant for many years, while the marriage of children who move in with their parents-in-law in other communities could encourage the children’s parents to re-align their relationships, with the children - and their affines - being visited at the expense of others.

11.2 Visiting and the Maintenance of Intra-Community Tranquillity

The !Kung San of Botswana and Namibia practise a system of mutual sharing with kin from other communities - known as *hxaro* - which allows individuals to maintain a network of social relations over a wide geographical area. Wiessner (1982) explains the practice as a means of reducing risk in the face of a highly variable environment so that, if resources are lacking in someone’s home territory, they are able to gain access to the resources located in the territory of someone with whom they maintain a *hxaro* relationship.

³² See Chapters 4 and 10.

³³ Cf. Bird-David (1994:595).

However, if such an essentially reductionist explanation - which understands inter-community sharing as a form of insurance³⁴ - were applied to the Enxet, it would severely misrepresent their motivations for travelling and visiting. They visit other communities out of desire, whether it be to see people they “love,” to have some fun or to experience change by moving away from a uninteresting situation that is no longer generative of a “sweet” *wáxok*.³⁵ Communities in which only a small proportion of residents are present so that there are limited possibilities of parties, games and social discourse are often described as *yetso* - “unsweet” - and people often respond by moving away for a while to find somewhere more enjoyable. Or, alternatively, people can be “fed-up” - *[-]leklakme* - with doing the same things every day and can seek to break the monotony by visiting kin or even by obtaining work on a ranch.

Although the motivations for visiting other communities are multiple, the end result is that people maintain close relations with a number of people spread over a wide area. And, paradoxically, the existence of these multi-community ego-centred social fields is a fundamental factor in the reproduction of both personal tranquillity and a concomitant tranquil and convivial intra-community social life. Whenever a person’s *wáxok* becomes disturbed, the immediate reaction is to distance oneself from the place where that disturbance occurred as a means of regaining a *wáxok* “in which nothing is happening.”

Such a distancing often occurs on the death of “close” kin and Grubb (1911:160ff) described how the pre-colonial Enxet would quickly change residence whenever a person died for fear of being attacked by the ghost.³⁶ Nowadays, with the acceptance of a syncretistic form of Christianity, people only “fear” - *[-]eyeye* - those ghosts that they believe have not gone to “heaven,” such as the ghosts of those who commit suicide. Yet, rather than changing residence, they are more likely to pull down and rebuild their house so as to confuse the ghost who is unable to recognize where its kin live. Nowadays, it is “sadness” - *[-]lapwayam*, which can also be described as a “heavy” *wáxok* - *ekyentaxnama [-]wáxok* - that is much more likely to cause people to abandon their community following the death of “close” kin. This is less likely to occur when an old person dies because their death is expected but, if a young child or a spouse dies, people can become overwhelmed by “sadness.” If they stay in their home community, they will “continually really see” - *[-]wetawo kya’a* - their loved one, an expression that does not refer to meeting their ghost but to the

³⁴ See Chapter 1.

³⁵ Cf. Myers (1988:60).

³⁶ I also discuss bereavement practices in Chapter 2.

evocation of memories of the deceased which are provoked by familiar places. The *wáxok* can only regain its tranquillity if the bereaved remove themselves from the community and the memories of their loved one, and it is not uncommon for people to remain away for over a year. They return once their *wáxoks* are no longer “heavy.”³⁷

Conflicts between individuals can also provoke “disturbed” *wáxoks* and the Enxet have few mechanisms at their disposal to bring about a resolution within the community. As I noted in Chapter 7, leaders are not responsible for re-establishing peaceful relations and the only people who may attempt to bring warring individuals together are those who are kin to both parties. Normally, though, people try to avoid becoming involved in someone else’s conflict and the most common resolution is for one or both of the parties to withdraw from the community, a phenomenon that has been widely reported in lowland South America.³⁸ Yet, abandoning a community is not described by the Enxet as a “norm” but, rather, is explained by reference to their affective well-being in a manner reminiscent of Goldman’s (1963:280) description of the Cubeo’s “low tolerance for psychic discomfort.”³⁹

Although the fundamental reason for leaving one’s community following a conflict is a “disturbed” *wáxok*, people can refer to a variety of specific emotional states.⁴⁰ For instance, a man from San Carlos, who had argued with his wife, was said by people to have become “angry” with her and to have “hated” her - [-]*taknagko*. Since he did not want to be near her, he left for Makthlawaiya, but returned after a few days as if nothing had happened. However, another man, who had hit his wife when drunk and “angry,” once he had sobered up he became “ashamed” of his actions, and it was because of his “shame” - and not his “anger” - that he left. He did not return for over a year but, once back, life returned to normal. Other people have temporarily left a community because, after being attacked with a knife, they are “fearful” that their assailant will try once more. The fact that they have maintained close relations with their kin elsewhere means that they are able to stay with them while their *wáxoks* regain their equilibrium.

People can, though, not only remove themselves temporarily from communities but also decide to change their residence permanently if they believe

³⁷ It is tempting to explain some suicides as a means of leaving the community because of “sadness.”

³⁸ See, for instance: Goldman (1963:158f, 279ff), Kracke (1978:3, 22), Thomas (1982:167; 235f), Regehr (1987:170f), Rosengren (1987:157), Overing (1989b:164; 1993b:51), McCallum (1990:424), Gow (1991:93), Belaunde (1992:13, 103f) and Ellis (1996). Cf. Collier and Rosaldo (1981:289) and Gibson (1985:393).

³⁹ Cf. Grubb (1911:192).

⁴⁰ Cf. Loewen (1966).

that the circumstances causing their “disturbed” *wáxoks* will continue indefinitely. In pre-colonial times it is likely that there was a continual process of fissioning of communities in response to conflicts, as occurs elsewhere in Lowland South America,⁴¹ but the present-day lack of available land on colonies means that the establishment of entirely new communities is rare, though not unknown. Much more common are moves to established communities where people already have “close” kin. Since the initial colonization of El Estribo, a number of families have escaped difficult situations by returning to Makthlawaiya and there has also been a certain amount of movement the other way. Yet, people find it difficult to move all their possessions - including the corrugated zinc plates for their roofs - since if they want to travel a long distance, they must either hire a vehicle, which is difficult given their low wages, or sell those possessions that they cannot carry, which they are generally reluctant to do. Therefore, it is more common for people from El Estribo to change communities within El Estribo since they can transport all their possessions with a horse and cart which can be hired cheaply. Even a physical separation of only two or three kilometres from those with whom people are in conflict appears sufficient for them to regain their tranquillity.

Therefore, by maintaining relations with the wider kindred - and others - people have places to go when life becomes unbearable in their home communities.⁴² They do not have to depend on intermediaries to resolve any inter-personal conflicts but find the solution in their own hands - or, rather, their feet. And, given that the large size of contemporary communities provides an increased potential for conflict, the need for people to maintain good relations in a range of places is, perhaps, even greater than in the pre-colonial period. Paradoxically, therefore, the contemporary “sedentary” communities found on colonies are only viable if the Enxet continue to maintain a pattern of relatively high mobility.

11.3 Conclusion

A proper understanding of the generation of sociality among the Enxet can only be attained by combining the spatial perspectives of both Overing (1989b) and Ellis (1996). Although the Enxet cannot strictly be said to produce “community” in the sense of a nucleated, bounded, spatial entity, each individual generates his or her own unique social field within the confines of a community, a situation that corresponds to Overing’s stress on the production of the local community. Yet,

⁴¹ Cf. Goldman (1963:279f), Rivière (1969:231; 1984:74) and Chagnon (1968).

⁴² Even Wiessner (1982) despite her reductionist approach, recognizes that the *hxaro* enables people to resolve conflicts by moving to other communities.

individuals are just as concerned to generate relations within a more expansive social field, one that is located in a number of communities throughout the region, a practice that corresponds with Ellis's observations on Tsimane sociality.

However, I do not believe that the Enxet stress on both the community and the wider kindred is unique and I would tentatively argue that the Enxet case is typical of the indigenous people of Lowland South America. As the ethnographic research makes clear, throughout the region indigenous people are preoccupied with creating safe relations with members of both their local communities and a variety of other communities. Both sets of relationships are, in essence, created and re-created by the voluntary sharing of food and other private property. This is a fundamentally different argument to that of Gow (1991:179) who believes that the Piro "people's inability to achieve co-residence with all their kin is an existential problem of life itself." In contrast, I suggest that not being resident with all one's kin is an essential, perhaps even desired part of indigenous life as it enables people to fulfil their wish to travel and visit those they "love." As a consequence, they can find a sanctuary when life at home becomes intolerable.⁴³

It is possible, therefore, to recognize two sets of cross-cutting and overlapping principles that contribute to the organization of Enxet social life and, almost certainly, to that of many other indigenous peoples. The first, co-residence, is focused on one point in space while the other, the kindred, stresses spatial dispersion. The terms for both - [-]hawóxama ("co-resident") and [-]námokkok ("kindred") - both evoke a sense of sameness and are imbued by the principle of "love" or sociality. Consequently, it is likely that Rosengren's (1987:132) comment that, "'closeness' and 'distance' in regard to the relationship system is largely a function of spatial proximity" misrepresents indigenous conceptions. Co-residents can be characterized as "distant" while residents of other communities can be classified as "close."⁴⁴ In effect, an individual's classification of other people is predicated on the current state of the affective bonds between them which depend, in turn, on the practice or non-practice of "love." Just because indigenous people can refer to all co-residents as kin does not imply a negation of non-co-residents as kin, a point that Gow (1991) appears to forget in his enthusiasm to stress the Piro understanding of the community as a body of co-residing "real" kin.

Furthermore, in contrast to Overing's (1989b:172) stress on the *daily* creation of affective bonds, the generation of "love" has more to do with opportunity. Within

⁴³ Cf. Ellis (1996:67f).

⁴⁴ Cf. Rivière (1969:230).

communities, sociality is produced on a more or less daily basis because spatial proximity offers that opportunity. In this situation, a refusal to share is understood as a denial of a relationship. Yet, when there is a shortage of food, sharing is reduced because the opportunity diminishes but, since this is not understood as a *refusal* to share, it does not necessarily threaten social life. Similarly, when people live apart, frequent sharing is impossible and, logically, their lack of daily sharing is not regarded as a rejection of a relationship. Instead, as long as spatially distant “close” kin can demonstrate that they are actively investing effort in maintaining a relationship by visiting and, in turn, providing hospitality, the “love” that was initiated in the past - and which exists as a memory - will continue to be re-created. It is the refusal to visit that spells the end of a relationship between kin who live apart.

For social life to be possible in indigenous societies that are not governed by rules or laws it is necessary for individuals to maintain close social relations both within and outside the community. To live a tranquil life - in the Enxet case, “without anything happening in one’s *wáxok*”⁴⁵ - it is necessary to generate “love” within the community and avoid actions that could be interpreted as “hate” - [-]*taknagko*. However, it is also important to maintain links with one’s wider kindred so that, if a person’s tranquillity is disturbed within their home community, they have somewhere to go and live convivially. Therefore, the ability to change residence is a key element in the maintenance of social order and conflict resolution.

What, therefore, do the spatial dimensions of Enxet sociality tell us about their understanding of the frequently reported “inside:outside” dichotomy. As Ellis (1996:26) notes for the Tsimane, the Enxet too never speak in terms of “inside” and “outside,” and the absence of such a discourse is evidence that they do not understand such a concept in spatial terms. Furthermore, it would appear that other indigenous peoples present apparently contradictory and ambiguous discourses and practice. Negative attitudes of indigenous people to residents of other communities⁴⁶ need to be balanced against the enthusiasm with which they visit and receive visitors, while the stress on the community as a body of kin has to be set against the existence of “close” kin in other communities. Logically, if “close” kin live on the “outside,” the outside cannot be all bad. Therefore, as anthropologists we need to take care not to stress those aspects of indigenous discourse that fit in with our theoretical models but to be open to recognizing the significance of apparent incoherencies in indigenous discourse and practice.

⁴⁵ ie. *méke ektahakxa* [-]*wáxok*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rivière (1984:71).

However, indigenous discourse on the “inside:outside” may be less contradictory than it seems since what we consider to be the “inside” is not regarded by the Enxet as corresponding to a point in space - in other words, the home community. Instead, both the “inside” and “outside” - or, as they express it, “close” and “distant” - are affective categories and indicative of appropriate and inappropriate ways of acting toward each other. In Enxet thought, the salient discourse around which social relations are understood is the dichotomy between “love” and “hate” in which a geographical dimension is absent. Therefore, an insistence on the home community as a place of safety and other communities as places of danger⁴⁷ would make little sense to the Enxet. Danger (or “hate”) can easily arise within the home community and, when this occurs, people can often abandon their community to find sanctuary in the safety of other communities where they have “close” kin with whom they have maintained good, “loving” relations. Therefore, for the Enxet, what we understand to be the “inside” can be found in both the home community and throughout the entire region, indeed anywhere where those whom they “love” can be found.⁴⁸ It even stretches to Britain where both the anthropologist and Anglican missionaries continue to send money to “care for” those indigenous people they “love.”

⁴⁷ Cf. Overing (1993a:193).

⁴⁸ See Ellis (1996:26) for a similar conclusion regarding the Tsimane concept of the “inside/outside.” Also, see Kidd (1997b; 1997d) for a discussion on the Enxet concept of alterity in which I demonstrate that the Enxet notion of the Other is not based on ethnicity but is related to the practice of “love” and “hate.” Therefore, non-Enxet who practice “love” can be regarded as “insiders” (cf. Overing 1996a; 1998).

12. DEMAND SHARING: A THREAT TO TRANQUILLITY

In previous chapters I have considered voluntary sharing and shown how it is impelled by and constitutive of “love” and sociable relations both within and beyond the local community. However, there is a danger that an excessive stress on “love” can create a partial and unduly romantic picture of indigenous life. I wish to redress the balance by focusing, in this chapter, on another form of sharing - “demand sharing” - which also permeates daily social relations yet which, when compared to voluntary sharing, has a markedly contrasting effect on an individual’s emotions.¹ Rather than being generative of “love,” demand sharing can, by infringing on a potential giver’s *wáxok*, stimulate “negative” emotions such as anger, annoyance and shame and undermine sociable relations and community life. Yet, in the literature on lowland South America the two types of sharing are not always differentiated² and, even when they are, insufficient recognition is given to their distinct impacts on the social and affective life of a community. The prevalence of demand sharing within indigenous communities presents a challenge to indigenous social life that must be overcome if tranquillity and conviviality are to be maintained. I will suggest that this is achieved by deceiving and lying to one’s fellow community members and, while we may view such practices as inherently immoral, they are, in fact, essential to the well-being of indigenous communities.

12.1 “People without Things”

While voluntary sharing is intimately associated with generosity and “love,” I would like to suggest that demand sharing is motivated by a strongly held egalitarian ethic which, in certain respects, can be understood as contradicting the stress on “love.” An egalitarian ethic has often been reported as characteristic of indigenous people and hunter-gatherers³ and is expressed by the Enxet in a number of ways. One frequently invoked self-denomination is the term “*énxet méke aksok*” which means, literally, “people without things” or, in other words, “poor people.” Interestingly, Renshaw (1986:181) has remarked that a similar term is commonly employed by indigenous people throughout the Chaco and, as he explains, its meaning is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it describes an objective reality and reflects how the

¹ The term “demand sharing” has also been employed by Peterson (1991b:74) and Bird-David (1992:30; 1994:595).

² See, for example, Henley (1982) and Renshaw (1986).

³ See, for example, Woodburn (1982), Thomas (1982), Ingold (1986:222f) and Overing (1989b). An egalitarian ethic has been reported among the Enxet by Grubb (1911:188) and Loewen (1967:27).

Enxet see themselves in comparison with rich white people; in this sense, it encapsulates an aspiration to a better life. However, it is also used as a means of positively affirming a way of life and as a symbol of shared identity. The term “*énxet méke aksok*” is usually prefaced by the verb *nenteme* which means not just “we are” but also encompasses a way of being. Not only do the Enxet consider themselves poor, but they are all poor. They are, therefore, all equal and, in their eyes, this equality in poverty is an essential characteristic of Enxet identity.

The stress on egalitarian social relations is also explicit in a variety of other commonly used terms. As I explained in Chapter 5, the term for co-resident - *[-]hawóxama* - comprises the terms *[-]hawó*, meaning “to be the same as” or “to be equal to,” and *[-]xama* meaning “one.” It, therefore, incorporates a clear stress on the need to be equal and, indeed, the word *[-]hawó* is frequently used in conversation to judge the economic practices of others. For example, a man who is as poor as everyone else in the community can be referred to favourably as *aphawok pok* - “equal to others” - while someone who accumulates possessions and refuses to share can be denounced as *mexnawok pok* - “unequal to others.”⁴ An egalitarian ideology is also apparent in the use of the word *néten*, meaning “above,” and those who are perceived as aspiring to be wealthier than their fellows can be accused of trying to be *néten*, in other words, “above” others. Clearly, attempts to create inequalities are severely frowned upon.⁵

The egalitarian ideology of the Enxet is reflected in the reality of community life since within communities there is a relative homogeneity with regard to the amount of material possessions found in different households.⁶ Any furniture is usually either old or of poor quality and it is unlikely that a household has more than a cupboard or set of drawers, a small number of beds which are often fabricated at home from rawhide stretched across a wooden frame, cheap foam mattresses for those who are able to afford them, and a few decrepit wooden chairs. People also possess mosquito nets in varying states of disrepair, clothing of a variety of qualities, essential tools - including, if possible, a rifle or pistol - cooking utensils, an earthenware water-pot, a radio or cassette-recorder, and a bicycle or two. Of course, some households have a few other things - and a small number of people in El Estribo and

⁴ Although I have translated the term *pok* as “others,” as I explained in Chapter 4 it can also mean “his kin.”

⁵ The variety of linguistic means employed by the Enxet to express an egalitarian ideology is impressive and should be compared with some “egalitarian” peoples among whom the verbal rhetoric of equality is not elaborated but can only be captured by observing their actions (cf. Woodburn 1982:432).

⁶ Cf. Renshaw (1986:178; 1988:338).

Makthlawaiya have owned, for at least a while, motorbikes - but an overall impression of uniform poverty overpowers any apparent differences.

12.2 The Practice of Demand Sharing

Although, as I will explain, demand sharing is often associated with the generation of negative emotions, I should begin by clarifying that this is not always so. When demand sharing occurs within an already safe, close and “loving” relationship it usually causes no problem at all. In fact, the existence of a relationship in which people make requests of each other on a day to day basis is, itself, indicative of a close relationship. Askers have no need to practise or feel “restraint” - and, therefore, no need to “strengthen” their *wáxok* - and potential givers, because of the “love” they feel, do not experience any threat to the tranquillity of their *wáxoks*. Requests can be for as little as a small quantity of food, such as *yerba maté*, when household supplies are temporarily exhausted, or can rise to requests for over US\$100 to help pay for a wedding celebration. They can take place between co-residents or messages can be sent to “close” kin in other communities to ask them for “help.”

However, my main concern here is with the type of demand sharing that is encapsulated by the Enxet verb [-]*magkaxno* which can be translated as “to ask/request,” although only in the specific sense of “asking for *food*.” It is clearly differentiated from [-]*elmaxnagko*, the generic verb for “to ask/request,” which corresponds to the Spanish verb *pedir*. In fact, the meaning of [-]*magkaxno* is located between a request and an order in that it is expected that the person to whom it is directed will respond in the affirmative. Nevertheless, it is not an “obligation” since potential givers can refuse to share, although such a denial would almost certainly signal a rupture in a relationship. As a form of shorthand I will refer to it as a “demand.”

Demand sharing of this type has been commonly reported among indigenous peoples of lowland South America and among similar peoples elsewhere.⁷ It is also practised throughout the Chaco region as suggested by the following references: Siffredi (1975:53) mentions that the Chorote can “bother” others, a practice that she differentiates from a request; Alvarsson (1988:207) describes a Wichí practice of “hanging around” other people’s houses waiting for food while Palmer (1997:77)

⁷ See, for example, Marshall (1976:369), Siskind (1973:6), Kracke (1978:21), Thomas (1982:164), Altman (1987:148), Lee (1988:267), Endicott (1988:117), Myers (1988:56), Tanaka (1991:131), Santos Granero (1991:215), Bird-David (1992:30; 1994:595), Peterson (1991b:74), McCallum (1989:208ff) and Belaunde (1992:181).

talks of the Wichí “cadging” food; the Toba are said to “ask” for food (Gordillo 1992:113, 125); while the Pilagá are reported as “begging”⁸ (Henry 1951:190). It should be noted, though, that some anthropologists deny the existence of demand sharing among specific indigenous peoples: Overing (1989b:162) states that, according to Goldman (1963), the Cubeo cannot demand another person’s produce while Gow (1991:165ff) and Ellis (1996:159) both insist that, among the Piro and the Tsimane, only spouses are able to make demands of each other.⁹ However, such peoples seem to be exceptions to the norm.

[-]magkaxno - “demand sharing” - is usually practised with those with whom one does not have a day-to-day relationship of mutual sharing. It implies taking a conscious decision to visit a house where there is believed to be a surplus to ask for a share. One does not ask for food in general but, instead, the request is always for something specific which the demander knows is there. Those with good gardens are most vulnerable since it is usually quite obvious when their crops are mature and ready for harvest; such people often find themselves subjected to a number of visitors per day, all of whom demand the same thing. While potential givers usually ensure that visitors remain near the house while they enter the garden alone to choose which plants to harvest, some demanders turn up with their own digging sticks thereby unequivocally communicating that they expect to undertake the harvest themselves. Consequently, they, rather than the owners of the food, put a limit on the amount taken and such intent is difficult to deny unless potential givers are able to “strengthen” their *wáxoks*. People can also become the targets of *[-]magkaxno* after killing a large animal or returning from a store with a significant quantity of purchased food.

When someone arrives at a person’s house with the intention of “demanding” food, they usually wait before making their request. They are first of all invited to sit down and are offered *tereré* before they and their hosts begin to converse on a wide range of topics. During this time, visitors “strengthen” their *wáxoks* to overcome their “restraint” so that they are able to make their demand.¹⁰ They also assess the kind of reaction that their request will provoke and, when they judge the time is right, they make their request. Of course, people vary in their approaches and those with less “restraint” are much quicker in expressing their demand. In fact, one woman, who

⁸ Cf. Renshaw (1988:205f).

⁹ Gow (1991) states that “real kin” cannot demand food from each other. However, he does not describe what happens between more distant kin or non-kin.

¹⁰ Cf. Loewen (1966).

was said to be “crazy” - [-]yéhaxma - would make her demand on arrival. She did not have the “knowledge” to act with proper “restraint.”

Demand sharing is regarded, therefore, as a manifestation of a lack of “restraint” and those making “demands” violate - to paraphrase Thomas (1982:237) - the moral requirement to extend autonomy as the prerogative of the other. They act without “knowledge” and “love” although, paradoxically, they often invest their “demands” with “love” by claiming common kinship with those to whom their “demands” are directed. A woman from San Carlos, for example, complained that the only time a couple from Alegre referred to her as “kin” was when they were “demanding” her food. People who claim not to make “demands” insist that this is because they have “restraint” and that, if they were to do it, they would feel “ashamed” - [-]megkakto - afterwards. Interestingly, McCallum (1989:209) states that the Cashinahua exhibit “restraint” when passing by those who have food and that they only “beg” for food if they can do so without being thought of as “shameless.” And, Ellis (1996:151) reports that sharing is restricted among the Tsimane because they feel embarrassment/timidity (*tricác dye*).¹¹

While, on the face of it, it would appear that [-]magkaxno should be regarded as unacceptable behaviour, people, in fact, are rather more ambivalent in their opinions of it, possibly because the giver’s positive response is still regarded as subsumed within the paradigm of “love.” For instance, once, when I worked for the Anglican Church, a friend - who, at the time, was subjected to many “demands” - pleaded with me to call a meeting of everyone in El Estribo to order them to desist from practising [-]magkaxno. Yet, a few years later, when he was actively trying to become a community leader, I visited his house to find him repairing a neighbour’s bicycle. When I casually asked if he was going to charge for his work, his almost aggressive response took me by surprise.:

“Now look here Stephen! We’re Enxet and we don’t charge people for doing things. We’re not like Paraguayans or Mennonites who’ll charge for everything. If an old woman comes to my house I’ll give her food for nothing and I’ll give her a watermelon as well. She won’t pay me anything. If I go to see my aunt (*mémay*) in Carpincho to “demand” [-]magkaxno something, she’ll give me food and I won’t have to pay her. This is the way we Lenguas are. Look at the Mennonites. They’ll even charge their brothers for things and if a son uses his father’s tractor he’ll also have to pay. We don’t do that. If I want to use my brother’s tool, he’ll let me have it for nothing. We give things to

¹¹ Ellis (1996) appears to regard *tricác dye*’ as a negative attribute whereas the similar Enxet concept of “restraint/timidity” - [-]ennawagko - is regarded as both positive and negative.

people for nothing even if they're not kin. I don't know why we're like this but we are. Perhaps God made us like this. I suppose that's why no Enxet is a "*patrón*." However, if we were to charge for everything we did, perhaps we would become "*patrones*" as well."

[-]magkaxno, in this response, is spoken of as a positive characteristic of the Enxet, one that sets them apart from white people. In addition, one man who criticized *[-]magkaxno* and denied ever having practised it because he would be "ashamed," exhibited no reticence at all when, a couple of months later, he heard that a cow was being butchered in a neighbouring community. He enthusiastically informed me that he was off to "demand" some meat and, a couple of hours later, he returned with a succulent portion. I perceived no "shame" on his part and, instead, he appeared almost triumphant.

Nevertheless, demand sharing can frequently provoke "disturbed" *wáxoks* in those who are targeted.¹² This is often the case when potential givers are reluctant to hand over their food, perhaps because they believe that they have too little, or, alternatively, because they do not want to give it to the person making the demand. At times, while people may be willing to respond to a few "demands," an inundation of "demands" can disturb the tranquillity of their *wáxoks* as the owners see their stock of food rapidly diminishing. People often describe themselves as "fed up" with - *[-]leklakme* - or as "disliking" - *kaleklamo [-]wáxok* - continual demands. One woman who handed over manioc to some visitors with apparent equanimity, later that day - and visibly disturbed - complained to me bitterly that it was not right that people came to "demand" her manioc. "I was the one who invested all the effort in cultivating it," she said, "and now these people who couldn't be bothered to do their own gardens come and take advantage of me."

Grubb (1911:190) quotes an Enxet man whose explanation of why he did not cultivate a larger garden indicates that a distaste of being a target of demand sharing was also prevalent in the pre-colonial period and that it has not been caused by contact with "corrupting" western values:

He mentioned several of his clansmen, and bade me look at their tiny gardens, saying: 'If I grew large crops, these men would grow still less

¹² However, "demands" can also provoke more positive affective responses. For instance, if givers want to develop a relationship with those "demanding," they may be pleased to be subjected to a "demand" since this allows them to demonstrate their "love." (Cf. Marshall [1976:369] who reports the !Kung as saying that asking "forms a love between people"). Alternatively, potential givers may have such an overabundance of food in their gardens that they may feel no regret at handing it over. (Cf. McCallum [1989:210] who states that when the Cashinahua have an abundance of fish there are less emotional overtones in giving).

and, according to our custom, they would become my uninvited guests, and the surplus over and above what I now have would go to them instead of to my family. Were I to garner my crops and keep them for a time of scarcity, these men would not exercise equal thrift, and knowing that I had stock they would call upon me.

It is not only the fact that people dislike losing their possessions that causes their loss of tranquillity, but, also, the threat to their personal autonomy as they feel compelled to comply with any “demands” for their food.¹³ Yet this sense of compulsion is different to an *obligation*, a concept that has no direct counterpart in Enxet.¹⁴ Instead, the Enxet explain that they comply because they have “soft/unlocked” *wáxoks*. To refuse a request would require them to “strengthen/close” their *wáxoks*, a response that would be anti-social and a denial of “love” and would lead them to feel “ashamed” - [-] *megkakto*.¹⁵ People also claim that their compliance is due to their fear that, if they refuse, the “demanders” may become “angry” - [-] *lóló* - and “hate” - [-] *taknagko* - them.¹⁶ Indeed, some people have explained that they respond favourably to requests from shamans because they “fear” that an “angry” shaman may harm them and, in fact, illnesses are frequently said to have been caused by shamans who were denied their “demands.”¹⁷

“Demands” for food can, therefore, in various ways provoke unpleasant affective responses in those on the receiving end, disturbing or harming the tranquillity of their *wáxoks*. And, such experiences of negative emotional responses to demand sharing are not restricted to the Enxet: among the Cashinahua, McCallum (1989:208ff) observed “resentment” and “annoyance;” sharing can become a “burden” among the Sharanahua (Siskind 1973:85); while Tanaka (1991:131) has noted how demand sharing among the Central Kalahari San can result in an “unpleasant time.”¹⁸

¹³ A similar sense of compulsion has been noted among other indigenous American and hunter-gatherer peoples. See, for example, Siskind (1973:84), Kracke (1978:21), Price (1987:14), Myers (1988:56), McCallum (1989:210), Santos Granero (1991:215) and Bird-David (1994:595). Endicott (1988:117) provides an interesting twist by saying that the sense of compulsion is reinforced among the Batek by the fear that a refusal may harm the asker.

¹⁴ In fact, the Enxet, if they want to express the concept, employ the Spanish word *obligación*.

¹⁵ Such a reference to “shame” is reminiscent of Fortes’ (1983:27) argument that prescriptive altruism prevails “by reason of the internalized sanctions of conscience.”

¹⁶ Cf. Grubb’s (1911:191) statement that an Enxet who kept his possessions would be “hated and terrorized by the others.”

¹⁷ Even when a shaman does not consciously take revenge, his auxiliary spirits, noticing his “anger,” may take it upon themselves to attack the person who has caused the “anger.” Cf. Gordillo (1992:111, 140f) and Santos Granero (1991:246).

¹⁸ Cf. Ellis (1996).

The disturbance generated in people's *wáxoks* by demand sharing can have visible consequences. Some people claim that they reduced the size of their gardens because they became "fed up" with - [-]*leklakme* - being deprived of their produce. This is especially serious in communities such as Makthlawaiya where few people cultivate gardens and, as a result, are more susceptible to "demands." Some families have almost entirely abandoned gardening while others claim that they do not cultivate because they are "worried" about being subject to "demands."¹⁹ A similar scenario has been mentioned by Renshaw (1986:205f) as occurring elsewhere in the Chaco. And, the pressures of demand sharing can even make people decide to leave their communities, although usually only temporarily.²⁰

Demand sharing, therefore, provokes a form of giving that is often not impelled by "love." It is not a "thought" - *ekxeyenma* [-]*wáxok*²¹ - in that it is not an autonomous decision of the *wáxok* but is, instead, imposed on the *wáxok* from outside. I would suggest, therefore, that the motives of those making "demands" are derived more from an egalitarian ethic than a genuine desire to generate "love." Those who have a surplus or are better off than others can be subjected to demand sharing which functions, effectively, as a type of "levelling mechanism," to use a term favoured by Woodburn²² (1982:436). The enthusiasm with which people make "demands" of those with surpluses is one explanation for why the Enxet are still "people without things."²³

12.3 The Discomfort of Borrowing

Durable property and cash are less liable to be subjected to demands that result in their definitive alienation from their original owner. Instead, they are more likely to be "borrowed" and, although borrowing does not imply permanent alienation, as I will show it still functions as a type of levelling mechanism. Within the context of a strong "loving" relationship - such as that which exists between members of a household or between very "close" kin - objects are freely lent and borrowed with no apparent threat to the tranquillity of the owner's *wáxok*. Indeed, in such a context the

¹⁹ Cf. Grubb (1911:189f).

²⁰ Cf. Henley (1982:76), Renshaw (1988:349) and Endicott (1988:124).

²¹ ie. "a mentioning of the *wáxok*."

²² Cf. Altman's (1987:231) term "anti-accumulation forces." See also Barnard and Woodburn (1988:25) and Renshaw (1986:189).

²³ Other "levelling mechanisms" used by the Enxet include theft, gambling and the consumption of alcohol and are discussed elsewhere in the thesis (see Chapters 7 and 13). In Makthlawaiya, cattle owners have occasionally found their animals maimed by machetes or harpoons during the night which provokes significant disturbances in the owners' *wáxoks*. In some cases this has led them to dispose of all their animals so as to avoid further threats to their personal tranquillity.

owners' permission is often not even sought because it is known beforehand that they will not object.²⁴

In contrast, if the relationship between the two parties is not especially close, borrowing becomes more problematic and borrowers must "strengthen/lock" their *wáxoks* before making a request. A wide variety of goods are susceptible to borrowing including bicycles, tools, tape-recorders, guitars, rifles, and horses, indeed, almost any object that some people have but others do not. Money is particularly popular and those who have just received their wages are extremely vulnerable targets. As a rich foreigner, I was frequently asked to lend money, as are Enxet teachers whenever they arrive back from Asunción with their salaries. Almost immediately they are visited by perhaps two or three people who, accepting the *tereré* on offer, make idle chat until their *wáxoks* are sufficiently "strengthened" to enable them to ask for a loan.

If it is evident that the object or money to be borrowed is available, requests are highly unlikely to be denied since this would require the owners to "strengthen/close" their own *wáxoks*. Such an action would probably be interpreted as a refusal to practise "love" and, as a result, not only would it cause a deterioration in the relationship between the two parties, but would provoke feelings of "shame" in the owner and a concomitant "disturbed" *wáxok*.²⁵

Nevertheless, as with demand sharing, owners of objects or money can often find that agreeing to a borrowing request can also generate a similarly "disturbed" *wáxok*. Borrowers can be accused of acting without "restraint" and could be seen as infringing on an owner's personal autonomy. However, one would have thought that, since loaned objects should be returned, the negative impact on an owner's *wáxok* would be less than that experienced during demand sharing. For a number of reasons, though, this is not necessarily so.

One reason why people are reluctant to lend their possessions to others is their "fear/worry" - [-]eyéso²⁶ - that the object will be destroyed by the borrower. This is not an unjustified fear since the Enxet take little care of their possessions.²⁷ Around each house are littered the remnants of once prized objects such as tape-recorders, radios, bicycles and tools which often become worthless within a few months of their

²⁴ Cf. Thomas (1982:53), Ingold (1986:225), Endicott (1988:119) and Hugh-Jones (1992:60).

²⁵ Cf. Renshaw (1986:184).

²⁶ ie. "to cause one to fear."

²⁷ Cf. Renshaw (1986:180) and Kesteven (1984 - cited in Peterson 1991b:75).

acquisition.²⁸ Objects, if not cared for properly, deteriorate in the difficult environment of the Chaco and people are reluctant to stop children using them as toys since this would imply a lack of respect for their personal autonomy.²⁹

When objects are lent, borrowers are even less inclined to take care of them and I have frequently been on the receiving end. My wife and I once lent our guitar to a young men's music group in Makthlawaiya and when, after a few months, it was eventually returned it was unrecognizable. The varnish had disappeared, some strings were broken and, worst of all, two long cracks had appeared in the back of the soundbox.

If possessions are destroyed when being borrowed, the owner can suffer a "disturbed" *wáxok*. Leoncio, who lives in Palo Santo, once lent his hand-drill to his brother-in-law Eugenio but, after waiting for a year, it had still not been returned. He eventually paid Eugenio a visit to ask for the drill back and discovered that it had been abandoned on the ground outside the house where the children had used it as a toy. The handle had snapped off and when I met Leoncio later that day he was visibly distressed and complained bitterly about the damage. He said that it had caused him to experience a "heavy" *wáxok* (in other words, sadness)

The degree of enthusiasm with which people respond to borrowing requests can also depend on their assessment of how easy it will be to retrieve the object or have their money re-paid. If they are confident that the object or money will be voluntarily returned within a short period, their sense of "worry" - *ektamheyka [-]wáxok* - is substantially diminished. Usually, though, people appear disinclined to return objects or repay loans - a practice that was also prevalent in pre-colonial times (cf. Grubb 1911:191) - and some Enxet even insist, somewhat sarcastically, that the non-repayment of money is part of their "culture."³⁰ People, therefore, dislike lending things to those from whom retrieval "will be difficult" - *askehe* - and, in fact, the expression *askehe* encapsulates their sense of foreboding. Its literal translation is "it

²⁸ The rapid deterioration of Enxet possessions may be explained by the fact that they are not interested in "having" possessions - an attitude that, I suggest, is characteristic of western society and explains our tendency towards accumulation - but in "using" them (cf. Miller 1995:108; Peterson 1991b:84; and Ichikawa 1991:147). They do not anticipate retaining a particular object for a number of years hence but are interested in taking advantage of it in the here and now. Therefore, while Europeans could be described as a "have and to hold" people, the Enxet could be characterized as a "to have and to use" people.

²⁹ Cf. Endicott (1988:119ff) and Peterson (1991b:75).

³⁰ "Culture" is a translation of the term *[-]témakxa* (see Chapter 3). Grubb (1911:211) states that the Enxet, when first in contact with Anglican missionaries, always repaid their debts to him which contrasts markedly with my own experience. However, Grubb had the distinct advantage of being perceived as an extremely powerful shaman.

hurts” or “it is painful” so, when people refer to the “difficulty” of re-possessing an object they are, in effect, saying “it will be painful to recover it.” The pain to which they refer is that of the *wáxok*.

One reason why people are disinclined to return borrowed goods can be found in the verb used to signify “to borrow” - [-]meykha. Essentially, the word means “to use” and so, when people ask to borrow something they effectively say, “I want to use your possession.”³¹ However, as I explained when discussing adoption,³² the verb [-]meykha comprises a root [-]ma, which means “to take” or “to have,” and the suffix [-]eykha which suggests repetition. Therefore, [-]meykha could also be said to mean “to have continuously” and so “borrowing” can imply a sense of “continuously having” something, a notion that does not suggest a strong imperative to return an object to its original owner.³³ By “having” an object, a borrower gradually becomes associated with it and can begin to compete with the owner’s rights to the same object. Indeed, if owners make no effort to re-acquire their possession, borrowers can even invest in an object by repairing it. For instance, one man had a bicycle of mine for so long that, when it eventually broke down, he invested a substantial sum in its repair, not with the intention of returning it to me intact but so that he could continue to use it.

Requesting the return of one’s own property or money can threaten a borrower’s personal autonomy and, as a result, is not easy and requires owners to “strengthen” their *wáxoks*. However, by asking, “owners” effectively re-assert their ownership since everyone recognizes that borrowers cannot erase owners’ property rights unless the owners themselves allow that to happen. Yet, the whole process of retrieving an object is potentially unpleasant and disruptive of the tranquillity of the *wáxok* and the knowledge that it will be “painful/difficult” adds to people’s distaste of lending. One alternative and less “painful” means of securing the return of one’s possessions is “to shame” - [-]megkásó³⁴ - borrowers by gossiping about them. Borrowers are bound to hear about the gossip and, in response, often return the objects voluntarily. Nevertheless, potential borrowers can relieve any future pressure on themselves to return money by asking lenders, once a loan has been agreed, if they are in a hurry - [-]pekhésó - to have the money back. Since “being in a hurry” for

³¹ Miller (1995:108) notes that the Toba also employ “to use” to mean “to borrow.”

³² See Chapter 4.

³³ While a borrowed durable object is referred to as [-]meykha, a loan of money is expressed by the term [-]méyak. Both mean “my use” and I cannot explain the reason for the difference except, perhaps, for the need to make a distinction. In Chapter 10, I described a similar phenomenon for the words “distribution” and “fattening.”

³⁴ [-]megkásó - “to shame” - comprises the verb [-]megkako - “to be ashamed” - and the causative suffix [-]ásó.

repayment indicates a lack of “restraint,” lenders always reply in the negative. Once they have done this, though, it becomes even more “painful/difficult” to retrieve their money.

The continual pressure to lend objects can often provoke reluctant owners into disposing of their possessions so that the problem disappears.³⁵ For instance, Alfredo, the owner of eight cattle, was persuaded to swap them for a motorbike by his wife’s father’s brother, Martín. Once he had complied, he discovered that Martín was keen to borrow the motorbike every day and was rather less interested in contributing to its upkeep. After a few months, Alfredo became “fed up” - *[-]leklakme* - with the situation and sold it back to its original owner. Although he only received two cows in exchange, he felt that the six cattle he lost in the transaction was a price well worth paying to regain a tranquil *wáxok*. Another man was provoked into selling his rifle for similar reasons and explained that he had been in a dilemma. Because he did not want to lend his rifle he suffered a “disturbed” *wáxok* whenever he did, but, whenever he refused, he experienced “shame.” Whatever he did, therefore, contributed to a loss of personal tranquillity and, for this reason, he decided to sell the gun. Similar strategies have been reported elsewhere: for instance, a Yanomami destroyed his canoe after being subjected to constant requests (in Collier and Rosaldo 1981:323) while Myers (1988:61) describes how cars have been set fire to by their Pintupi owners as a desperate and angry solution to the problem of disputes over their use.³⁶ The worry that people feel about being asked to lend money is also probably a significant factor in explaining the enthusiasm with which people rapidly exhaust any cash, a topic I will deal with in more detail in Chapter 13.

12.4 In Praise of Deceit

The prospect of experiencing the discomfort that can be generated by demand sharing and borrowing encourages people to adopt certain strategies to avoid a disturbance to their *wáxoks*. For instance, Enxet teachers, despite their relatively large wages, satisfy their subsistence needs by quickly using up their salaries and then surviving from credit. On a day-by-day basis, they obtain small quantities of food from local stores and build up debts throughout the month. Because they have no cash and the food that they acquire is consumed almost immediately, they are protected from both borrowing and demand sharing. When they return from Asunción with their wages at the end of the month, they pay off their debts and, as a result, are again left

³⁵ Cf. Grubb (1911:191) and Renshaw (1986:180).

³⁶ Myers (1988:61) also states that owners are often relieved when their cars break down since only then are they free of demands.

with little cash in hand. They, therefore, re-commence the monthly cycle of accumulating credit. So prevalent is the use of credit among the Enxet that one Mennonite storeowner in Lolita is of the opinion that, “an Indian can’t be happy unless he has obtained credit.”³⁷

However, the most common strategy to avoid succumbing to “demands” involves lying and deceiving. Although potential givers find it extremely difficult to deny a request if those making “demands” know that the desired food or objects are available, if the opportunity exists to deceive “askers” by convincing them that there is nothing, it is often taken.³⁸ People can hide food in their houses and, if someone makes a demand, they can simply lie by saying that they have none. Money, because of its size and portability, also lends itself to a strategy of lying, and people can easily claim that they are “broke”³⁹ if someone asks them for a loan, although one problem with lying about money is that any subsequent spending has to be done discretely. Interestingly, “lying” is expressed in Enxet by *mopwánamya’ a* - literally “information that has ability”⁴⁰ - and suggests that the Enxet understand “lies” as powerful words that can make things happen. In the context of demand sharing, these powerful words can protect the tranquillity of potential givers’ *wáxoks*.

If food still lies unharvested in the garden, it is more difficult to deceive “askers” though not impossible. When, for example, people “demand” watermelons, potential givers can leave visitors behind in their house to drink *tereré* while they enter the garden by themselves to seek out the smallest and least tasty ones, thereby preserving the best for themselves - or for other more valued visitors. Nonetheless, they insist that the watermelons that they give are the best that they have and, therefore, manage to exhibit the required etiquette of offering “loving” hospitality - *[-]ápekxa*.

People also take steps to avoid being subjected to “demands” for their garden produce in the first place. For instance, some gardeners, once their manioc is mature, cut down the stalks to give the impression that it has already been harvested. Others allow their sweet potato to become overgrown so that the plants themselves disappear from view. People are aware, of course, that by not weeding they are reducing their

³⁷ The enthusiasm of indigenous people for credit would suggest the need for a reassessment of the institution of debt-bondage. See, for example, Renshaw (1986:207f), Hugh-Jones (1992) and Kidd (1997a).

³⁸ “To deceive” is *[-]jelyexancheseykha* in Enxet and is derived from *[-]yexanma*, “to be hidden.” It means, literally, “to cause to be continually hidden.”

³⁹ The word used for “I am broke” is *ekyetekke* which means, literally, “I am snapped.”

⁴⁰ *Mopwánamya’ a* is a composite word comprising the verb “to be able” - *[-]mowána* - and the term “news/information” - *amya’ a*. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of *[-]mowána* and shamanic power.

overall harvest but this is preferred to being targeted by demand sharers. A similar strategy of disguising food was also practised by old women whenever they came to our house in Makthlawaiya to ask us for “help.” On receiving their kilogramme of rice or beans, they would tuck the packet under their shirt or coat and, hunching their shoulders to hide it even more, return home as quickly as possible in the hope that no one would notice them. This food was, at times, their only meal for the day and it was clear that they were not inclined to hand it over to anyone but their own household.

In contrast to food and money, most durable objects are difficult to hide and, as a result, their owners have to be more imaginative if they do not want them to be borrowed. For instance, one man from Makthlawaiya became so “fed up” with interminable requests for his bicycle that he eventually decided to keep it in a permanent state of disrepair. Whenever anyone asked him for it, he was able to refuse them by truthfully stating that it was broken. He preferred a tranquil *wáxok* over the opportunity to use the bicycle himself.

The use of deceit and lying to avoid sharing and lending is a strategy that is commonly employed by indigenous people and hunter-gatherers throughout the world.⁴¹ It helps maintain tranquillity and conviviality in the community by enabling people not to share without incurring the displeasure of others. The key is, as McCallum (1989:206) points out, to avoid sharing while, at the same time, appearing to be generous. As long as things are well-hidden, a reluctant potential giver can employ a lie to deflect a “demand” without causing offence.⁴² Since people stress certain relationships over others, they need to be able to deny food and goods to some while giving it to others. In addition, whenever they have property that they do not want to share with anyone, they need an effective strategy that enables them to keep it without their *wáxoks* becoming “disturbed.”⁴³

Lying and deceiving can, therefore, be understood as “essential social graces” (Siskind 1973:85) and as constitutive of social life since they allow people to avoid conflicts. They are not regarded by the Enxet as provoking moral questions and no one ever feels guilty about lying, as long as they are not found out. Indeed, no word exists in the Enxet language that adequately expresses the concept of “guilt.”

⁴¹ For South American examples see, for example: Bridges (1950:112), Siskind (1973:85), Kracke (1978:21), McCallum (1989:206ff; 1990:417) and Ellis (1996:149). For elsewhere in the world see: Dowling (1968:503), Collier and Rosaldo (1981:296), Myers (1986:115; 1988:56, 59), Altman (1987:147), Barnard and Woodburn (1988:16) and Endicott (1988:117).

⁴² Cf. Siskind (1973:85) who states that secrecy limits confrontation among the Sharanahua.

⁴³ The desire not to share is further evidence for the existence of full property rights of food and durable goods among the Enxet.

However, the situation is quite different if people are caught deceiving others since the clear evidence that they are refusing to share and practise “love” can cause them to experience “shame” - [-] *megkakto*. For instance, during the time we lived in Asunción we were once visited by a group of people from Makthlawaiya who stayed with us for a few days. One day they bought a watermelon and, not wanting to share it with us, they sneaked it into their room and proceeded to eat it. I had noticed them entering the house and wanted to chat with them to see if they had enjoyed their day. As I approached their door I heard a commotion inside and muffled shouts of “it’s Stephen!” before one of the women appeared at the door and, opening it as little as possible, tried to engage me in conversation while simultaneously blocking my path into the room. Her actions aroused my interest and I pressed on regardless, giving her no option but to let me through. On entering the room, I found everyone sitting, spoons in hand, around a juicy, red watermelon. No one could bring themselves to look at me and, after exchanging a few pleasantries, I departed the clearly uncomfortable situation. When I later told some Enxet friends what had happened, they agreed that I had “caused my visitors to be ashamed” - [-] *megkásó*. Indeed, the “fear/worry” of experiencing “shame” can inhibit people from deceiving others and, therefore, it is only done when people are convinced that they will not be discovered.

12.5 Conclusion

The act of sharing, therefore, should not be regarded as always constitutive of sociality. Different types of sharing exist in indigenous communities and, while voluntary sharing is impelled by “love,” demand sharing derives more from an egalitarian ethic. Statements such as: “Consumables are possessed only to be given away in the social process”⁴⁴ represent only one aspect of indigenous people’s ties to their property and, somewhat romantically, ignore those self-regarding emotions and desires that Thomas (1982) identified in his discussion of the constant appearance of incipient hierarchies among the Pemon. For an egalitarian social organization and economy to exist, indigenous people cannot only rely on a voluntary respect for the ethical value of “love” but require levelling mechanisms, or, as Thomas (1982:231ff) states, incipient hierarchies need to be constantly destabilized.⁴⁵ In Chapter 13, I will describe how these levelling mechanisms are practised within the context of the monetary economy that has penetrated Enxet community life.

Yet, it would be a mistake to overemphasize a desire to assert egalitarianism as the motivation for demand sharing. People often decide to “demand” food from

⁴⁴ McCallum (1989).

⁴⁵ Cf. Overing (1993b:51f).

others purely out of desire, because they are “caused to like” - [-]yásekeso⁴⁶ - things they see in the possession of others. If, for example, people desire meat and another household has more than enough for its own needs, they can “demand” a share. In that moment, they are not motivated by an egalitarian ideology but by their immediate desires, and often explain their “demand” by the statement “*ekmakhawo ápetek*” - “I really fancy some meat.” Alternatively, some “demanders” may be motivated by need, such as when their household has no food,⁴⁷ while others may “demand” the food of others whenever they feel too “lazy” - [-]haxéxko⁴⁸ - to hunt or look for work. Yet, even when those making “demands” are not motivated by an egalitarian ethic, in practical terms their “demands” still constitute levelling mechanisms and promote the continuation of an egalitarian social organization.

Finally, can this discussion of demand sharing enable us to understand better the nature of obligation within indigenous economic relations? As I discussed earlier,⁴⁹ Ingold (1986) has postulated that hunter-gatherers are obliged to share because all food is held by individuals on behalf of the collectivity while Fortes (1983) explains the same phenomenon by reference to putative rules of kinship and a concomitant “binding mutual interdependence.” However, the Enxet do not seem to recognize either of these explanations and employ, instead, a discourse that makes reference to notions of personhood and the affective life. When faced by a “demand,” people share because to do otherwise would require them to “strengthen/lock” their *wáxoks* - which is difficult in itself - and which would subsequently cause them to experience “shame” once their refusal to practise “love” became obvious to others. They are also “caused to fear” - [-]yéso - that a person denied a “demand” will begin to “hate” them. It is the desire to avoid a disturbed *wáxok* that impels people to respond affirmatively to “demands” yet, as I have shown, this does not necessarily permit the tranquillity of the *wáxok* to be maintained. The best solution, therefore, often is to avoid becoming targets for “demands” or, if circumstances permit, to

⁴⁶ [-]yásekeso would appear to comprise the verb “to like” - [-]yespagko - with the addition of the causative suffix [-]eso.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that the distinction between “desire” and “need” is not clear-cut in Enxet. The verb “to need” - [-]mámenyého - can also be translated as “to want” and the difference between the two meanings is not always evident.

⁴⁸ [-]haxéxko comprises the verb “to be bent over” with a suffix that signifies exaggeration.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 1.

deceive and lie convincingly, in other words to have the skill to use “words that have ability.”

13. DOMESTICATING LETHAL MONEY

The last chapter of David Thomas' otherwise excellent book on the Pemon people of Venezuela - "Order without Government" - provides a marked and disturbing contrast with the rest of his work. His perceptive and stimulating analysis of the Pemon people's egalitarian social system is brusquely replaced by a profoundly negative and depressing tone as he laments the passing away of the culture he has but recently described to the reader. He remarks (Thomas 1982: 239f):

While the egalitarian forces in Pemon society will influence events for some time to come, the egalitarian social system described here is probably, for all practical purposes gone. The greatest tragedy of the Pemon experience will not only be that the Pemon will end up on the bottom rung of the Venezuelan class ladder, or only that they will feel, collectively and individually, the sting of prejudice and exploitation at the hands of the criollo population. But even worse will be the internal stratification of the Pemon themselves, the exploitation of some Pemon by others.

He provides examples of Pemon employing their own people as wage labourers and mentions that "westernized" young men and women are beginning to refer to their fellows as *indio sucio* (dirty Indian). In conclusion, he insists that the Pemon will eventually be transformed into *campesinos* and cease to be members of an "egalitarian social system."

Thomas explicitly identifies money as the agent responsible for the destruction of Pemon culture, explaining that, "It is only with the advent and complete penetration of that single measure of human beings, Western currency, that the system will disintegrate" (1982:241). His belief in the lethal power of money is reflected in the work of many other anthropologists,¹ including that of Renshaw (1986:192) who remarks:

Money, so long as it remains outside the [Chaco] Indians' own economy, is not generally viewed as a threat. ... Where it impinges on the networks of generalized exchange, it is the very basis of social relations that is threatened.

According to Bloch and Parry (1989:4ff) and Peterson (1991a:3), the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of lethal money are found in the works of Marx and Simmel. They claimed that money possessed two special attributes which

¹ Other anthropologists who have subscribed to the notion of lethal money include Murphy and Steward (1956), Henley (1982:221), Taylor (1981: 653ff), McCallum (1989) and Stirrat (1989:100f).

differentiate it from other commodities: the first is that it is a quantitative ratio that functions as a measure of value and enables property in one form to be easily converted into property in any another form;² the second is its putative anonymous and impersonal nature.³ Both Marx and Simmel insisted that money possesses the potential to objectify and depersonalize social relations thereby leading to a marked increase in individualism.⁴ They believed that once it penetrates non-monetarized societies, it stimulates the development of commoditization at the expense of the autochthonous forms of economic transactions - such as sharing and gift-giving - leading to the appearance of the impersonal, inconsequential relationships that are characteristic of the market-place (Bloch and Parry 1989:6). Community life will eventually disintegrate due to a decrease in interpersonal dependency and a concomitant increase in differentiation between individuals⁵

As Peterson (1991a:3) remarks, Marx and Simmel's theories on money and commoditization were widely shared by the founding fathers of sociology and have often been unquestioningly accepted by contemporary investigators.⁶ As a result, many anthropologists have undertaken their research with an *a priori* understanding of money as possessing a powerful, almost magical revolutionary power, as if it were the computer virus of indigenous peoples, an anonymous force that destroys and disintegrates any system with which it comes in contact.⁷ This conception of money has influenced how anthropology has dealt with the topic of money, although it is noticeable that many anthropologists have chosen to ignore money in their ethnographies, preferring instead to practise a form of "salvage anthropology" or, at best, to restrict its consideration to a postscript dedicated to "cultural change."

Given the long experience of the Enxet with money - which they refer to as *selyakyé*, literally "round things" - and its significant place in daily life, to ignore it would be perverse and so, in this chapter, I will focus on the role of money in the internal economy of the Enxet. According to Grubb (1911:71) the pre-colonial Enxet employed necklaces as a unit of exchange - with a five metre necklace having the equivalent value of a sheep - and while these necklaces should not be viewed as a form of money, it would suggest that the practice of barter was not unusual, although we have no information about the nature of the relationship between bartering

² See: Hart (1986:638), Renshaw (1986:192) and Peterson (1991a:3).

³ See: Bloch and Parry (1989:6) and Hart (1986:638).

⁴ See: Bloch and Parry (1989:6) and Peterson (1991a:3).

⁵ See: Peterson (1991a:3).

⁶ This can be seen in the comments of such authors as Thomas (1982), Henley (1982), Renshaw (1986) and McCallum (1989).

⁷ Cf. Bloch and Parry (1989:12).

partners.⁸ The first real experience of the Enxet with a form of money was in the early mission stations of the South American Missionary Society (SAMS).⁹ The missionaries developed a system of paper tokens with which Enxet employees were paid. There were four types of token, each bearing the picture of a different animal, and each with a different value (SAMS n.d.1:15). The Enxet could exchange the tokens in the mission stores for manufactured goods, although there is no information on whether they were used in transactions between themselves. The system would appear to have lasted for almost thirty years and was only abandoned when the Paraguayan government issued a decree in the 1930s banning the use of credit tokens.¹⁰

Since the end of the Chaco War in 1936 the contact of the Enxet with money has increased dramatically. Although wages on ranches have always been low and mainly paid in kind, people have usually been able to gain access to some cash and nowadays money plays a significant role in the internal economy of the Enxet. I will divide this study of money into four distinct sections. First of all I will discuss the generative power of money, while in the second section I will consider how it is that money does not threaten the egalitarian social relations of the Enxet, examining, in this context, certain “levelling mechanisms.” The third section will deal specifically with commoditization within Enxet communities while the fourth will examine the topic of employment between Enxet. Many authors view commoditization and employment as key indicators of social breakdown within indigenous communities but I will question whether this is the case among the Enxet. In my analysis I will attempt to follow the advice of Bloch and Parry (1989:1) who point out that, “in order to understand the way in which money is viewed it is vitally important to understand the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated.” In this way, I hope to avoid “attributing to money in general what in fact is a specific set of meanings which derive from our own culture” (1989:1) a trap into which many anthropologists appear to have fallen.

⁸ Grubb (1911:71) described the necklaces as a form of money. Alvarsson (1988:222f) also described necklaces as used in a similar way among the Wichí of the western Chaco.

⁹ It would appear that trade that occurred between Paraguayans and Enxet on the banks of the River Paraguay in the late nineteenth century took the form of barter with skins and feathers being exchanged for manufactured goods.

¹⁰ According to the Enxet, the Paraguayans banned the tokens because they were afraid that the Enxet would become richer than them.

13.1 “Love” and the Generative Power of Money

According to Renshaw (1986:182), Chaco indigenous people view money as profoundly different in nature to other durable objects. While, on the one hand he stresses the metonymical link between people and their personal possessions, he notes that the anonymous character of money makes such a relationship impossible. However, I would suggest that Renshaw overemphasizes the differences between money and other durable property and that money is, essentially, one other type of personal property. As with other durable goods, money is usually personally owned irrespective of its origin¹¹ and, given that I have already questioned the existence of a metonymical relationship between individuals and their personal possessions,¹² I do not find the absence of such a link between people and their money as particularly problematic. One significant difference between money and other personal possessions is that the close kin of a deceased person have no problem retaining the latter’s cash, a point also noted by Renshaw (1988:345). Yet, this is easily explained by reference to the lack of distinctiveness of cash. Seeing it does not evoke the memory of the deceased and cause “sadness” and, anyway, it is usually spent almost immediately.

Consequently, since there is no significant difference between money and other personal goods, there should be no reason why money cannot be used in gift-giving and sharing. Yet, Renshaw¹³ (1986:190) insists that, in the Chaco, money is “very specifically excluded from the networks of generalized reciprocity,” a viewpoint that has been echoed by anthropologists elsewhere.¹⁴ My experience is very different and, in previous chapters, I have already given numerous examples of money being voluntarily shared both within the household and between “close” kin, even between those who live in different communities. Indeed, money seems eminently suitable for sharing and it has certainly been reported among other indigenous people: Gow (1991:139) mentions that the Piro use money in gift-giving while Alvarsson (1988:208f) claims that the Wichí of the western Chaco share money in the same way as food.¹⁵

How, therefore, can we explain Renshaw’s insistence that money is unsuitable for sharing among Chaco indigenous people. A clue is provided by Bloch and Parry’s

¹¹ Cf. Renshaw (1988:345) and Belaunde (1992:137).

¹² See Chapter 7.

¹³ See also Renshaw (1988:341, 346).

¹⁴ See, for example, Riches (1975:22) and Forrest (1987:289).

¹⁵ The sharing of money among Chaco indigenous peoples has also been noted by Gordillo (1994:58) and Mendoza (1998:64).

(1989:8f) statement that the impersonal nature of money has lead many anthropologists to presuppose that it is an inappropriate gift. It is often assumed that the natural environment of money is the market economy and, since anthropology's ideology of the gift has been constructed in antithesis to market exchange, anthropologists tend to dismiss the idea that money can be used in a sharing economy in which the altruistic gift is highly valued. It is likely that Renshaw has been unduly influenced by this presupposition when interpreting his ethnographic data, a suggestion that is made more plausible by the fact that elsewhere he contradicts himself by stating that money is, in fact, used by indigenous workers to support not only their households but also other kin and neighbours.¹⁶

Money, therefore, can be employed to generate social relationships in much the same way as food and other goods and its giving can be one aspect of "love." Such a position is easy to accept once we recognize that it is not the object that is given that stands for the relationship between giver and receiver but the act of giving itself.¹⁷ Consequently, the impersonal nature of money is of little importance. Indeed, another significant factor that tends to be overlooked in discussions on the suitability of money for sharing is its convertibility.¹⁸ As long as people have access to shops, money can be easily transformed into food or other goods which are then treated in the same way as any other food or objects. Money, therefore, is used indirectly to produce social relations. In fact, whenever a group of people require some goods - such as football strips for a community football team - they are usually bought by those with the biggest wages. Therefore, those who are better off are generous and "loving" with their money and, by acting as leaders should, they enhance their position as leaders.¹⁹

13.2 Cash and the Maintenance of Egalitarian Relations

Implicit in the writings of those anthropologists who stress the lethal power of money is the fear that it can be easily stored and accumulated thereby provoking increased social and economic differentiation among "egalitarian" indigenous peoples. Yet the Enxet, despite their long association with money, are still remarkably egalitarian and some of those with the greatest access to money - such as teachers - are among those with the least possessions and most humble dwellings. This is the

¹⁶ See Renshaw (1986:204; 1988:345).

¹⁷ See Chapter 10.

¹⁸ The significance of the convertibility of money has also been noted - although, at times, only implicitly - by Altman (1987:159), Alvarsson (1988:208, 221), Endicott (1988:118) and Gordillo (1994:68).

¹⁹ Cf. Gordillo (1994:70).

result of their immediate “consumption” of money and the continuing viability of levelling mechanisms which continue to uphold, either directly or indirectly, the egalitarian ideology of the Enxet.

13.2.1 A Windfall Mentality

The incredible capacity of indigenous people to spend money has often been remarked upon in the literature, and the Enxet are no different.²⁰ No better example can be provided than those teachers employed by the Ministry of Education who are among the highest Enxet wage earners. Each month they travel to Asunción to receive their salaries yet within a few days they are entirely depleted. They usually stay three or four days in Asunción and during that time most of their money disappears as they live well beyond their means. For many of them taxi travel, expensive restaurants, night-clubs, prostitutes and abundant alcohol are par for the course, as is illustrated by a church pastor’s account of his experience with Alejandro, one of the teachers from El Estribo:

“I was staying in the Anglican Church’s residence with Juan [an indigenous nurse] and we had agreed to travel home with Alejandro. He had collected his wage in the morning but didn’t arrive back at the residence until 1 o’clock the next morning. He woke the two of us up and suggested that we left for the bus station so that we wouldn’t miss our bus. I didn’t have my watch and so I assumed that it was much later and it was only when we arrived at the bus station in our taxi that I realized how early it was. Alejandro suggested that we leave our luggage in a locker, which we did, and Alejandro paid for it. He then took us off to a hotel where there was dancing, drinking and people having a good time. Alejandro ordered food for the three of us - which he paid for - and bought me a litre of coke and beers for himself and Juan. When some prostitutes arrived, Alejandro also bought drinks for them. However, he gave Juan G:100,000²¹ to look after and asked him to take it to his wife in El Estribo. Out of interest I decided to ask the prostitutes how much they charged and they said G:25,000. I told them that I only had G:15,000 and was able to get out of doing anything. Juan and I decided to return to the bus station to get some sleep but in the morning we couldn’t get our luggage out of the locker and so Juan went to look for Alejandro to ask for the key. When he found him, Alejandro asked him for the G:100,000. Juan gave it to him and returned to the bus station. Just before we left Alejandro turned up at the station and informed us that he was broke. He asked me to lend him G:1,000 for the busfare to Villa Hayes²² [a town 20 kilometres

²⁰ Cf. Renshaw (1986:180; 1988:345), Forrest (1987:289f) and Hugh-Jones (1992).

²¹ About US\$45.

²² Villa Hayes is the administrative capital of the Department of Presidente Hayes where El Estribo is located.

from Asunción] which I did because I had “compassion” for him. He got off the bus at Villa Hayes and I assume that he went to visit the politicians to ask them for a loan of money.”

Alejandro is, in reality, one of the extreme cases but most teachers arrive home with at least two-thirds of their salary already used up having bought various goods for themselves, as well as gifts for their wives and family. I also discovered that they were never particularly concerned about prices. I once invested great effort into explaining to a man who wanted to buy a cassette-recorder that there were many different brands all with different prices, pointing out that he could save money by looking in a number of shops before making a decision about what to buy. I accompanied him to the shops but, in the first one we entered, he decided to buy one of the models on display. With some difficulty I persuaded him to wait and took him to the shop next door. This time the temptation proved irresistible and he purchased a poor quality, overpriced cassette-recorder. If the Enxet see something they want, they will usually buy it as long as they have the money.

Large purchases are often accomplished by obtaining credit from shops and once the teachers realized that their status as government employees made them eligible to receive loans from moneylenders, all but one succumbed. Most loans were unsecured and had exorbitant rates of interest. Typical repayment conditions for a loan of G:400,000 were G:175,000 per month over four months - in other words, an interest rate 225% per annum - but the worst example I came across concerned Juan, the nurse from El Estribo, who received a salary from the Ministry of Health. Having just finished paying six monthly quotas of G:115,000 on a loan of G:300,000, he took out a further loan of G:400,000 for which he agreed to pay six monthly quotas of G:155,000 and one final quota of G:950,000, giving a total of G:1,880,000. He signed IOUs for each month but, after four months, he began to default and was only saved by the intervention of his superior in the Ministry of Health who threatened to denounce the money lender. When I asked Juan why he had agreed to such terms he replied that he had not known what a loan was,²³ an explanation that other people in El Estribo found laughable.

Both Juan and the teachers took the loans because they were attracted by the possibility of a large sum of money which, when added to their monthly wage, would enable them to make significant purchases. Vicente, for example, wanted a loan of G:600,000 to buy a horse and bicycle. Unfortunately for him, he discovered that such an amount would require a guarantor and, when none was available, he decided to

²³ To describe a loan, he used the Spanish word *préstamo*.

accept just G:350,000. When, a few days later, I asked him whether he had decided to buy the bicycle or the horse, his response was to laughingly explain that he had bought neither. Nevertheless, not all the loans are frittered away in Asunción and some teachers do buy articles to take home for themselves and their families including bicycles, clothes, jewellery and cassette-recorders. Yet, when one loan is paid off another follows and, in the intervening months, the teachers have to pay substantial sums to the money lenders which means a significant reduction in their disposable income. Some have tried to overcome the problem by taking out a number of loans from different moneylenders but have found that their total monthly repayments exceed their salaries. A number have ended up being sued by the moneylenders and two teachers had 95% of their wages retained by the Ministry of Education over a period of two years so that the moneylenders could be repaid.²⁴

The teachers are an extreme but nonetheless typical example of how the Enxet deal with money. The same rapid depletion occurred with the successful cotton cultivators during the 1995/96 season, some of whom received over G:1,000,000 for their crops. Within a week or two most, if not all of their money had disappeared and, while some bought corrugated zinc sheets, bicycles and clothes, many were left with the feeling that their money had evaporated away. The Enxet refer to their tendency to exhaust their money within a short time span as “destroying money” - “[*-*]towásekha selyakyé.”²⁵

Hugh-Jones (1992:64) refers to this practice as a “windfall mentality” and explains its prevalence among the Barasana by reference to a power known as *ewa* which is said to imbue manufactured goods. It is, “an irresistibly attractive and potent force which leads [the Barasana] to act in an uncontrolled manner and to do things against their better judgement” (1992:46). Although I have not heard any reference to a similar power among the Enxet - although they do believe that apparently “inanimate” objects can have spiritual “owners” - the lack of control and judgement described by Hugh-Jones could also apply to the Enxet. Yet they are more likely to refer to their *wáxoks* as being “speeded up” - *ekpekhéso* [*-*]wáxok - by the temptation of purchasing highly desired goods, a term that implies a temporary loss of inner equilibrium.²⁶

²⁴ During this period they received G:30,000 per month which did not even cover the cost of a return bus ticket to Asunción.

²⁵ [*-*]towásekha - “to destroy” - appears to be derived from the verb “to eat” - [*-*]tó.

²⁶ Renshaw (1988:345) explains the desire to purchase expensive but ultimately useless goods for oneself as a consequence of the high value placed on personal autonomy. If the personal autonomy he refers to is self-regarding rather than other-regarding and, therefore, essentially immoral, his explanation may have some validity but it does not satisfactorily explain why indigenous people are often just as anxious to purchase gifts for others.

Money, therefore, is immediately “consumed” and I only know two people who managed to keep substantial sums of money for more than a month while nobody at all possesses “savings.” Although this can be partially explained by an apparently innate profligacy which acts, in effect, as a form of egalitarian self-regulation, we should not ignore the levelling mechanisms exerted by individuals on each other. The desire to avoid the demands of others - especially requests to borrow money - may also be a significant factor in explaining why the Enxet dispose of surplus cash almost immediately.²⁷

13.2.2 Levelling Mechanisms

As well as the borrowing of money, a number of other practices could also be regarded as “levelling mechanisms” since they inhibit any significant accumulation of money. In this section, I will consider gambling and drinking and also provide an example of a more spontaneous and imaginative levelling mechanism.

Gambling is popular with the Enxet, just as it was in pre-colonial times when *sekes* was the most common game.²⁸ It is a game of chance played normally by four people and, instead of dice, four sticks with markings on each side are thrown to the ground. Depending on how they fall, each participant is able to move a counter along a series of holes in the ground with the aim of consuming the “food,” that is found in each hole, taking care not to be attacked by other participants or to be drowned in the “river.” In the pre-colonial period stakes were beads, tobacco pipes and small articles of clothing and the winner kept everything. It is an exciting game but, many years ago, it was banned by the missionaries and, as a result, it is nowadays only rarely played although, when it is, cash is used as the stake. It is much more common to gamble with playing cards but, since they are also frowned upon by the church, only a minority of community members participate on a regular basis. Nevertheless, it does permit a limited amount of redistribution of available cash.

The most popular form of contemporary gambling involves wagers on games of football and volleyball. Almost everyone participates, including spectators, and the Enxet find it almost inconceivable to play sport without some sort of wager. Each side places the same amount of money in a pool - although women also bet clothes and ornaments - and the winner takes all. The size of the wagers depends on the amount of

²⁷ See Chapter 12.

²⁸ See: Hunt (1895:182), Hawtreay (1901:297) and SAMS (n.d.2:17f). Early authors referred to *sekes* as *hastawa* although “*has*” and “*tawa*” are, in fact, words called out during the game by participants.

money in the community and, when cash is scarce, a pool rarely passes G:12,000 in value.²⁹ However, when people return from wage labour bets are substantially increased and some individuals can wager the equivalent of two days income.³⁰ During the Christmas and Easter festivities, when people return to their colonies with more money than usual, wagers at football matches can average around G:120,000 for both sides combined,³¹ while the highest that I have come across has been G:400,000.³² Despite the fact that those with money have a 50% chance of doubling their wagers, this form of gambling still has the potential of allowing a substantial redistribution of cash, although it is normal to allow the losers an opportunity to recover their losses.

The consumption of alcohol is an even more powerful form of redistribution.³³ Traditionally, the Enxet produced and drank alcohol during times of abundance and the same basic principle applies today.³⁴ When men arrive home from wage labour with cash in hand, the first act of many of them is to purchase *caña* which, on an indigenous colony, can cost up to three times the market value. On Makthlawaiya, whenever a number of men return together having been on a work-party for a rancher, dancing also begins and the *caña* is freely shared among all the participants. On El Estribo, where “traditional” dancing is banned, groups of men still gather to drink together. Among the Enxet, the apparently egalitarian concept of taking turns to buy a round is unknown and, instead, the onus is on those with available cash to buy for everyone else. I have seen dances on Makthlawaiya continue for over a week, only stopping when the money is exhausted.

Dedicated drinkers can become extremely popular whenever they have surplus cash available. Once when a number of men who had received relatively generous severance pay after many years service on a neighbouring ranch arrived back in Makthlawaiya, their houses were inundated with friends and kin who enthusiastically helped them drink their money away. Once drunk, people are incapable of “strengthening” their *wáxoks* and are, therefore, unable to put a brake on their spending. But, once the money disappears, so do the visitors. Even when the amount of money is relatively modest, the scenario is the same. For instance, a man to whom I paid G:20,000³⁵ was immediately joined by two drinking companions who

²⁹ About US\$6.00.

³⁰ This would be the equivalent of between US\$10.00 and US\$15.00.

³¹ About US\$60.00.

³² About US\$200.00.

³³ See Chapter 3.

³⁴ Cf. Grubb (1911:177ff).

³⁵ Approximately US\$10.

encouraged him to buy *caña* and, within a short time, all his money had been drunk. The Enxet say that drinking partners literally “stick to” - [-]yepetma - those with cash and, indeed, it is almost unknown for an Enxet to drink alone.³⁶ Providing arguments or fights do not break out, drinking together is extremely sociable and, in this respect, cash is constitutive of sociality. Nevertheless, it can often have the opposite effect on those wives witnessing their families’ subsistence disappear down the throats of their husbands’ transitory companions. I have seen a woman shout in anger at her husband in front of a store in Makthlawaiya as she tried - unsuccessfully - to make him hand over his salary before it was totally depleted. When drunk and, therefore, temporarily lacking in “knowledge,” husbands may no longer be concerned about “loving” their families.

Although Renshaw (1986:192; 1988:345) recognizes that gambling and drinking are characteristic features of indigenous social life in the Chaco, he does not appear to regard them as distributive measures. Instead, he explains both phenomena as manifestations of the high degree of autonomy that individuals have over the use of their money, suggesting that both are means of keeping cash outside the internal economy. Yet, it is difficult to see how gambling and drinking can be conceived of as anything but integral aspects of the indigenous economy, a view shared by Altman (1987:157ff) who, in his ethnographic study of the Gunwinggu of Australia, suggests that both practices enable money to be shared within the community.³⁷ Certainly, both gambling and drinking promote egalitarian relations within Enxet communities and enable large numbers of people to benefit from an individual’s earnings.

At times, the Enxet can implement rather more imaginative levelling mechanisms which are tailored to specific circumstances. One of the most spectacular concerned the proceeds received from renting out a corral in Makthlawaiya. A few years earlier it had been constructed, at great expense, by the Anglican Church using high quality *quebracho* posts and, when the Church handed the land over to the community, the corral became community property. Although it was of little direct use to the community, whenever ranchers from the north wanted to send their cattle to market they would take them by foot to Makthlawaiya and use the corral to load them onto lorries. Although the community received a small fee for each cow that passed through the corral, it was paid to Benjamin, the main community leader. However, Benjamin, who was often described as having a “strong/closed” *wáxok*, usually kept the money for himself even though, at times, it was considerable, surpassing

³⁶ Interestingly, Forrest (1987:300) appears to suggest that the Kalinya exhaust their money by drinking alone.

³⁷ Cf. Woodburn (1982:442) and Peterson (1991b:73f).

G:1,000,000.³⁸ Although he was widely criticized in the village, the matter was never raised in community meetings since people were “worried/fearful” about being in conflict with Benjamin. The only person to make a direct claim for the money was the husband of Benjamin’s wife’s mother’s brother’s daughter. Yet he could not garner wide support as he was mainly interested in obtaining money for himself. He maintained that, since he had constructed the corral, it belonged to him, an assertion rejected by other community members who pointed out that, at the time, he had been an employee of the Anglican Church.³⁹ Nevertheless, on one occasion following payment from a Paraguayan rancher, the two men’s wives - who were “sisters” - ended up fighting each other. As a result, Benjamin gave his competitor a rather less than generous G:10,000.⁴⁰

Eventually, in November 1994, matters came to a head. During a one-week absence of Benjamin from the community, two men decided to dismantle the corral.⁴¹ They were soon joined by others and, within a short time, the corral had been reduced to a pile of quebracho posts, over 250 in total. Each person appropriated those that they themselves had removed and contact was made with Paraguayan traders who agreed to purchase the posts at a bargain price. During the next few days the Paraguayans removed the posts from the colony and by the time Benjamin returned, nothing remained. People informed me that they had taken such drastic action because they were “angry” with Benjamin; his refusal to distribute the money had made them resolve that he would not benefit either. Benjamin himself had a somewhat different interpretation, insisting that the perpetrators were motivated by a desire to buy *caña*. Nonetheless, it was an excellent example of a rather dramatic and consciously implemented levelling mechanism that, at a stroke, removed one of the main threats to an egalitarian and tranquil social life in Makthlawaiya.

13.3 Commoditization within the Internal Economy

My main point in the above discussion is that, although money has entered into the internal economy of the Enxet, it has not given rise to significant intra-community differentials of wealth. Even Benjamin, who has had more money pass through his hands than any Enxet I know, was, by 1996, one of the poorer members of

³⁸ Approximately US\$500.

³⁹ The conflict over the corral is another example of differing concepts of property being used to contest ownership. See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion.

⁴⁰ Approximately, US\$5.00.

⁴¹ One man was Benjamin’s wife’s brother while the other was not kin. Both were interested in becoming leader’s of the community.

his community.⁴² Consequently, the apparently lethal power of money has, to a great extent, been nullified within Enxet communities - if, indeed, it ever existed.

However, money has also permitted the introduction of commoditization into Enxet communities and, in this section, I plan to examine the phenomenon of commodity relations in some detail. To date, it has been little researched within lowland South America and, instead, anthropologists have tended to restrict themselves to statements that stress the dangers of the penetration of market relations into indigenous community. For instance, McCallum (1989:206) states that: “Something which creates kinship when it is given away as a present, confirms difference if it is *sold* as a commodity,”⁴³ and that: “Theft and *commodity transactions* make people into strangers and enemies, whereas giving and receiving presents make them into kin.”⁴⁴ Gordillo (1992:168; 1994:76) expresses similar sentiments when observing that the appearance of shops in communities signals a breakdown in community relations. Yet, little evidence is offered to back up these rather sweeping statements.

Should, though, commoditization be seen as inherently dangerous to the well-being and social life of indigenous communities? A commodity transaction is, in essence, an example of balanced reciprocity, a type of economic transaction with which many indigenous peoples have experience. Barter, for example, is practised among the Barasana and, while it is not characteristic of relations within the longhouse, it certainly occurs between friends⁴⁵ (Hugh-Jones 1992:60). I noted earlier that barter was also engaged in by the Enxet in the pre-colonial period and, as Appadurai (1986:10ff) points out, there is a commonality of spirit between barter, gift exchange and commodity exchange.⁴⁶ Overing (1992:195) has even observed that balanced reciprocity is practised by Piaroa close kin and these few examples would suggest that commodity transactions should not be regarded as something utterly alien and unacceptable to indigenous people. In fact, the Enxet word for “to pay” - *[-]yagmagkásó* - is clearly derived from the verb “to change/exchange” -

⁴² By the end of 1995 Benjamin, who had previously been one of the bigger cattle owners, was down to his last few animals. Unfortunately for him, he was jailed in December 1995 for cattle theft and, although he was almost certainly innocent, he languished in jail for six months. By the time he was freed, his wife had sold all but two of his cattle.

⁴³ The stress is mine.

⁴⁴ The stress is mine.

⁴⁵ Cf. Butt Colson (1973), Dreyfus (1983/84), Thomas (1972) and Overing (1992) on the large-scale trading networks in the Guianas.

⁴⁶ Sahlins (1974:195) mistakenly classifies barter as negative reciprocity.

[-]yakmagkásó - and suggests that the Enxet conceive of barter, exchange and commodity transactions as almost synonymous.⁴⁷

Among the Enxet two forms of commodity relations can be distinguished: co-operative stores and private enterprise. The topic of co-operative stores in indigenous communities has been skilfully dealt with by McCallum (1989:261 ff) while brief discussions of co-operatives in the Chaco have been undertaken by Renshaw (1986:210f), Wallis (1986:25f) and Kidd (1996). For this reason - and to save space - I will omit a consideration of co-operative stores and will, instead, concentrate on the much more controversial topic of indigenous private enterprise.

According to Renshaw (1988:350), “commerce is almost unknown in the Indian communities of the Chaco” but, in my own experience, he could hardly be more mistaken. Within El Estribo and Makthlawaiya - as well as in many other communities - commodity transactions pervade daily social life, taking place between “close” kin, “distant” kin, affines and non-kin. Only within the household has commoditization not taken hold, yet even it is not totally sacrosanct. Since commodity transactions assume a variety of forms, I will examine, first of all, more informal commercial relations before moving onto the topic of indigenous-run stores.

13.3.1 Informal Commodity Transactions

Informal commodity transactions can be classified into those purely concerned with making a profit and those that also involve an element of protecting one’s own production from demand sharing. In the former, part-time entrepreneurs buy goods from Paraguayan or Mennonite stores and sell them at a profit within their own and neighbouring communities. Some individuals, whenever a large crowd gathers - such as during the Christmas and Easter festivities - take advantage of people’s need for food and drink. For instance, on one occasion two sisters in San Carlos made a soft drink and took it in turns to sell it to a particularly large assembly of community members and visitors.⁴⁸ Within less than three hours they had made a profit of G:20,000,⁴⁹ the equivalent of two days wages from a Mennonite farmer. Another time, in Veinte de Enero, an eight year old boy did the same thing, again making a tidy profit. A family in Karandá used to make bread every weekend to sell to the members

⁴⁷ Very occasionally some people still pronounce *[-]yagmagkásó* as *[-]yakmagkásó*. See Chapter 10 for a similar example of the transformation of phonemes.

⁴⁸ Both sisters were married with children.

⁴⁹ Approximately US\$10.00.

of their community while two or three others would occasionally travel to the Mennonite bakery in Lolita and return with loaves of bread to sell.

Some people visit houses in order to sell their wares, including one man who I observed selling coloured tape to wrap around bicycle handlebars although he more commonly carried an ice-box filled with cool fizzy drinks.⁵⁰ In certain houses - usually those of his closer kin or acquaintances - he would often be invited to drink *tereré* and enjoy an agreeable conversation, and, although the hosts would still purchase his drinks, he did, occasionally, offer them without charge. I also noticed once that when his father met him and asked for a can, he was given it immediately, without paying. Although they lived in different communities within El Estribo, the father and son had a close “loving” relationship and it would have been unthinkable for the son to refuse a direct request from his father.

Commercializing one's own production is also relatively common and is one means of achieving some protection from demand sharing - [-]*magkaxno*. At times, people place prices on their garden produce - usually on crops that are in short supply - to warn off demand sharers. Manioc tends to fall in this category and, in 1996, the three households in Palo Santo and San Carlos that had relatively large plots of manioc decided to put it on sale after becoming “fed up” - [-]*leklakme* - with “demands.” Some people even carve a price onto watermelons before they are harvested, thereby clearly indicating that they can only be sold. The knowledge that certain garden produce can only be exchanged for cash discourages people from making “demands.” However, placing prices on goods is not always effective. One woman informed me that although her mother's sister's daughter (MZD) was selling manioc, she herself would obtain it without cost as she was kin. She was implying that their “loving” relationship would override commercial considerations. Since the relationship was close, it probably did.

In contrast to Renshaw's (1986:209) insistence that the commercialization of domestic animal meat in the Chaco is “fairly uncommon,” it is, in fact, almost unknown for the Enxet not to put up for sale at least part of any butchered animal. A few days before a slaughter, it is announced that meat will be sold and, by the time the butchering takes place, those wanting meat will have obtained some money. Owners keep a certain amount of meat for their own households - of which a part may be voluntarily shared with other “loved” people - and sell the rest at about half the price of a Mennonite store. Usually, owners butcher animals when they are certain that

⁵⁰ He was able to obtain the ice from a nearby Mennonite village.

there is substantial money within the community and can ensure that all purchases will be made with cash. People without cash are usually reluctant to ask for meat on credit because of “restraint” which is magnified by the fact that any request would have to be made in front of the other buyers. However, sometimes owners require money immediately and are unwilling to wait for the most propitious moment for the sale. When this happens, they can be left with a large quantity of unsold meat and are, therefore, more inclined to offer credit. Of course, they are left with the “difficult/painful” task of persuading people to repay their debts.

Even when cows are slaughtered for communal meals, commercialization still takes place if the animal is personally owned. Church weddings are usually accompanied by a communal meal that the couple’s parents provide. One set of parents will provide the meat, and it is normal to sell the meat from half the cow prior to the wedding while the other half is used to prepare the wedding meal. The profit from the sale of the meat often covers the original cost of the animal and, indeed, this is the reason given for doing it.

Although McCallum (1989:15) reports that the commercialization of meat among the Cashinahua is “enormously problematic,” the Enxet appear willing to sell even the meat of game animals, if there is a demand. The relative infrequency with which this happens is not down to any disinclination on the part of the Enxet but to more practical reasons. Few animals are large enough to provide surplus meat for sale and, while the tapir is sufficiently big, it is not considered particularly tasty and is not greatly desired. However, hunters returning with a number of armadillos will sometimes decide to sell one, usually for around G:7,000.⁵¹ In fact, some individuals, on seeing hunters pass their houses with more than enough armadillos, will occasionally offer to buy one.

The usual explanation given by the Enxet for why they sell their crops is that they have been produced by their own effort and people often refer to the sweat they shed in their cultivation. However, the commercialization of one’s own production can also help preserve personal tranquillity - and, by implication, the tranquillity of the community - by reducing unwelcome demand sharing. The knowledge that certain produce can only be exchanged for cash discourages people from making “demands” and so producers with surpluses can, if they so desire, avoid the impositions of others and the concomitant threats to their autonomy. They are not put in the position of having to “strengthen” their *wáxoks* if they are disinclined to accede to a “demand.”

⁵¹ Approximately US\$3.50.

Nevertheless, a decision to sell produce instead of sharing it can provoke the accusation of possessing “strong/locked” *wáxoks*.

It should not, though, be assumed that the Enxet follow a strong moral code in their commercial dealings. If the opportunity arises to take advantage of someone, they will often grab it. For instance, people can attempt to sell goods as expensively as possible and one man who purchased a bicycle for G:100,000⁵² was, a few weeks later, happy to sell it to his son-in-law for G:150,000. Similarly, buyers will attempt to purchase goods as cheaply as possible, especially if sellers are desperate for cash.⁵³ A teacher who bought a watch for G:300,000⁵⁴ sold it less than two months later to an affine for G:50,000.⁵⁵ On another occasion, a couple in Palo Santo sold a large proportion of their manioc to a fellow community member for substantially less than the market value. When I mentioned this to the buyer he merely laughed and asked me not to tell the sellers.

13.3.2 Indigenous Stores

Renshaw (1986:210) insists that private stores are almost unknown in the Chaco, another statement that contrasts markedly with my own observations.⁵⁶ In my experience, so long as two essential pre-conditions are fulfilled, stores will appear in Enxet communities. The first condition is that there should be no non-indigenous stores in the immediate vicinity with which a community store would have to compete. The storeowner in San Carlos reckoned that if people had less than G:5,000 they would shop in his store; if they had G:10,000 they would travel the five kilometres to the Mennonite-run indigenous co-operative in the colony of Paz del Chaco; and if they had G:50,000 they would journey as far as the Mennonite stores in Lolita, some fifteen kilometres from the community. The other condition is that storeowners should have access to places where they can purchase goods in bulk. In San Carlos the storeowner was able to make bulk purchases in Lolita by using his

⁵² Approximately US\$50.00.

⁵³ When people are desperate to sell something, they often do not ask for a fixed price because of “restraint” and are willing to accept whatever they are offered.

⁵⁴ Approximately US\$150.00.

⁵⁵ Approximately US\$25.00.

⁵⁶ Gordillo (1994:76f) appears to agree with Renshaw when he states that stores among the Toba, “would not be entirely possible in the rural communities,” although he does suggest that they could exist in Toba communities in Argentinian towns. However, they certainly existed among the Enxet when Renshaw was undertaking his research and even during the early years of the twentieth century there were indigenous-run stores on some of the mission stations of the SAMS. Indigenous-run stores are also mentioned by Forrest (1987:294f), Alvarsson (1988:221), Santos Granero (1986b:122f) and Gordillo (1992:168). Whether they are more prevalent than would appear from the literature is difficult to know since I suspect that some authors merely choose not to mention them as they do not fit in with the image of indigenous society that they are trying to project.

horses and cart. Indeed, other people in El Estribo insisted that the lack of a cart was the only reason why they did not start their own stores. In Makthlawaiya, in contrast, the stores are provisioned by *macateros* - travelling merchants - who regularly visit the community carrying a wide range of wares. Each store strikes a deal with a specific *macatero* who, in exchange, offers them reduced prices on goods.⁵⁷

Many stores are remarkably short-lived, lasting no more than a few weeks or months. These tend to be owned by people who are perceived to be wealthy and, consequently, are particular targets for demand sharing. By opening a store, they attempt to protect themselves from “demands” so as to preserve their possessions. The example of Tito who, for many many years, had been a ranch employee and had accumulated forty cattle, is fairly typical. When, in 1990, the ranchowner told him that he would either have to dispose of his cattle or leave his job, Tito decided to move to Makthlawaiya where he obtained a small plot of agricultural land and his cattle gained access to the colony’s abundant pasture. Almost immediately he set up a store in his house but, within a year, only four cattle remained and the store was a distant memory.

The main factor in the demise of Tito’s store was alcohol. Tito himself enjoyed a drink and, while his store functioned, he was rarely without drinking companions, all of whom expected him to provide the *caña*. He obliged and, in addition, because he was often drunk, he was incapable of “strengthening” his *wáxok* to refuse credit and found it “difficult/painful” to ask for debts to be repaid. Paraguayan traders also took advantage of him, especially one who lived seven kilometres from the village, on the main road to Concepción. He would provide Tito with overpriced goods on credit but each time he ran up a bill of G:100,000⁵⁸ he would demand a cow as payment. Tito did not possess a sufficiently “strong” *wáxok* to resist the trader and, as a result, his cattle rapidly diminished in number. However, once his “herd” was reduced to four, it remained more or less the same size during the next few years.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, there are examples of indigenous-run stores that have operated successfully for more than two years. In the following discussion, I will analyze the

⁵⁷ Only rarely do indigenous-run stores appear in ranch communities. This is due to the ranchowners usually providing stores and the difficulty in obtaining bulk purchases from independent traders. Many communities are also too small or too poor to make them viable. However, I have come across indigenous run stores on ranches, most notably in the community of Cora’i where the storeowner was able to take advantage of passing *macateros*.

⁵⁸ Approximately US\$50.00.

⁵⁹ Tito possessed four cattle when I last met him in mid-1996.

reasons for their success and consider Gordillo's (1992:168) contention that they are examples of increasing differentiation within indigenous communities and symptoms of a breakdown in social relations. During my fieldwork in El Estribo, there was only one store in the colony and it had been in existence for approximately two years. It showed no sign of disappearing and was run by Jorge from his house in San Carlos. He essentially sold food staples such as pasta, rice, flour, *fariña*,⁶⁰ *galletas*⁶¹ and *yerba maté* as well as batteries, soap, cooking oil, sweets, tobacco and cigarettes. In Makthlawaiya, there were always at least two stores and while they sold the same goods as Jorge, they also offered *caña* and wine. The advantage of alcohol is that it provides a large turnover and an attractive profit. However, it also has significant drawbacks. Storeowners are frequently disturbed at night by drunks in search of a drink while attempts to deny credit to a drunk can cause an outbreak of "anger." Indeed, drunks often arrive at a store already "angry," causing unpleasantness for the storeowner and his family. In addition, storeowners have to take care not to over-consume alcohol themselves so as to avoid the problems that befell Tito.

The stores function in the following way. Since no one understands the concept of percentages, storeowners tend to price their goods using a more or less fixed mark-up. For instance, Jorge increased his food staples by G:500⁶² per kilogramme which, in the case of rice, meant a rise from G:1,000 to G:1,500 - in other words, 50% - while *yerba maté*, which cost him G:2,000 per kilo, was marked-up by 25%. He bought batteries at G:750 each which were sold at G:950 while half a kilogramme of tobacco, which cost him G:10,000, presented him with a profit of G:5,000. The amount of goods purchased by Jorge on a weekly basis varied according to the number of people in the community. He would travel to Lolita once or twice a week, usually returning with around 300 kilogrammes of food staples, approximately forty batteries, one or two boxes of soap, two or three bags of sweets, five to ten litres of cooking oil, a kilogramme of tobacco, and about twenty packets of cigarettes. His weekly profit was generally between G:150,000 and G:350,000⁶³ which represented an excellent income when compared to the wages of Enxet employees on Mennonite farms.

Book-keeping is relatively simple.⁶⁴ Storekeepers note down each sale as well as the amount of credit given to each family. As a result they can keep track of how

⁶⁰ *Fariña* is ground manioc.

⁶¹ *Galletas* are a type of hard bread that lasts for a number of weeks.

⁶² Approximately, US\$0.25.

⁶³ In other words, between US\$75 and US\$175.

⁶⁴ Book keeping has to be simple since storekeepers rarely have more than four or five years of poor quality primary education.

much cash they should have in their possession as well as the debts of individual customers and the overall amount they are owed. However, no note is made of outgoings. Food for meals is taken from the store by whomever is cooking without any record being kept and, if the storeowner requires cash for private purchases, he merely plucks it from the store's kitty. The main concern of storekeepers is to ensure that they have sufficient funds to cover their next bulk purchase and so they restrict the amount that they take from the store's funds until the required amount is reached. Jorge, for example, while on his trips to Lolita, would first of all purchase everything for the store and would then use the remaining cash to purchase "luxury" items such as beef, bread, clothes, presents for his grandchildren and tools, in effect anything that took his fancy.

Rarely is effort exerted in maximizing profits. Each return trip to Lolita would take Jorge six hours and was not to be undertaken lightly. At times, even when the store was empty, Jorge would show little interest in travelling to Lolita and could spend one or two days without any business. Nonetheless, people would continue to visit his store and it appeared to me that he sometimes decided to make the trip to Lolita because he was tired of explaining that he had nothing left. However, Jorge would normally ensure that he had sufficient food available whenever a large number of people congregated in San Carlos.

Jorge rarely purchased the honey produced by community members mainly because they preferred to sell it directly to Mennonites from whom they could obtain a better price. In contrast, the main purchasers of honey in Makthlawaiya were the indigenous stores since people were unwilling to wait for the occasionally unpredictable *macateros*. One storeowner, for example, would buy wild honey at G:4,000⁶⁵ per litre which he would subsequently sell to *macateros* for G:5,000. Furthermore, whenever he travelled to Asunción, he would take twenty or thirty litres with him which would fetch up to G:8,000 per litre. When he had first started his store, he had been willing to exchange the honey for cash but, once he realized that people were spending the money in other stores, he began only to pay in kind. If other unsolicited produce was offered - such as a pumpkin or an armadillo - he would pay very little, justifying his low price by the fact that he had not asked for it and was only acting out of compassion.

Why, though, are such stores successful and, more specifically, how do storeowners deal with the problem of credit? One significant factor is that successful

⁶⁵ Approximately US\$2.00.

stores are not started to protect the owner's possessions, such as cattle. Instead, the owner's explicit intention is to make a living from any profits and, consequently, they are committed to achieving success in their ventures. Nonetheless, throughout Lowland South America an inability to manage credit is repeatedly mentioned as the main factor in the demise of indigenous stores.⁶⁶ Anderlini and Sabourian (1992:93) have proposed that if self-interested individuals run up debts to which, in the event of non-payment, no sanctions are attached, they will usually default. As I have indicated in this and previous chapters, the non-payment of debts is common in Enxet communities. Therefore, how do Enxet storeowners limit the amount of credit and ensure that it is repaid? What "sanctions" are employed in communities in which rules and laws appear to be non-existent and the enforcement of "customs" is not the responsibility of any recognized authority figure.

The successful management of credit can be explained by reference to the interplay between the *wáxoks* of the owner and the person requesting credit. On the one hand, a successful storeowner must have a "strong/closed" *wáxok* that makes him capable of denying requests for credit, despite the fact that it can also see him accused of not practising "love." On the other hand, those wanting credit need to be able to "strengthen" their *wáxoks* so that they can act without "restraint/timidity."

Asking for credit from a storeowner is a "difficult/painful" experience and people often say that they avoid it because of "restraint/timidity" - [-]ennawagko - with the stress, in this context, on the side of "timidity." People "are caused to fear" - [-]yéso - by the "strong/closed" *wáxok* of the storeowner and need to assess whether their desire for credit surpasses the prospect of an uncomfortable *wáxok*. Even if they are successful in obtaining credit, each time they return without their debt having been paid off, the more "difficult/painful" it will be since the storeowner will "strengthen/close" his *wáxok* even more.

I have often witnessed requests for credit that have been made to storeowners who are reluctant to comply. Some people, on reaching the store, hang around for ten or twenty minutes while making idle chat before they feel sufficiently "strengthened" to formulate their request. Others ask for credit as soon as they arrive, as if wanting to pass through an unpleasant experience as quickly as possible. Storeowners, for their part, express their displeasure in a variety of ways. They can involuntarily tighten their facial muscles, pause or glance to the ground before answering, or even remind the customer of how much credit has already been given. They can even refuse to

⁶⁶ See, for example, Renshaw (1986:210), Forrest (1987:295), Alvarsson (1988:221) and Santos Granero (1986b:122f) (although Santos Granero refers to the "demands of relatives").

hand over the entire request, perhaps offering only half a kilogramme of rice instead of one kilogramme. Alternatively, storekeepers can use quite different tactics, and I occasionally observed Jorge bantering light-heartedly with people about his inability to extend further credit, evidently trying to maintain a degree of tranquillity and comfort in the relationship.

Eventually, though, after experiencing too many uncomfortable situations, those in debt decide that they can no longer face up to the ordeal of asking for more credit and avoid returning to the store until they can repay at least some of their bill. However, one tactic that is commonly employed by those with excessive credit is to send children in their stead, although I have noticed that, in such circumstances, storeowners are much more willing to voice their displeasure. Although they hand over some food - usually rather less than the amount requested - the storeowners send the children home with the message that their parents' or grandparents' credit line is closed until the debt is repaid.

Of course, storeowners are not always reluctant to give credit. When people initially want to open a credit line they experience little resistance and it is only as the amount of credit increases that the storeowner's displeasure intensifies. Usually, people are allowed a maximum debt of between G:4,000 and G:8,000,⁶⁷ which is more or less the amount that can be absorbed by the capital base of an indigenous store. Nonetheless, the maximum permissible debt varies according to the financial position of the potential purchaser and the degree of trust that they inspire. Teachers can obtain credit lines of up to G:100,000⁶⁸ per month when the storeowner is certain that he can ensure repayment,⁶⁹ while those with reputations as prompt repayers are also likely to receive relatively high credit limits. Not all teachers, though, are permitted high credit lines. Alejandro, whose exploits in Asunción I described earlier, ran up a debt of G:60,000⁷⁰ in Jorge's store which he refused to repay, despite being asked a number of times. He was, therefore, allowed no further credit.

Untrustworthy teachers may also oblige storeowners to implement special measures to ensure repayment. In Makthlawaiya, one storeowner had difficulties with a teacher who continually returned home from Asunción claiming to be broke. The storeowners began, therefore, to travel to Asunción with the teachers, accompanying them to the bank where they received their salaries to ensure that they could not avoid

⁶⁷ In other words, between US\$2.00 and US\$4.00.

⁶⁸ Approximately US\$50.00.

⁶⁹ See Chapter 12. In general, those with permanent employment also tend to be allowed higher credit lines.

⁷⁰ Approximately US\$30.00.

paying him. However, this was not the only reason for his trips. He also carried honey to sell, could buy goods for his store at cheaper prices than in the Chaco, and would meet up with his wife's brothers and other kin from El Estribo for two or three days of fun.

Does the development of a commercial relationship with the members of their communities mean that storeowners become isolated or ostracized? In certain respects, some things change. They become targets for criticism although usually only by people who have been denied credit or are jealous of the storeowners' success. In fact, some of the more strident criticisms are by those who have been unsuccessful in establishing their own stores. Criticisms usually focus on the "strong/closed" and, therefore, "unloving" *wáxoks* of the storeowners although, paradoxically, whenever communities discuss establishing co-operative stores, a "strong/closed" *wáxok* is usually mentioned as an essential pre-requisite for prospective employees of the co-operative as this would enable them to keep credit in check. Consequently, criticisms tend to reflect the state of an individual's own relations with a storekeeper rather than any fundamental ideological concerns about commerce.

Storeowners also claim that they benefit less from sharing. For instance, before establishing his store in Makthlawaiya, José would often receive armadillos from his son-in-law's brother and wife. However, once his store was started, the same couple would only sell him any excess armadillos. Both he and Jorge claimed that their households were no longer "loved" by other community members and pointed out that they received more gifts from residents of other communities. Yet both were guilty of exaggerating their predicament since, in reality, their households continued to receive fish, game, crops and gathered produce on a regular basis, especially from their "close" kin. Nevertheless, I noticed that whenever the sisters of Jorge and his wife brought them food as a "thought," Jorge's wife would usually offer them something from the store in return. However, she used to explain to me that this was not a balanced exchange by cupping her hands to indicate how little she had given and by presenting her giving as a "thought." In addition, Jorge and José did not entirely escape from demand sharing, although Jorge used to refrain from consuming the provisions received from Paraguayan politicians so that he could hand them over in such instances.

Storeowners, therefore, maintain a variety of relationships with other households - some commercial and others not - and this can be further illustrated by the households of Jorge and his eldest daughter who lived one hundred metres apart. Jorge's son-in-law was a teacher and each month his wife built up a large credit line

at Jorge's store which was regularly repaid. However, the commercial relationship did not impede the teacher and his wife from visiting Jorge's house each day for *tereré* and both households normally shared surplus produce with each other, as well as such things as meat purchased from Mennonite stores and oranges obtained from Mennonite farms. Jorge's daughter and wife used to accompany each other when looking for firewood, fishing or harvesting *algarrobo* and his daughter, son-in-law and grand-daughter all voluntarily helped him to harvest his cotton. In contrast, when Jorge's wife harvested her son-in-law's beans, she was paid in cash. Whenever Jorge was away from home, his eldest daughter would take charge of the store - without being paid - and when the son-in-law was away, his wife and daughter would stay at Jorge's and be integrated into his household. Therefore, despite the fact that commodity transactions were a key element in the relationship between the two households, they all viewed each other as extremely "close" kin and continued to act appropriately.

Nor does the appearance of stores in indigenous communities signify an increasing differentiation between households, as assumed by Gordillo (1994:76f). Storeowners are not significantly better off than other community members. They quickly dispose of any extra cash and, in fact, they often face extra burdens because they are usually responsible for their entire household. Jorge, for example, shared his house with a daughter, her husband, and two grandchildren, none of whom produced anything of significance. The son-in-law was content to sit around the house or visit friends and kin, and Jorge's store provided for everyone. In Makthlawaiya, José also lived with a somewhat non-industrious daughter and son-in-law, as well as his mother-in-law, his father, and his wife's sister and husband and their two children. The drain on resources created by these dependents were significant factors in limiting the wealth of the storeowners.

Furthermore, even apparently successful stores are never permanent, and a range of factors can cause their demise. Carmelo, in Makthlawaiya, had run a store for a number of years but one evening, when drunk, he accidentally shot in the stomach the wife of his mother's sister's son. Fortunately, she survived and, once she had fully recovered, she began to visit Carmelo's store to "demand" food. Over a period of months she received so much that eventually Carmelo was obliged to close down his store. Another successful store was run by Felipe but it fell apart when he went on a trip for a few weeks leaving his father in charge. The father, who Felipe criticized for having a "soft/unlocked" *wáxok*, readily agreed to requests for credit and, by the time Felipe arrived home, the decapitalization of his store was complete. Anselmo, after running a store for more than five years, found that he could not keep pace with

his household's drain on his resources and decided to close it down. And Jorge almost had to terminate his store after receiving a message from his son asking him to send him all his money to help his grandson who was in hospital in the Mennonite town of Loma Plata. Jorge tried to comply but was prevented from travelling by heavy rainfall that closed the roads. By the time the roads had re-opened, his grandson had died and the money was no longer required. Other storeowners decide to give up because they eventually become "fed up" - [-]leklakme - with the pressures of running a store.

In summary, therefore, remarks such as McCallum's (1989:15) that commodity transactions disrupt the creation of sociality paint a picture of present-day indigenous social life that does not conform to reality. Within contemporary agglomerated indigenous communities, each individual has close relations with only a relatively small number of community members. Enxet "entrepreneurs" continue to maintain "loving" relations with their "close" kin by sharing and helping, even if they also have a commercial relationship with the same people. Although commerce is not generative of "love," it does not nullify the "love" that is created by other "loving" forms of interaction. And, given that "entrepreneurs" are unlikely to have maintained close relations with most people in their communities anyway, the fact that their relationships with other community members are characterized, in part, by commercial transactions is not particularly damaging.

It also needs to be borne in mind that most people recognize the advantages of having stores within their communities. They can ensure quick and easy access to essential foodstuffs and can obtain small amounts of food on credit whenever cash is short. In addition, teachers and other wage earners are able to subsist by obtaining credit from community stores and thereby avoid the "demands" of their fellows. In fact, the recognition of these advantages explains, in part, the general willingness among community members to repay credit so that serious stores do not fold.

13.4 Employing Kin and Co-Residents

The employment of indigenous people by their fellows is another aspect of market relations that anthropologists have regarded as causing the corruption of indigenous social life. For instance, McCallum (1988:201f) insists that among the Cashinahua it signifies a relationship between non-kin, enemies and strangers, Santos Granero (1991:35) is convinced that it affects ethnic identity and solidarity, while Thomas (1982:240) claims that once one indigenous person employs another their relationship can no longer be the same. One reason given for the damage caused by employment is that it is an inherently coercive relationship, one that conflicts with the

indigenous stress on personal autonomy and threatens the egalitarian basis of social life through the creation of hierarchies.⁷¹ Although instances of intra-ethnic employment are rarely reported among indigenous people and hunter-gatherers, it does appear to exist.⁷²

Renshaw (1986:208) insists that, among the indigenous people of the Chaco, it is not acceptable to employ someone from one's own community, an observation that contrasts with my own experience among the Enxet. Indeed, I will suggest that not only is intra-ethnic and intra-community employment among the Enxet not particularly damaging to inter-personal relations, it can also generate "love."

The intra-ethnic selling of labour assumes various forms among the Enxet. On the one hand are certain specialists - such as mid-wives and shamans - who sell their services to community members. Mid-wives are usually more mature women who accompany women through the process of child-birth. Nowadays they are few in number and are in relatively high demand. They never refuse a request for help despite the fact that their work may last one or two days and nights, in addition to subsequent visits to check on the mother and baby. They usually charge around G:25,000⁷³ for their services unless the mother is "close" kin, in which case they work for free. No one ever complains about the cost and one man, after observing the birth of his child, confided to me that they deserved much more because their work involved a tremendous sacrifice.

Shamans are also usually paid for their services unless, again, they are healing "close" kin in which case their efforts are undertaken within the paradigm of "love."⁷⁴ Healing ceremonies may last a number of nights but, irrespective of how long they work, the cost is normally the same. The normal charge made by a shaman is around G:20,000 to G:40,000⁷⁵ and given that, at times, there may be five or ten shamans collaborating together, costs cannot be high or patients will find payment impossible. One alternative means of payment is for a patient to obtain and kill a cow and distribute the meat among all the shamans.

⁷¹ See: Renshaw (1986:191, 202; 1988:346), Forrest (1987:279) and McCallum (1988:235).

⁷² See: Renshaw (1988:348), Endicott (1988:119), Santos Granero (1991:35) and Hugh-Jones (1992:69).

⁷³ Approximately US\$12.50.

⁷⁴ Miller (1995:49) notes that Toba shamans are paid "compensation."

⁷⁵ Approximately, US\$10.00 to US\$20.00. I have never known a shaman charge more than G:100,000 (US\$50.00).

The healing undertaken by shamans is often referred to as [-]*tamheykha* - the same word used to describe “wage labour” for a white employer - and it is clear that many older shamans view it as an opportunity to obtain money or food. They often insist on being paid and, if payment is delayed, they can visit patients to remind or even subtly threaten them, causing them to become worried and fearful if they are unable to find the money they promised. Nevertheless, some shamans insist that they are not paid and that anything they receive is a “thought” - *ekxeyenma* [-]*wáxok* - from the patient, in other words a voluntary gift. They stress that people are impressed by the great effort and “suffering” - [-]*legeykegkoho* - that they invest in their healing and, out of gratitude, offer to “help”⁷⁶ the shamans by giving them food or money. Shamans who express this opinion tend to be those with leadership ambitions and it would appear that they want to create an impression of personal generosity and willingness to “care for” and “love” community members.

Neither mid-wives nor shamans could be said to be coerced into selling their services and, indeed, in the latter case the only coercion comes from those shamans who insist on being paid. And, in many communities there are also people who provide less specialized services for small amounts of money. For instance, older people - or even those who are “mad”⁷⁷ - can, out of “compassion,” be paid to collect firewood or weed gardens. In addition, those with horses and carts can receive money to carry things for others although this payment can be presented as a “thought;” the cart-owner will announce that he does not want to be paid but, nevertheless, accepts a gift of money.

There are, though, cases in which employment is more formal and follows the model of short-term work for Mennonites. It is common in El Estribo for cotton cultivators to employ other colony members to assist with the harvest. In 1996, most of those with cotton plots in Karandá and Veinte de Enero took on two or three employees who were paid for each kilogramme of cotton harvested, as happens on Mennonite farms. Nevertheless, while the relationship between Mennonite farmers and the employees is impersonal, the same could not be said of the relationship between indigenous farmers and their employees.

Any examination of indigenous employment of their fellows needs to take note of the total social context. Work is usually undertaken within an encompassing mood of relative conviviality and, during rests, employees share *tereré* with their employers and eat with the household. Friendly banter is commonplace and

⁷⁶ ie. [-]*pasmó*.

⁷⁷ ie. [-]*yenne*.

employees are often given gifts of food to take home with them. Since these activities are constitutive of “love,” employment can, therefore, be a time for strengthening social relations.

There is also a tendency during cotton harvesting to employ kin, including “close” kin, and this highlights the redistributive character of indigenous labour relations. It needs to be borne in mind that indigenous cotton producers have no need to employ harvesters. Few farmers in El Estribo produce more than 1,000 kilogrammes of cotton, an amount that can be harvested in less than twenty man-days and which is well within the capacity of most households. Yet harvesters are employed anyway. They are paid 30% of the sale price of the cotton and, when production costs are taken into account, it can be calculated that harvesters often obtain around 50% of a farmer’s profit on each kilogramme of cotton. Therefore, by employing harvesters, cotton cultivators redistribute any cash obtained from their production to kin and others with whom they have “loving” relations.

Furthermore, labour relations between Enxet should not be seen as coercive since decisions on whether to work are made by the employees. During the harvest season, they are not obliged to work for their kin since, if they wanted, they could easily obtain work with Mennonites for more or less the same pay. There are no contracts and employees can choose to leave their work whenever they desire. They also make their own decisions on when to turn up in the morning and when to return home, and employers have no choice but to respect their employees’ personal autonomy and avoid infringing on their *wáxoks*. It needs to be recognized that there is no permanence to the employer/employee relationship. No fixed hierarchy is established and once the specific task is finished - such as the cotton harvest - the relationship between indigenous employers and their employees returns to what it was before. In fact, the next year it could easily be reversed if the employees decide to cultivate cotton and offer work to their erstwhile employers.⁷⁸ Indeed, the Enxet conceptualize employment as a form of exchange or, in other words, a relationship between equals. The pay received by an employee is known as *ekyagmaga*⁷⁹ which has the same essential root as *ekyakmageykxa*, meaning “exchange.” By exchanging labour for money, an equilibrium is maintained and, indeed, employment is often described in terms of an employee “helping”⁸⁰ an employer, an action that is both indicative of and constitutive of a “loving” relationship.

⁷⁸ Cf. Gomez (1991:190, 194) who makes a similar point for the Semai of Malaysia.

⁷⁹ The verb [-]yagmagkásó is derived from *ekyagmaga*.

⁸⁰ i.e. [-]pasmó.

Woodburn (1982:434) states that an essential characteristic of “egalitarian societies” is that, “people are not dependent on *specific* other people for access to basic requirements.” This type of relationship could also be said to characterize employer/employee relations among the Enxet: no durable relationship is created and each person retains autonomy over when and where to invest their own labour. One explanation for why anthropologists have adopted a negative view of indigenous employer/employee relations could well be that they are working within a western model of labour relations. By assuming that employment is tantamount to coercion, it may well be that anthropologists have inadvertently ignored the means by which personal autonomy subverts the creation of hierarchies in indigenous labour relations. We should, therefore, recognize the specific character of indigenous labour relations in which permanence is replaced by flexibility and control by personal choice. Just because *we* regard employer/employee relations as necessarily pregnant with potential conflict, we should not assume that other peoples share the same viewpoint.

13.5 Conclusion

Although I have questioned the assumption made by certain anthropologists that money is inherently lethal, I should point out that, very occasionally, I heard similar views expressed by individual Enxet. People would say things like: “It was better in the past when the Enxet used to share everything but now people only sell things to each other and we no longer have any kin.” While such comments undoubtedly demonstrate a certain unease with commodity relations I have chosen not to privilege them in my discussion.⁸¹ One reason is that these derogatory comments about commodity transactions were made by people who had no qualms about setting up their own stores or selling goods to others. Indeed, at other times they would defend their right to sell things to others. Their comments should be seen in context and, rather than criticizing commodity exchange *per se*, they usually constituted attacks on specific individuals, such as storeowners, or were the result of frustration at having been denied credit. I have, therefore, stressed a consideration of commodity transactions within the wider context of Enxet social life and I have shown that, despite potential dangers, the Enxet have managed to integrate money into their internal economy without it being fatally undermined. And, furthermore, as Appadurai (1986) and Bird-David (1994:598) have pointed out, the giving of gifts and commodity exchange are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist with one economic system.⁸²

⁸¹ In contrast, Gordillo (1994:76) appears to accept unquestioningly similar comments among the Toba.

⁸² Cf. Hugh-Jones (1992:52).

However, one underlying factor that we have not considered and which is extremely significant in inhibiting the development of hierarchical market relations within Enxet communities is the land tenure system. Individuals do not own or control natural resources and all land, in principle, is open to everyone, a concept of territoriality that has continued since pre-colonial times.⁸³ This principle has even been recognised in the Paraguayan Constitution which stipulates that indigenous land titles must be held communally.⁸⁴ The only land that people have an exclusive right to is their garden plot, yet this is not a right of proprietorship but rather of use.⁸⁵ The fact that no individual can obtain permanent ownership and control over a specific area of land is a major impediment to the development of hierarchies and inequalities. No Enxet is able to secure resources for his or her exclusive use and, as a result, land cannot be used as a basis for coercing others.⁸⁶ As long as this system of land tenure remains intact, it is likely that egalitarian relations will remain a significant feature of Enxet social life.

⁸³ A similar system of territoriality has been reported for a range of Lowland South American and hunter-gatherer peoples: cf. Woodburn (1982:435; 1988:15), Rivière (1984:15ff), Layton (1986:15), Renshaw (1986:193), Rosengren (1987:72-75), Altman (1987:137), Endicott (1988:13) and Overing (1993b:46f; 1996a:65).

⁸⁴ See Article 64 of the Paraguayan Constitution (Convención Nacional Constituyente 1992).

⁸⁵ Cf. Renshaw (1986:195).

⁸⁶ Overing (1983/4) makes a similar point for leaders among the Piaroa. Without control over land, labour and resources no leader can exercise control over his followers. Also see Woodburn (1982:438).

14. CONCLUSION

I was relaxing in my house in El Estribo one afternoon in February 1996 when a pick-up truck driven by two Mennonites - with an Enxet family in the back - suddenly rushed past and pulled to a halt in front of Carmelo's house, 150 metres beyond mine. At first, I paid little attention as Mennonites often visited the village in search of labourers and they were well-known for their reckless driving. However, as cries of anguish and weeping began to emerge from the group of people who had met the vehicle, I quickly realized that this was no normal visit. Intrigued by what was happening, I began to walk towards the house and, on my way, was soon met by Anita and Dorotea - sisters of Carmelo's wife Cristina - who were clearly distraught. "Stephen," they said, "you've got to do something. They've killed our brother Niño and now they've brought him home in a box. These Mennonites always 'hate' us and, whenever they harm us, nothing ever happens to them."

I quickened my stride and arrived at the pick-up to find everybody in a state of great agitation with the Mennonites defending themselves against angry accusations. Although the Mennonites were surprised to see me, I studiously ignored them and, first of all, asked Niño's brother Fabian - who had arrived in the pick-up - what had happened. It turned out that Niño had been employed by one of the Mennonites in the town of Para Todo and, some days earlier, had complained of being ill. His employer, not wanting to be saddled with a medical bill, had repeatedly refused to take him to the clinic and had merely offered some paracetamol. He even refused to drive him to El Estribo where the shamans would have tried to heal him. That morning, Niño had become so ill that his employer eventually rushed him to the clinic, but it was too late and he died within an hour of arrival. The Mennonite had then picked up Fabian and his family and, with the corpse, brought them home to El Estribo.

I then spoke to the Mennonites and they expressed their sorrow at what had happened. I told them that they would be hearing from us and asked them for Niño's pay. His employer pulled it from his shirt pocket and handed it to Fabian and I advised the Mennonites to leave. Once they had gone, Niño's kin demanded that the Mennonite should be punished by being made to pay some form of monetary compensation and so I volunteered to go to Para Todo the next day to see what could be done. Pascual, Carmelo's neighbour, offered to accompany me and, as it was becoming dark, Niño's body was taken to the Church and arrangements were made to bury him the following day.

At six o'clock the next morning Pascual and I left on our bicycles, covering the forty kilometres to Para Todo in just over three hours. As soon as we arrived, we visited the clinic to find out the cause of death and then went to see the town administrator who arranged for us to meet the head of the Mennonite police force. We saw him in his office and I explained that, since we believed that Niño's death had been caused by his employer's negligence, we would be taking legal action against him. The police chief argued that I had only heard one side of the story and that, that afternoon, he would arrange for us to meet with Niño's employer so that we could hear the "truth."

We re-convened at two o'clock and, at first, Niño's employer defended himself by insisting that he had done nothing wrong. Nevertheless, there were certain inconsistencies in his story and, by focusing on them, I was able to convince the police chief that the employer was lying. Soon we were discussing the level of compensation and, while the employer refused to pay more than G:200,000,¹ we refused to accept any less than G:1,000,000.² After more than an hour of hard negotiations, they eventually agreed to our demands and we returned to El Estribo having arranged to meet the police chief the next day in Lolita where he would hand over the money. Pascual was very pleased with the outcome and, on the way home, he laughed out loud when recalling the fear exhibited by Niño's employer. "His *wáxok* was really shivering," he said.

On arriving home, I called together Niño's brother Fabian, his sisters Dorotea, Anita and Cristina and Fabian's father-in-law Eugenio who was also a powerful shaman and community leader. They appeared satisfied with the outcome and I proposed that the four siblings - plus another sister who lived in a nearby community - should each receive a share of G:200,000. Everyone agreed and I suggested that Eugenio should accompany me to Lolita so that I could hand over the money to him. However, once everyone had left, Dorotea - in whose household I lived - tried to persuade me not to give the money to Eugenio, insisting that he and Fabian would deceive them. I tried to assuage her fears by explaining that Eugenio would never go against such a public agreement but she merely replied that I would see and learn - literally, "arrive at knowledge."

The next day, the police chief turned up in Lolita on time, gave me the money and I promptly handed it to Eugenio who was accompanied by Fabian. I immediately returned home, glad that I could now wash my hands of the matter and resolved not to

¹ Approximately US\$100.

² Approximately US\$500.

intervene again in the community's relations with the Mennonites. Late that afternoon, though, I noticed Dorotea and her husband Jorge speaking together in a somewhat agitated manner and, on enquiring what was wrong, they informed me that Fabian had given only G:60,000 to each of his sisters, which meant that he had kept G:760,000 for himself. He had even told his sisters that the police chief had only given us G:500,000, thereby casting doubt on my word. I felt betrayed but Dorotea reminded me about what she had said to me the night before. She continued: "Fabian never 'loves' us and never gives us anything. He even refused to 'care for' our father when he was dying. I knew that he would cheat us." I asked what could be done but they replied that the matter was now closed. I, though, feeling personally responsible for what had happened, paid Anita and Cristina a visit to see what they thought. They and their husbands were all clearly upset by Fabian and Eugenio's conduct and heartily agreed with my strong condemnations of them. I resolved, therefore, to visit Eugenio to express my disappointment and to persuade him to abide by the original agreement.

I arrived at Eugenio's house to find him, Fabian and their spouses sitting round their fire drinking *tereré*. I sensed that they were slightly nervous to see me, since it was obvious that my *wáxok* was disturbed, but they sat me down and offered me a plate of stew. I declined but accepted their subsequent offer of *tereré* and proceeded to engage in polite conversation. Soon, though, I summoned up the courage to ask them why Fabian had given so little money to his sisters and they replied that it was because Niño had large debts in a number of Mennonite stores in Para Todo. "The storeowners will expect Fabian to cover his debts," said Fabian's wife, "and do you think any of his sister's will 'think' about helping us when the Mennonites demand the money. We alone will be responsible and no one will 'love' us when we are in need. That's why we should have most of the money."

Just as I began to argue that, considering the circumstances, the Mennonites were highly unlikely to demand payment, to my great surprise, Carmelo, Cristina's husband, wandered up and sat down beside the fire. My immediate thought was that he had come to support me and, indeed, after listening for a short while to our conversation, he intervened. However, his words took me back. "Eugenio," he said, "I want you to know that my wife and I are perfectly happy with the money she received. Our *wáxoks* are tranquil. I don't know why Stephen is talking like this because there really is no problem. It's strange because Stephen doesn't normally behave in this way. Something must have caused him to act so out of character." A conversation then ensued between them, as if I were no longer there, in which they tried to figure out why I was behaving in such a confrontational manner. They

eventually decided that Jorge had put me up to it. “Jorge has a ‘strong’ *wáxok*,” said Eugenio, “and he’s always quick to anger and ‘hate’ us. Now he has Stephen doing things for him.”

It was Carmelo’s intervention that suddenly made me realize that I was acting in an entirely inappropriate manner. My desire to put right a perceived injustice was, in fact, exacerbating a conflict within the community and I was in danger of becoming a cause of major disharmony. After a few minutes intense reflection, I re-entered the conversation as if nothing had happened. We began to chat about other matters and, a few minutes later, I bid them farewell and returned home.

On arriving home, Dorotea and Jorge listened to my account of the conversation and pointed out that they had tried to explain to me that there was nothing to be done. “Eugenio has a ‘strong/closed’ *wáxok*,” said Dorotea. “We can never speak to him about his behaviour because he quickly becomes angry and ‘hates’ us.” I decided to accept their advice and, from that moment, I let the matter rest.

Nevertheless, it took time for the episode to disappear entirely. Fabian avoided Jorge’s home for over two months - although he could frequently be seen at Carmelo’s - and he and his family purchased a range of new and expensive clothing. Whenever we played football, he began to place large wagers and was never short of drink. Pascual, though, told me that he no longer trusted Eugenio and could now see that he was the same as other leaders, all of whom refused to “love” their people. Publicly, though, the matter was never mentioned again. However, my “victory” over the Mennonites was not forgotten. A number of Enxet who worked on Mennonite farms told me that their employers had begun to take better ‘care of’ them. “The Mennonites used to make fun of us and say that we had no *wese*³ to ‘love’ us,” they said, “but now they respect us because they have seen that we have a ‘strong’ *wese* with the power to ‘protect’ us.”

The events surrounding the death of Niño were instrumental in bringing home to me the importance placed on tranquillity by the Enxet. It was obvious to the Enxet that, during the whole episode I was being driven by “anger” but, as long as this anger was being directed towards the Mennonites, they fully supported me since I was looking after their interests. However, once my anger began to act within the

³ *Wese* is the word for the pre-colonial indigenous leaders who were expected to “care for” their people. See Chapter 10.

community, people became concerned about my behaviour. It is clear that, if Carmelo had not intervened when he did, I would have irreparably damaged my relations with Eugenio and his family. However, of even more concern to Carmelo was the fact that I was imperilling his own social relations and, although he was well aware that his wife had been cheated, his interest in justice was entirely overshadowed by his desire to maintain a tranquil social environment and to ensure that my inappropriate anger did not cause lasting damage. If achieving harmony meant forfeiting money, he felt that that was a price worth paying.

The overriding goal in life of any Enxet is the attainment of a tranquil and “sweet” *wáxok*, one in which “there is nothing happening” and which has “spread out” in contentment.⁴ While this may seem a somewhat selfish aim, the Enxet are fully aware that an individual’s affective comfort is dependent on the state of his or her interpersonal relations. A person in conflict with others is incapable of experiencing personal tranquillity and so “knowledgeable” people are sensitive to the needs of others and concerned to engender tranquil *wáxoks* among those with whom they maintain social relations.

Yet, daily life presents many challenges and tranquillity is often unattainable. Within each community there are people lacking in “knowledge” who often act inappropriately. In addition, outside influences and “temptations” can lead even those with the “strongest” *wáxoks* to behave in ways that they later regret. Therefore, it would be more correct to say that the Enxet - or, at least, those who are “knowledgeable” - *strive* on a day-to-day basis to live tranquilly. This requires them to attempt to control their self-regarding emotions and desires and to act in accordance with the other-regarding virtues that they were taught in childhood and which they continue to hear repeated in normal daily discourse.

Economic relations are one aspect of social relations that is crucial to the attainment of a tranquil life. This is brought out in the character of the discourse that is employed to describe economic relations and which centres on the use of what we would call “emotion words.” In reality, though, such words should not be regarded as merely referring to “feelings” but as encompassing an aesthetics of social behaviour. For instance, the dichotomy between “love” and “hate” is a dominant paradigm around which social life is structured and, while both words imply something “thought” and “felt,” they are also moral principles as well as guides to appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour and practice.

⁴ Cf. Overing (1993b:56).

For the Enxet, economic relations are not concerned with gaining material wealth but about living well with other people.⁵ And, to live well is to live tranquilly, in a network of social relations through which conviviality is engendered. Economic transactions such as pooling and sharing have tranquillity as their ultimate goal even if, in practice, this is not immediately apparent. Even demand sharing, impelled as it is by an egalitarian ethic, can generate tranquillity since the destabilization of hierarchies and the creation of sameness are pre-conditions for generating sociable relations. By removing difference and creating “people without things” a major cause of jealousy, anger and conflict is removed so that the engendering of sociality and “love” is facilitated. Only when people treat each other with “love” can tranquil social life be possible.

Anthropological theories that explain sharing among “egalitarian” indigenous people as, variously, a technique for ensuring future subsistence, as stimulated by “rules of kinship” or as impelled by obligation, fail to capture the essence of indigenous social practice and, certainly, do not reflect the indigenous people’s own understanding of their behaviour.⁶ Even Renshaw’s (1986; 1988) claim that social life among Chaco indigenous people is determined by their adherence to certain fundamental moral principles does not adequately reflect their philosophy of social life. Instead, the Enxet explain their behaviour by reference to notions of personhood and by the desire to live a life of affective comfort and, in this, they implicitly agree with Leavitt (1996:523) that emotions imply something “felt” as well as thought. Their understanding of why they act as they do centres on their concept of the *wáxok*, an aspect of the self that is both intensely private and inherently social. They insist that their social behaviour - both appropriate and inappropriate - can be explained by the physical - or metaphysical - state of the *wáxok*. Furthermore, because the *wáxok* is also the centre of cognition, people can consciously transform it so as to enable themselves to act in either a self-centred or other-regarding manner. It is an explanation that, I believe, we should take seriously if we want to understand indigenous social life and it is one that finds its root in the practice of child-raising, in the creation of “good/beautiful” people who have been taught not only how to think but how to feel.⁷ It is this *wáxok*-centred combination of thinking and feeling that enables the Enxet to act appropriately and which, ultimately, guides them as they strive to generate sociality and engender tranquillity.

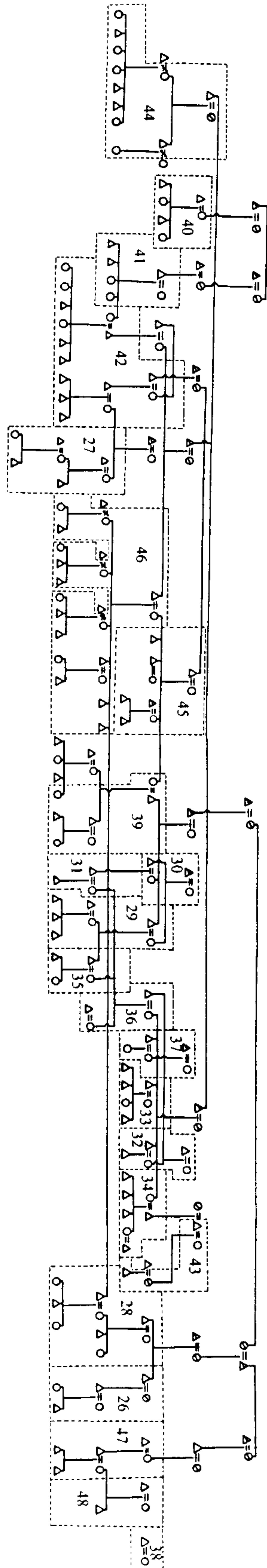
⁵ Cf. Overing (1993b:53ff).

⁶ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of these theories.

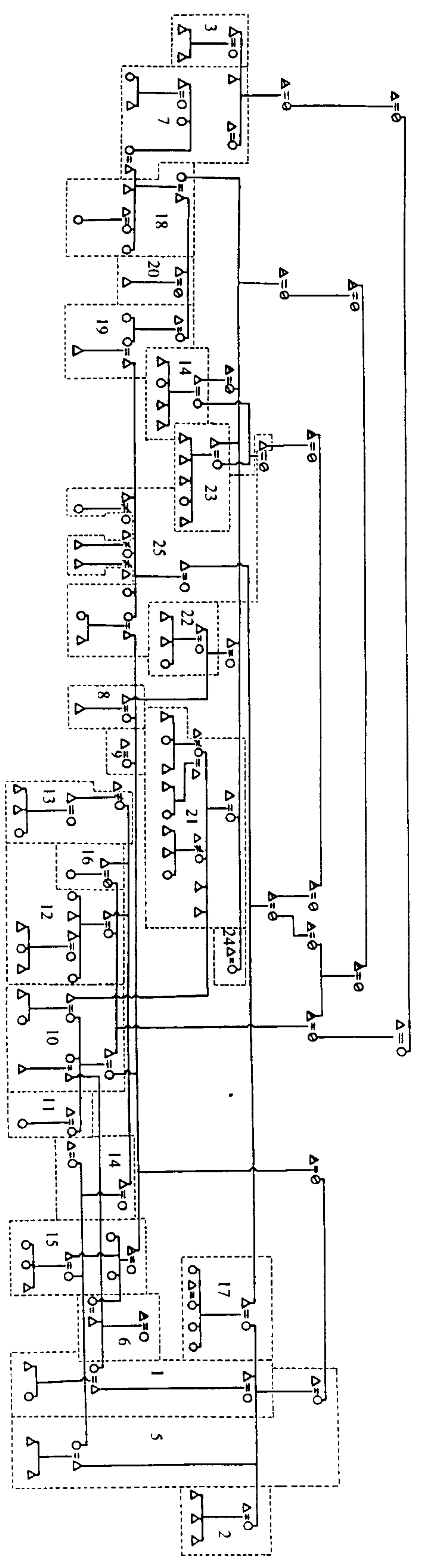
⁷ Cf. Overing (1982; 1988:177ff; 1989b:170) and Belaunde (1992:94ff).

The colonization of their land has presented the Enxet with enormous challenges. The market economy and western culture have confronted them with a multitude of “temptations” and they are surrounded by a world in which difference rather than sameness is emphasized. They have been introduced to new social practices which are more compatible with the values of competition and greed than with equality and generosity. Yet, despite this, and contrary to the fears of many anthropologists, the Enxet have managed to continue to live as “people without things.” They have transformed western economic practices to fit in with their way of life and to engender rather than destroy tranquillity and “love.” While not denying that they face many problems, their example, I believe, offers a source of hope and optimism in the face of western society’s inexorable colonization of indigenous land and minds throughout the South American continent.

APPENDIX 1: HOUSEHOLDS IN PALO SANTO



APPENDIX 2: HOUSEHOLDS IN SAN CARLOS



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