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# **Religious Change:**

**A Case-Study Amongst the Enxet of the Paraguayan Chaco**

**by**

**Stephen William Kidd**

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**Thesis submitted for the qualification of Master of Arts**

**to the UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**October, 1992**



**10 MAR 1993**

## ABSTRACT

An explanatory model of religious change in small-scale subsistence societies is developed, in which it is argued that the relative balance of domination between neighbouring societies is a crucial factor in the development of stimuli for religious change. Societies which retain control over their productive resources exhibit relative satisfaction with their well-being and change is usually restricted to diffusion. However, in a colonial situation the well-being of the dominated people is threatened and they enter a *crisis*. This is characterized by a realization that their ritual practices no longer adequately control the superempirical universe, and by a reduction in their sense of self-worth and prestige. A common response is religious transformation and the resultant conversion movements can be conceived of as active constructions of more satisfying cultures in which attempts are made to re-impose control over the mystical universe and to regain prestige and self-worth. The mechanism used is intercultural sociality: the dominated people look to the colonizers for the secret of their perceived success but the difficulties of intercultural communication result in frequent misinterpretation.

The model is used to explain religious change amongst the Enxet Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco. Prior to colonialism, change amongst the Enxet was limited to diffusion. However, post-1885 their land was invaded by the white man, plunging them into a crisis. Two independent conversion movements are examined and successfully explained by reference to the theoretical model. However, a third movement, conversion to Anglicanism, illustrates the influence of culturally-specific factors on the character of a movement. The Enxet, as immediate return hunter-gatherers, viewed the Anglican church as a "foraging resource" and the adoption of Anglicanism by a minority of Enxet was little more than a technique of gaining access to the economic benefits available.

In memory of  
Dr Walter Regehr

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## PREFACE

The idea for this thesis, and indeed my whole interest in social anthropology, arose whilst I was living and working amongst the Enxet of the Paraguayan Chaco. I originally went to Paraguay, in 1984, as a rather underprepared agricultural extension worker with relatively orthodox evangelical christian views. My contacts with the Enxet were initially limited to the work situation but, from 1985, this changed as I accompanied a group of Indians who were settling on the colony of El Estribo. I was able to live in their houses and thereby get to know and appreciate them much more. Thus began the process of my own conversion as the Indians increasingly challenged my ethnocentric worldview. Since 1989, I have been supporting the Enxet, Sanapaná and Angaité peoples as they have struggled to recover their traditional land, illegitimately appropriated by the white man more than one hundred years ago.

This thesis has been undertaken part-time and I am therefore extremely grateful to the various organizations that have supported me whilst in Paraguay. During my first six years there, I was employed by the South American Missionary Society and the Iglesia Anglicana Paraguaya both of whom exhibited amazing tolerance with my increasingly heretical ideas and disposition. My last trip of ten weeks, in 1992, was made possible by Dienste in Übersee and the Centro de Estudios Humanitarios.

However, my research would not have been possible without the assistance of the Enxet people, especially those of the communities of Makthlawaiya and El Estribo. Many, despite their poverty, provided my family and I with tremendous hospitality and we were most demanding on the households of Timon Recalde, Serafin Villamayor and Maruka Caballero. A number also gave freely of their time to teach me and I would especially like to thank Ambrosio Ramirez Lopez, Anibal Lopez, Nicasio Villamayor, Solano Acuña, Tomas Kilwaia, Anita Severo and the late Caballero Kyamakthlawaiya and Leon Chaves.

Whilst in Durham, the Department of Anthropology has been very kind in providing me with more assistance than is perhaps normal for part-time students, and I am especially grateful to Professor R. Layton and my supervisor

Dr. C.J. Gullick for their advice and time.

My ineptitude with computers has been off-set by the help and advice of a number of people, not least my brother Andrew who took on the responsibility of arranging printing.

Finally, this thesis would still be but a twinkle in the eye if it were not for the support and sacrifice of my wife Sandra who has not only had to bear an unfair workload in the house but has also shown great tolerance as our spare-time and holidays have been surrendered to the imperative of anthropological study.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Dusk had fallen and Anselmo, Sixto<sup>1</sup> and I were sitting round the fire drinking terere<sup>2</sup>. I was on a visit to the Enxet colony of El Estribo and was staying in Anselmo's house for a few days. Earlier in the evening the enthusiastic singing in the church service nearby had provided an ecclesiastical backdrop to our conversation but, as the evening drew on and the Indians left the service to make their way home, I gradually became aware of the sound of a *yohoxma*<sup>3</sup> singing quietly, somewhere in the distance. I remarked on it to my two Enxet companions and soon we were embroiled in an enthusiastic discussion about *yohoxma*.

They were adamant: the power of the *yohoxma* came from demons<sup>4</sup> and the chief of the demons was Satan. Since it was difficult for me to accept that they could dismiss their own religious traditions so easily and so forcefully, I found myself arguing against them. I asked how it was that they could class the *yohoxma* as evil if these same *yohoxma* were able to heal the sick. Surely this was a good thing? They insisted: the *yohoxma* were bad<sup>5</sup> and on dying they did not go to heaven but suffered two deaths, the first causing them to become ghosts and wander the earth whilst the second would occur on the day of judgement when they would be sent to hell<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, although all the Enxet were christian, if someone went to a *yohoxma* for healing then he would be abandoning his religion<sup>7</sup>. At this point, I thought I had trapped Anselmo into a contradiction and asked him

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<sup>1</sup>Pseudonyms have been employed.

<sup>2</sup>A paraguayan tea.

<sup>3</sup>Shaman.

<sup>4</sup>Although we were speaking in Enxet, Anselmo used the Spanish word *demonio*. When I asked him if, in Enxet, he would say *kelyekhama*, a class of evil spirit that the missionaries had associated with demons, he replied that he would.

<sup>5</sup>The word *asamche* in Enxet can be variously translated as "bad" or "evil".

<sup>6</sup>Hell is a translation of *kelyekhama axagkok* - the house of the demons (or Satan).

<sup>7</sup>Anselmo again used Spanish by saying *religion* - he was referring to Christianity.

how it was that he had recently had his eye healed by a *yohoxma*. Did this not mean that he himself must have abandoned Christianity? Expecting a climb-down I was surprised to hear him answer in the affirmative, thereby upholding the thrust of his argument. Indeed, he did not seem particularly perturbed by the eschatological implications of his admission. Eventually, after conversing for a little while longer, we decided to retire to our beds, but not before Sixto had asked me to say a prayer (a task normally carried out by Anselmo's mother).

Four months later, I was once more at Anselmo's, this time accompanied by a Scottish friend. In the evening the three of us were sitting round the fire drinking *terere* (Sixto was absent) when some *yohoxma* started singing not too far from Anselmo's house. Never having experienced a shamanic healing ceremony, I asked Anselmo if we could go and see what was happening. To my surprise he said yes, so, not wanting to waste any time, we set off immediately. Guided by the sound of the singing we soon approached the site of their activity which turned out to be the home of Pablo, Anselmo's elder brother. They seemed to have difficulty in recognising who we were and so we were able to get to within twenty metres before I heard the whispered warning "Esteban!"<sup>1</sup> Immediately the singing ceased, but I was able to make out four people sitting around the patient's bed. Somebody else was on the bed fanning the patient and the rest were sitting in a cluster, about three metres away; they had evidently been watching the performance.

Our arrival rapidly transformed the scene. The women in the cluster jumped up and one of them, Pablos's wife, came to meet us. After exchanging greetings she guided us to some seats that had been placed about ten metres from the patient. I could sense a general nervousness and the four *yohoxma* were clearly nonplussed by our arrival. For a short while they remained silent, as if uncertain what to do, then, one by one, three of them got up and came over to shake our hands. We exchanged pleasantries, but it was noticeable that one of them remained rooted to his seat. He was wearing a large cowboy hat and, by keeping his head tilted down, it was impossible to recognise him.

After the greetings I kept quiet, worried that I might have caused an unforgivable insult or disruption. The *yohoxma* returned to their seats and, after a short while, began to converse softly. I could not understand everything said but

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<sup>1</sup>The Spanish form of "Stephen".

it was clear that they were talking about me. I heard one of them mention that I was very interested in their traditional dancing, an activity that had been banned by the Mission, and that in Makthlawaiya, my own village, I frequently danced. Pablo, who was the one sitting on the bed, mentioned that there was another missionary who had also talked to him about the dancing in a favourable way. The conversation continued in the same vein for some five minutes and it seemed to me that they were trying to convince themselves that not all the missionaries were still against their traditions. Then one of them turned towards us and announced that they were working<sup>1</sup>. I replied that I was aware of that, that I thought that what they were doing was good, and that I had only turned up out of interest. Anselmo and Pablo then came to my aid by telling everyone that what I said was true and that I had been telling them for a long time that I wanted to see a shamanic ceremony. They resumed their conversation and, after a short while, one of them began to sing. The others soon followed, and every fifteen minutes or so they stopped for a short discussion before recommencing. However, it took an hour for me to recognise the fourth *yohoxma* and that was when, during a break in the singing, he stood up, took off his hat and, bending over the patient, sucked on her stomach - it was Sixto.

We left at about eleven-thirty and quickly retired to bed. Sixto did not return home until dawn and he informed us that they had worked until five-thirty and that the patient would now recover. From that day on there was a marked change in the conversations between Sixto and I. He no longer condemned his traditional religion but became both a useful and enthusiastic informant.

This encounter was a product of one hundred years of missionary endeavour. During my first few years in Paraguay, the Indians perceived me to be a missionary and so, logically, they attributed to me the ethnocentric attitudes that they normally associated with missionaries. This explained their attempts to misinform me and their initial discomfort when I arrived at the shamanic healing ceremony. However, it is also indicative of the ultimately dishonest nature of Enxet-missionary relationships, the direct result of one-hundred years of evangelization.

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<sup>1</sup>*Nentamhaekha*.

The account also clearly demonstrates the syncretic nature of modern Enxet religion. Behind the church services and the prayers is a vibrant traditional religion, one which still plays a central role in Enxet society and in which all Enxet participate.

## 1.1. The Aim and Structure of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to examine religious change in the context of the Enxet Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco. However, although there have been a great many studies done on religious change from an anthropological perspective, a major failing has been the inadequate development of a theoretical framework within which this transformation can be analyzed and comprehended. Therefore, chapter two will be concerned with the development of an explanatory model of religious transformation predicated on the assumption that a major causal factor of change in any society is contact with other cultures. It will be postulated that distinct "structures" of intersocietal contact precipitate varied responses within small-scale subsistence societies, and that the most rapid and extensive religious transformations are correlated with a loss of control by a society over its productive resources. This results in the development of a societal "crisis" which, in turn, provokes a response from the members of the society in question as they attempt to resolve the crisis by constructing a more satisfying culture. The mechanism by which this is achieved is intercultural sociality, which refers to the dynamic character of the relationships between people of different societies. The rest of the thesis will apply this theory in the context of the religious transformation that has taken place amongst the southern Enxet Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco.

Chapter three will set the scene by reconstructing Enxet society and culture at the end of the nineteenth century. It will show how the Enxet were an independent people and will characterize the structure of their contact with the white man as in equilibrium. In this context their culture provided them with a satisfactory sense of well-being. Elements of the pre-colonial culture that help explain the subsequent conversion movements will also be described. These are: the Enxet's understanding of how success in the empirical world was dependent,

ultimately, on the effective manipulation of the unseen (i.e. spiritual) world; the criteria they used for defining and determining status and prestige; and their identity as immediate return, egalitarian hunter-gatherers.

The fourth chapter will consider the structure of contact between the Enxet and the white man. It will describe how the invasion and colonization of their land by the white man forced the Enxet into a situation of dependence and subjugation. As a result, they lost control over the productive resources of their territory.

The consequences of colonization will be the subject of chapter five. It will show how the combination of intensified contact with the white man and colonialism provoked a crisis in Enxet society. Various aspects of this crisis will be examined including: the devastating effect of European diseases; the demise of the traditional economy, the incorporation of the Enxet into the capitalist economy as a pool of cheap labour for the landowner, and the resultant subsistence crisis; and the disorganization of their society and the imposition of an alien social system. As a result of this crisis they realized that they could no longer understand the cosmos and manipulate it so as to provide an adequate sense of well-being. They also experienced a drastic reduction and confusion in their sense of self-worth and prestige.

Chapter six will examine the response of the Enxet to the crisis. It will show how, as social actors, they actively attempted to reconstruct their culture in a more satisfying way through the development of conversion movements. Unfortunately, lack of space will allow only three movements to be considered. Nevertheless, an examination of these movements will show how the Enxet attempted to understand the reasons for the crisis and to create new mechanisms with which to control the superempirical elements of the universe and thereby, improve the material conditions of their lives. Similarly, they strove to regain their sense of integrity, self-worth and prestige. Intercultural sociality will be examined as the mechanism by which the Enxet sought to recreate their culture and will concentrate on their relationship with a group of Anglican missionaries. However, the discussion of one of the movements, the conversion to Anglicanism, will show how culturally specific factors, in this case the hunter-gatherer identity of the Indians, are significant in influencing the character of a conversion movement.



The final chapter will summarize the argument and relate what occurred amongst the Enxet to the theoretical model developed in chapter two.

## 1.2. Research Methodology

The research data was obtained from two sources: the available literature and Enxet informants. The literature consulted was of various types and could be classified as: anthropological and semi-anthropological articles and books; Mission literature, including books written by the pioneer missionaries, the magazines and annual reports of the South American Missionary Society<sup>1</sup>, reports of the Anglican Church of Paraguay, diaries from the mission stations, and missionary correspondence; and occasional books and articles written by other visitors to the Chaco. Of this, the Mission literature has been particularly valuable, providing a wealth of information, the vast majority of which has never before been used in academic research. However, as Beidelman (1982, xviii) and Whiteman (1983a) have pointed out, great care needs to be taken when using missionary writings since they tend to contain biases consistent with the missionaries' own ideology and their perception of their intended audience.

My contact with Enxet informants was the result of more than six years residence in the Chaco. I first went to Paraguay in 1984 and, although I mainly resided in the mission station of Makthlawaiya, I did also spend a lot of time travelling to, and staying in, a large number of other Indian communities. During most of my time in Paraguay I worked for the Anglican church and, as I have already indicated, this negatively influenced my relationship with the Enxet during my first two years there. However, as they began to realize that my ideas and viewpoints were quite different to those that they normally associated with missionaries, and as I increasingly learnt their language and began to work in supporting their land rights' claims, I gradually developed relationships of trust and mutual confidence with a number of Enxet. This enabled me to obtain information

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<sup>1</sup>This is an Anglican missionary society and was responsible for initiating the mission and has consistently provided the majority of mission personnel ever since.

on both their history and contemporary culture that has been especially useful in providing insights into past events which would otherwise be incomprehensible.

### 1.3. The Enxet

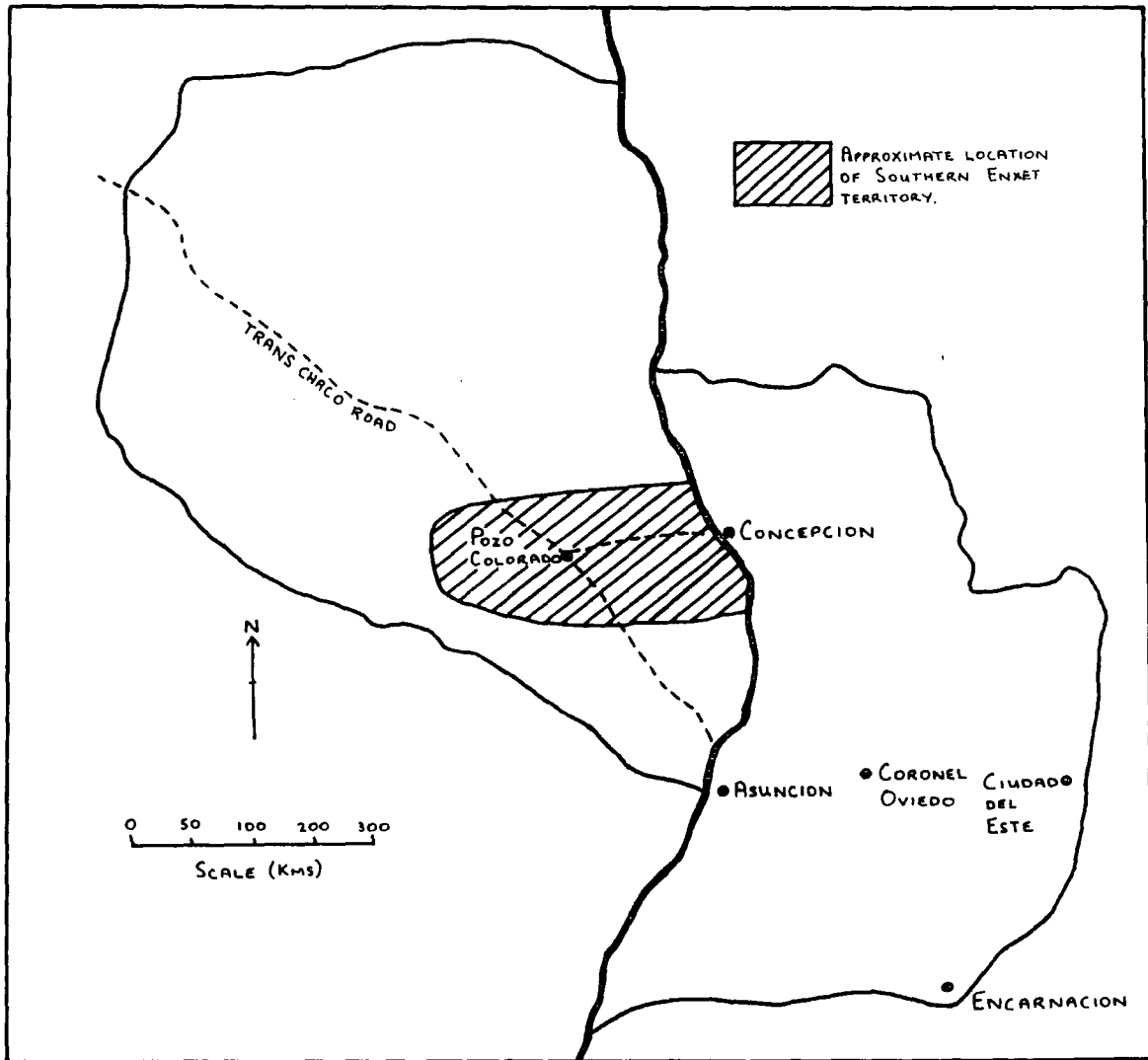
The Enxet, more commonly known as the Lengua-Maskoy, inhabit the Chaco region of Paraguay, an area of 246,926 km<sup>2</sup>, which constitutes the western half of the country (Kleinpennig 1984). It is a region of low population density and its almost 100,000 inhabitants can be compared with the more than 4,000,000 of eastern Paraguay, a slightly smaller area (Map 1.1.).

The Enxet are usually classified as southern and northern, and it is the former group which will be considered in this investigation. They are located in an area bounded to the east by the River Paraguay, to the south and north by the Rio Montelindo and Riacho San Carlos and which stretches 200 kilometres to the west (Map 1.2.). They are neighbours to many other Chaco tribes including, the Sanapana and Angaite to the north, the Nivakle and Maka to the west, and the Toba to the south.

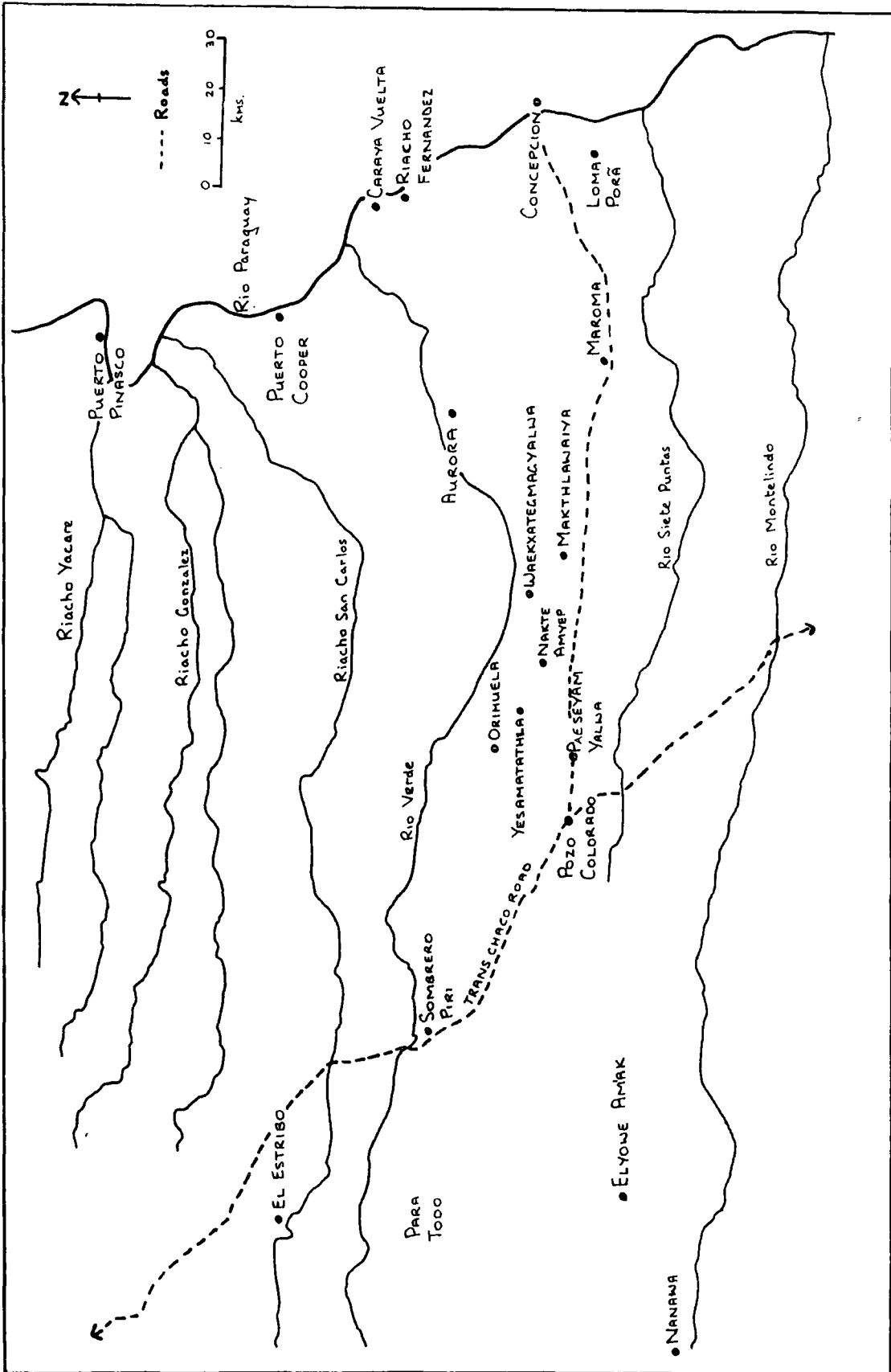
The Paraguayan Chaco Indians are classified into five major linguistic families which are normally sub-divided into fourteen distinct language groups (cf. Stahl 1982, 16). The Enxet belong to the Maskoy family which is usually thought to also comprise the Angaite, Sanapana, Guana (Kashkiha) and Toba-Maskoy peoples. Unfortunately, this classification is too simplistic and does not correspond to the various Maskoy peoples' understanding of the tribal divisions. For example, the Enxet regard the peoples referred to in Spanish as Sanapana and Angaite as four distinct tribes: the *Sapag*, *Kelyakmok*, *Yagkelyakmok*, and *Chatewes*. This would suggest the need for a more thorough linguistic survey than has hitherto been attempted.

The present-day southern Enxet population is difficult to assess. A number of censuses have been undertaken but they have all suffered from methodological problems which seriously undermine their reliability. One, by the Anglican church (Faulkner, 1978) in August 1978 put the population at 2631, whilst the national Indian census of 1981 found 2978 (INDI 1982). My own estimate, based on a partial census that I carried out myself in 1990-91, is of 3100, although I would not

Map 1.1. Paraguay, Showing Location of Southern Enxet Territory



Map 1.2. Southern Enxet Territory



be surprised if all of them turn out to be gross underestimates. The Paraguayan<sup>1</sup> population of the zone is unknown but is probably less than 3,000.

#### 1.4. The Geography and Climate of the Chaco

The Chaco is an almost completely flat area of land which stretches for hundreds of kilometres to the west of the River Paraguay, incorporating large sections of Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. Within the territory of the southern Enxet, 70% of the first 130 kilometres of land to the west of the River Paraguay is liable to flooding for up to six months of the year. However, the length and geographical extent of flooding varies considerably from year to year and the depth of the water is usually no more than fifty centimetres. The areas liable to flooding constitute three main ecological zones: treeless areas, where the flooding is deepest; palm forest; and low-lying woodland. The 30% of non-flooding land is at an almost imperceptibly higher elevation and, again, consists of three main ecological zones: small areas of savanna grassland, often no more than 2000 metres across; high forest (i.e. with tall trees); and low forest, often associated with the algaroba tree the fruit of which contributes significantly to the Indian diet. Over the whole area, and in a west-east orientation, a large number of small rivers and streams meander their way to the River Paraguay. During floods, or after heavy rain, these rivers become impassable on foot, but once the floods have receded the flow of water can cease completely leaving only stagnant pools. There are also many fossil river beds, relics of former meanders, which, with heavy rainfall or floods, fill with water but, in contrast to the still functioning streams, can often take a number of months to dry out. In fact, the deeper ones give the appearance of small lakes and provide the only permanent natural surface water supplies in the area. Their geographical occurrence is so infrequent that it was this paucity of permanent water supplies which, prior to colonization, was the environmental factor that most limited the area's human carrying capacity. However, in the last fifty years the supply of

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<sup>1</sup>When I refer to Paraguayan I mean the Spanish and Guarani speaking population of either European or mixed European-Indian ancestry.

permanent water has increased with the excavation of large water-holes, of up to 5000m<sup>3</sup>, by the majority of the cattle ranches.

Moving to the west, the land becomes progressively less liable to flooding so that, west of a north-south line 130 kilometres from the River Paraguay, most of the land is permanently free from flooding. Savanna grassland is more extensive here but the majority of the land is either high or low forest or, further west, increasingly dense scrub and bush.

The area is located on the Tropic of Capricorn and has a seasonal climate. Winter is relatively dry and cool, with normal day-time temperatures varying between 15°C and 25°C. In contrast, day-time summer temperatures vary between 30°C and 45°C and this is the season of most rainfall. Annual precipitation varies between 1100mm near the River Paraguay and 750mm in the west of the zone. A significant feature of the rainfall is its temporal and spatial variability. It is highly unpredictable and, during the summer, it is not uncommon to have droughts of four to six weeks. This makes agriculture a hazardous and potentially unproductive activity. Whilst rainfall can, when associated with fronts from the south, fall over the whole Chaco, the most common rainfalls are in the form of *chaperones*, isolated falls over an area of usually no more than ten kilometres wide. The trajectories of these *chaperones* are easily observed from the ground and it is not uncommon to see three or four at any one time.

## 2. AN EXPLANATORY MODEL OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

There is no shortage of anthropological literature dealing with religious conversion. A whole field of study has built up around the transformation of traditional tribal religions through contact with a world religion. Work produced has varied from studies of individual cases, mainly from Africa and Oceania, to general works most notably those of Worsley (1957), Lanternari (1963), Burridge (1969) and Wilson (1973). Whilst there have been a number of significant studies in South America as a whole, for example Butt (1960, 1971), Bonilla (1972)<sup>1</sup>, Whitten (1976), Taussig (1987) and von Graeve (1989)<sup>2</sup>, the Chaco in particular should be regarded as one of the centres for the study of religious conversion with work published by Bartolome (1972), Cordeu and Siffredi (1971), Miller (1970, 1971, 1975, and 1979), Loewen et al. (1965), Regehr (1979 and 1981), Reyburn (1954) and Wright (1989 and 1990).

However, one problem faced when studying religious conversion is that the theory of the subject is quite poorly developed. Attempts to create explanatory models have, unfortunately, rarely been derived from basic anthropological theory dealing with the creation and development of culture. One reason for this may have been the influence that, until recently, the organismic conception of culture had on anthropology. This was characterised by a number of features. Culture was reified and regarded as existing in advance of human history and action (Fox 1985, 196). As a result, cultural norms and collective representations were viewed as acting directly on the individual, a passive entity (Obeyesekere, 1981, 111). Related to this was the tendency to view cultures as internally homogeneous and externally bounded with few, if any contacts with other societies (Wolf 1982, 6). Consequently, culture was perceived as something inherently stable, a view which did not readily provide a framework within which to understand or explain cultural change.

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<sup>1</sup>This more properly dealt with the relationship between missionaries and Indians.

<sup>2</sup>Von Graeve concentrated on the effect on forest Indians of contact with white society rather than conversion. However, he did emphasize the relationship with missionaries.

This is not to say that structural-functionalists completely ignored the rapid cultural transformation that they observed in their areas of study. Rather, the theoretical aspects of their work were severely hampered by their organismic conception of culture. Wallace's (1956) seminal paper on revitalization movements provides an excellent example in that, as a result of his understanding that the natural condition of cultures was as "steady states", he could only conceive of change from one steady state to another and not as a continuous dynamic process.

In the last twenty-five years a more satisfactory explanation of cultural change has been made possible as a result of the paradigmatic shifts in the field of general anthropological theory. Nevertheless, little has been done to explain religious conversion within the context of these new paradigms. Whilst a successful explanation of religious change must, of necessity, be eclectic most of the work to date has been too culture specific and too isolated from general theory. However, this does not mean that it contradicts modern cultural theory. The intention of this chapter, therefore, is to outline the relevant aspects of contemporary theory relating to the creation of culture and from that develop an explanatory model of religious conversion. Furthermore, I will show how many of the existing explanations of religious change fit into this general outline. Subsequent chapters will then use this model to help explain religious change amongst the Enxet and, simultaneously, an assessment will be made of its value.

Modern cultural theory is predicated on the conviction that change is endemic in society and reflects Carrithers' (in press) view that:

So long as we think of humans simply as individuals subjected to a collectivity, or to disembodied cerebration, change of the sort human history so richly evidences becomes curiously distant and difficult to comprehend. A more thoroughly sociological view places change, not permanence, at the centre of our vision.

Therefore, before presenting a theory dealing specifically with religious change and conversion, it is necessary to reflect on the general question of the creation of culture.



## 2.1. The Creation of Culture

In the last twenty-five years three paradigms have arisen which have greatly influenced anthropology's understanding of how culture is created. They are all relevant in explaining religious conversion.

### 2.1.1. MAN THE SOCIAL ACTOR

Since the mid-1960s there has been a move away from the idea that culture pre-exists and imposes itself on individuals to one in which people are regarded as imposing meaning on the world (Obeyesekere 1981, 110). As Godelier (1986, 1) put it:

Human beings, in contrast to other social animals, do not just live in society, they *produce society in order to live*. In the course of their existence, they invent new ways of thinking and acting - both upon themselves and upon the nature which surrounds them. They therefore produce culture and create history (or History).

This view was reinforced by Carrithers (in press):

We are not just animals who are passively remoulded by our respective societies and cultures, for we actively make and remake societies into new ways of life, ..... and that calls for altogether more impressive abilities."

This is a radical shift away from one of the key elements of the organismic conception of culture in that people are regarded as "social actors making real choices" (Fox 1985). Indeed, Obeyesekere (1981, 110) asserted that "the set of meanings that human beings impose<sup>1</sup> on the world is what we mean by culture."

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<sup>1</sup>My emphasis.

### 2.1.2. SOCIALITY

What, then, is the mechanism by which people produce culture or, as Carrithers put it, what are these "altogether more impressive abilities?" First of all, the idea that individual societies are internally homogenous must be rejected. The reality is that humans in any given society manifest a significant degree of heterogeneity. This permits a process of intracultural dialecticalism to occur. This was summarized by Carrithers as "sociality" or, in other words, as relationships between people. Its significance for the development of culture was stated clearly by Fox (1985, 196f) when he asked:

Instead of proceeding as if a culture existed in advance of human action in history, what if anthropologists presumed that culture as a system of meaning emerged from the sum of social relationships composing a society - that it arose and endured only as men and women struggled to make it?

It is important to recognise that in no society are social relationships stable. Rather, they are characterized by their dynamism, a point clarified by Godelier (1986, 18):

Social relations are not things. They do not exist without human intervention and action producing and reproducing them each day - which does not mean that they are always reproduced in a form identical to that of yesterday or the day before yesterday. All relations are realities in flux and motion, and in this movement they are daily deformed, altered or eroded to a greater or lesser degree, vanishing or metamorphosing to rhythms that may be imperceptible or brutal, according to the kind of society to which they belong.

Therefore, when attempting to explain cultural transformation, an understanding of culture as the product of dynamic social relationships is essential. It is through being in relationship with others that humans, as social actors, produce societies and cultures. This was summarized by Carrithers (in press) who said that humans are:

...inventive and profoundly social animals, living in and through their relations with each other and acting and reacting upon each other to make new relations and new forms of life<sup>1</sup>.

However, it is useful to consider the meaning of the term "relationships" in more detail. Basically it refers to some form of interaction between people and, since all human interaction involves communication we can deduce that when people are in relationship they can be said to be in communication. Consequently, our explanation of cultural transformation would be enhanced if we were to improve our understanding of the communication process<sup>2</sup>.

To take place, communication requires a minimum of two people and is defined as "that which happens whenever meaning is attached to behaviour or the residue of behaviour" (Porter and Samover 1988, 16). It can be either intentional or unintentional and whilst both aspects will be considered in this thesis, the former (i.e. communication with conscious intent) will receive most attention. It can be summarized as (Porter and Samover 1988, 17):

a dynamic transactional behaviour-affecting process in which sources and receivers intentionally code their behaviour to produce messages that they transmit through a channel in order to induce or elicit particular attitudes or behaviours. Communication is complete only when the intended message recipient perceives the coded behaviour, attributes meaning to it, and is affected by it.

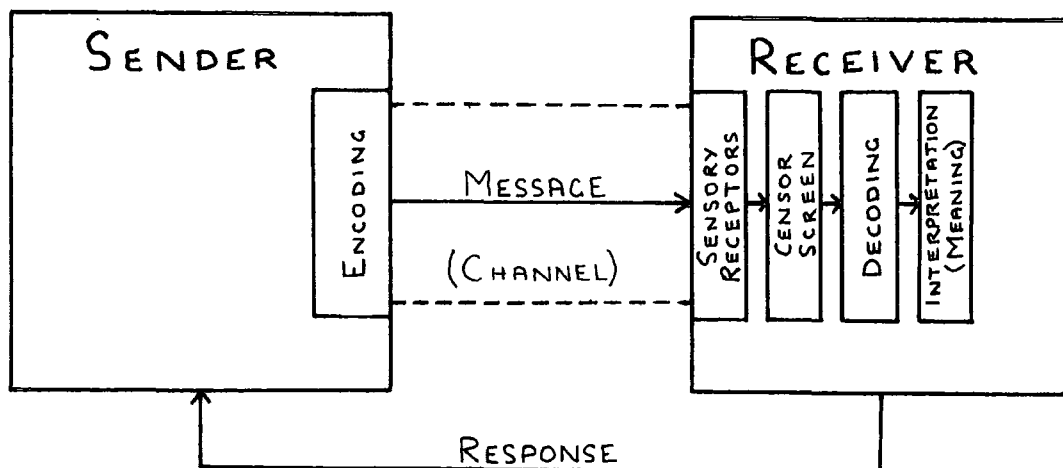
How, though, does communication operate? This will be explained by reference to fig. 2.1, each element being described in turn.

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<sup>1</sup>My emphasis.

<sup>2</sup>Much of the description and discussion of the communication process is taken from Porter and Samover (1988) and Singer (1987).

**Figure 2.1. The Communication Process**



i. Sender. Whilst there must always be someone to initiate communication, people are, in fact, continually sending and receiving messages. As Asante et al. (1979, 16) pointed out:

Communication is dynamic and can be studied much more profitably as a process than as a static phenomenon.

Therefore, both sender and receiver are mutually interchangeable roles.

ii. Message. A message, in the context of this work, is any stimulus initiated intentionally or unintentionally by one human being which is perceived by the sensory receptors of at least one other person. However, as will be explained later, message must not be confused with meaning.

iii. Encoding function. When a sender wants to initiate a communication he must encode his message so that it can be understood by the receiver. The code used is "a culturally defined, rule governed system of shared arbitrary symbols used to transmit (and elicit) meaning" (Singer 1987, 83). However, prior to being decoded by the receiver, the symbols should not be regarded as more than a message

containing "potential" meaning. Language is one example of a system which symbolically represents reality but it is not the only one.

Prior to initiating transmission, the sender assesses which symbolic representations will be most effective in ensuring that the receiver comprehends as much of the intended meaning as possible. However, people tend to assume that others perceive the world in the same way that they do. This is often an incorrect assumption, and frequently results in inappropriately chosen symbols.

iv. Channel. Messages can be transmitted through many different channels. For example, spoken language normally employs an audible channel (although not uniquely so as evidenced by sign language), whilst writing employs a material (e.g. paper) and visual channel. These channels can be used in many different ways, for example, when people talk about "leading by example" or when a visual demonstration is given of a new technique.

v. Receiver. A person receives a message by means of his sensory perceptors. However, it is by no means a foregone conclusion that the sender and receiver attribute equivalent meanings to the same message. Why this is so was explained by Obeyesekere (1981, 109):

Reality, out there, is according to Weber without meaning; culture confers meaning upon the formless, meaningless reality of the phenomenal world. I see the world out there physically, but my perceptions, even if organized, have no meaning unless mediated by culture.

Therefore, to understand the interpretation of a message it is necessary to analyze perception and culture (meaning systems) in more detail:

a. Perception. Porter and Samover (1988, 24) defined perception as "the internal process by which we select, evaluate, and organize stimuli from the external environment." People continually receive messages, many more than they can cope with. Therefore, they select the messages that they consider the most significant. This is done by means of what may figuratively be described as a sensor screen which designates what is

attended to and what is ignored. People are not born with a censor screen but learn it by participating in a culture (Hall 1988, 44). Consequently they do not attend to those stimuli which their culture has not trained them to perceive<sup>1</sup>.

A person's perception is also affected by "noise" which, in many cases, refers to stimuli of the physical environment picked up by the sensory receptors of the body and which, if sufficiently significant, can drown out other messages. It can also refer to the social and psychological environment, such as differences in attitudes and values or the character of the relationship to the other person. For example, if someone is not liked or trusted by the person he is attempting to communicate with, he is less likely to be listened to.

b. Meaning systems and their influence on decoding. When a message is received, the symbolic code employed needs to be decoded by the receiver. In this context it is necessary to ask, as Hofstadler did, (1979, in D'Andrade 1984, 101f):

...whether meaning can be said to be inherent in the message, or whether meaning is always manufactured by the interaction of a mind or a mechanism with a message.

D'Andrade answered by stating (1984, 103):

As a result of the interaction between what is contained in cultural messages and what is contained in the interpretive system of the mind, as a general rule, one cannot locate cultural meanings in the message. Thus a distinction must be made between message and meaning.

The meaning the receiver imputes to a message is predicated on the knowledge he has gained through his relationships with other people and on

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<sup>1</sup>Being trained by culture refers, of course, to the socialization and education process that everyone undergoes through their relationships with other members of their society.

his past experiences. This provides him with mental "categories" or "symbol systems" erected, as D'Andrade (1984, 91) pointed out, by adherence to the constitutive rule system prevalent in the receiver's society. The function of these categories was defined by D'Andrade when he wrote that:

Probably every cultural category "creates" an entity, in the sense that what is understood to be "out there" is affected by the culturally based associations built into the category system.

In general terms these categories are drawn from the receiver's culture unless, of course, he has been particularly cosmopolitan. However, it needs to be emphasized that even within the same culture there is no guarantee that two people will infer the same meaning from a message. This can be illustrated by reference to language, a potentially inexact symbol system, in which many words are open to a wide variety of interpretations, and which can lead two people from the same society to impute distinct meanings to the same word. Indeed, the same person can infer different meanings according to the context in which the transmission takes place.

vi. Response. Response refers to the change in behaviour of the receiver as he acts on the message received. It includes the transmission back to the original sender of a further message. What is said depends very much on the meaning inferred from the original message and gives the original sender the chance to assess how well his message was understood before he himself transmits a further message. This emphasizes the point that communication is a dynamic process and the content of a message is always affected by the content of previous transmissions.

### 2.1.3. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF CULTURES

One final feature of the proposed explanatory model of cultural transformation requires mention and concerns the interconnectedness of societies and cultures. Whilst the organismic conception of culture conceived of societies as bounded, closed systems the new paradigm asserted that (Wolf 1982, 3):

the world of mankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like "nation," "society," and "culture" name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding.

The interconnectedness of cultures is a key element in the explanation of both the "why" and the "how" of cultural transformation. As Wolf (1982, 76) remarked:

Cultural change or cultural evolution does not operate on isolated societies but always on interconnected systems in which societies are variously linked within wider "social fields."

The significance of this in explaining religious change and its relationship with the concepts of man as a social actor and sociality will be explained in the following section.

## 2.2. The Mechanism of Religious Change

The aim of this section is to develop a model explaining religious change. It will be predicated on a conception of culture that regards man as a social actor, who creates culture through sociality and who lives in a culture that is part of a world wide system of interconnected cultures. Furthermore, it will show that most theory that has been developed to explain religious change fits in surprisingly well with the model.

The model has three parts. The first, derived from the understanding of the interconnectedness of cultures looks at the structure of the contact between different societies. The next investigates the influence of this structure in developing pre-conditions for religious change. Finally, the mechanisms by which religious change comes about will be discussed and this will concentrate on man as a social actor and sociality in a intercultural context.



## 2.2.1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERSOCIETAL CONTACT.

Whilst no society is an isolated system the structure, or form, that its contact with other societies takes can vary considerably. A key variable in the structure of the intersocietal contact is the degree of domination of one society over another, particularly in terms of control over the productive resources of the local area. This idea is implicit in much of the literature on religious change both in general works (e.g. Burrige 1969, 143; 1991, 110; and Wilson 1973, 5 and 38) and specific case-studies (e.g. Fernandez 1982, 9; Moore 1984, 27; Nason 1978; and Peel 1977, 114). The terms employed may differ but the concept is the same.

The degree of domination can be extremely varied. Two societies may be in a state of equilibrium in that neither is able to dominate the other sufficiently to be able to take control of the productive resources. At the opposite extreme is the colonial situation wherein one society has assumed control of the other's productive resources. Needless to say, between these extremes exist many variations in the balance of subordination and domination.

A further important point is that this balance is dynamic and as such varies temporally (Wilson 1973, 48 and 272). For example, whilst two societies might, at one point in history, be in equilibrium, technological changes that take place in only one may unhinge this balance enabling it to dominate the other. In the last five hundred years this has occurred on a world scale as Europe, partly as a result of its superior military technology, has spread through and colonized much of the world. Indeed Wolf (1982) identified the spread of Europe and, concomitantly, capitalism as one of the major causes of worldwide cultural change.

The importance of intersocietal contact is that stimuli for cultural and religious change are created. The nature of the stimuli depends on the structure of the contact and is the subject of the next section.

## 2.2.2. PRE-CONDITIONS FOR RELIGIOUS CHANGE

When societies come into contact this can potentially affect the material conditions of the members of the societies in question and, logically, influence their

sense of well-being. This varies according to the structure of the intersocietal contact. For example, the members of societies that maintain an equilibrium are unlikely to experience a reduction in their sense of well-being<sup>1</sup>. This does not mean that their cultures will not be transformed since it is common in this type of situation for one culture to incorporate elements of the other culture which are perceived to be useful. This was characterized by Vago (1980, 132ff) as diffusion. However, it is possible to experience radical change in a situation of equilibrium. For example, the transmission of a new disease could decimate a people possessing no effective biological defences whilst in contrast, a new cultural element could be deemed to be so advantageous so as to transform the whole system of social organization. An example was the horse amongst the Plains Indians (Wolf 1982, 176ff) and Guaicuru peoples (Cordeu and Siffredi 1971, 15ff).

However, it is the colonial situation that provides the most fertile pre-conditions for change. As has been mentioned, the subjected people in a colonial situation lose control, to varying degrees, of their productive resources. This brings about a marked reduction in their sense of well-being resulting in a situation of **crisis**, defined by La Barre (1971, 11), *vis a vis* religious change, as:

...a deeply felt frustration or basic problem with which routine methods, secular or sacred, cannot cope<sup>2</sup>.

This can be better understood by discussing in more detail the two aspects of culture considered most relevant in explaining religious conversion which are the function of religion in society and the concept of prestige.

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<sup>1</sup>This is not always so and Wilson (1973, 216ff) described three cases in New Guinea in which the rumour of the white man's presence and culture was sufficient to bring about a sense of "culture shock" and induce demands for cultural transformation.

<sup>2</sup>Many other terms are used in the literature to describe what is essentially the same situation, for example: anomy (Burrige 1969, 37; and Wilson 1973, 3), relative deprivation (Wilson 1973, 3), tension (Wilson 1973, 86), culture shock (Wilson 1973, 215), stress (Wallace 1956, 267; Kammerer 1990, 284) and dissonance (Miller 1979).

### 2.2.2.1. The Function of Religion

The theoretical approach taken here is a relatively modern version of the intellectualist position<sup>1</sup>. It understands traditional cosmologies and rituals to be concerned with *power* or, rather, with assumptions about power (Burridge 1969, 6 and 143; Miller 1975; and Peel 1977, 126f). People in traditional small-scale societies use religion to understand, explain, predict and control the universe (Horton 1971, 94ff; and Fernandez 1982, 281;). As Powers (1987, 175) put it, cosmology should be viewed as :

...a dialectic between experience and the need to rationalize that experience and the perceived superempirical or metaphysical causality believed to account for such experience<sup>2</sup>.

People desire control over the universe so as to attain a satisfying culture or, as Miller (1975) pointed out for the Toba, to maintain health, harmony and contentedness<sup>3</sup>. Of course, in no society are ritual practices always completely successful but, in a society that is not in crisis, failures do not challenge the veracity of the religious system but are explained away by what Evans-Pritchard (1976, 155ff) referred to as the phenomenon of secondary elaboration<sup>4</sup>. At a more fundamental level Layton (1989, 6f) has pointed out that every explanatory theory rests on certain constitutive rules which are not open to question within the theory. Consequently, certain challenges to theory are regarded as nonsensical and irrelevant by the members of the challenged culture. A similar point was made by Horton (1970) when he talked of the closed predicament of traditional small-scale societies' world views.

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<sup>1</sup>See Horton (1970 and 1971) and Lukes (1970).

<sup>2</sup>cf. Horton and Peel (1976, 485).

<sup>3</sup>This should not be understood to mean that traditional small-scale societies are in a state of harmony, rather that this is their aim.

<sup>4</sup>See also Horton (1970, 162ff).

When a society is in crisis a situation of disomy develops, defined by Burridge (1960, 274) as:

...an acceleration in the number of particulars in an environment without a corresponding series of categories within terms of which they might be comprehended and mastered.

As a result the traditional religion is no longer able to understand, explain, predict and control the new situation and the pre-crisis assumptions about the nature of power are no longer able to guarantee the truth of things (Burridge 1969, 7f)<sup>1</sup>. To make sense of a disordered world new assumptions are required (Burridge 1969, 144; and Wilson 1973, 499) which necessitate innovations in the cosmology and ritual practice. Consequently, the traditional religion is transformed.

#### 2.2.2.2. Prestige

Every society has a means by which the integrity of men is established and through which prestige is gained (Burridge 1960, 215; and 1969, 11, 75 and 112). In small-scale subsistence economies prestige is generally measured by reference to the subsistence activities that most, or all, undertake in common, although the ability of ritual specialists also enters into consideration (Burridge 1969, 42; and 1991, 107).

However, in a colonial situation the autochthonous society comes into contact with a new type of man who, by virtue of his dominant position, is seen to be superior. This challenges their integrity as men especially as they are unable to compete on their own terms (Burridge 1969, 41)<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, western capitalist society brings with it an alternative discourse on prestige, one predicated on the possession of wealth, (Burridge 1969, 42; and 1991, 108), and this makes competition with the dominator even more difficult. It can also enable members

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Wilson (1973, 54) and Counts (1978, 374).

<sup>2</sup>It is, of course also possible that they are no longer able to practise the activities through which they traditionally gained prestige, as happened to the Plains Indians when the buffalo were destroyed.

of the dominated society to use this alternative discourse to enhance their prestige when, according to traditional criteria, they would not normally be able to. Commonly, for example, young men in Melanesia can take advantage of their preferential access to paid employment to become much wealthier than their elders who still live by the traditional economy. Since prestige in this context is predicated on the possession and dispersal of wealth the young men have the potential to usurp the elders (Burrige 1969, 114).

Integrity as men is also threatened by the experience of events and new capacities and powers which cannot be explained (Burrige 1969, 35 and 96). The ritual specialists lose prestige by being seen to be incapable of adequately controlling the new situation. This is compounded if the invaders are demonstrably more successful, for example, in curing alien diseases.

Regaining lost prestige becomes an essential element of any culture in crisis. Indeed Burrige (1969, 11, 117 and 141ff) asserted that at the heart of a conversion movement stands a more satisfactory way of gaining prestige encapsulated in the creation of a "new man".

Once propitious conditions exist what are the mechanisms by which religious change comes about? This is the subject of the following section.

### 2.2.3. THE MECHANICS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

General anthropological theory dealing with the creation of culture is again useful in contributing to an understanding of the mechanics of religious conversion. Two aspects will be emphasized: the role of man as a social actor and sociality in an intercultural context.

#### 2.2.3.1. Man the Social Actor

The literature on religious change is quite explicit in viewing man as an active agent in the process of religious change, even amongst those who adhere to

an organismic conception of culture (cf. Wallace 1956, 265). The terms used to describe this process vary but include *construction* (Wallace 1956, 265; Miller 1971; Whitten 1976, 215ff; and Fernandez 1982, 282), *reinterpretation* (Butt Colson 1971, 54; and Riviere 1981, 1), *recreation* (Butt Colson 1971, 54), *reelaboration* (Wright 1989, 228), *reinvention* (Powers 1987) and *development* (Wilson 1973, 474). However, the most enlightening study of man's active participation in the transformation of religion has been that of Obeyesekere (1981).

Wilson (1973, 327) has usefully developed the argument further with relation to societies in crisis. Predicating his thesis on the work of Burrige (1960) and Lawrence (1964) he makes the distinction between "persisting belief" and "spasmodic cults". "Persisting belief" is an immanent but inchoate understanding of the crisis and develops in society as a whole, often being expressed in mythical form. It was characterized by Burrige (1960, 26ff) as a "myth-dream", a:

...body of notions derived from a variety of sources such as rumours, personal experiences, desires, conflicts, and ideas about the total environment which find expression in myths, dreams, popular stories, and anecdotes.

At certain spatial and temporal points a charismatic figure arises who consciously activates this "myth-dream" by giving meaning to it in the context of a "spasmodic cult" or conversion movement. This helps clarify Miller's (1979, 13) somewhat contradictory and confusing critique of Wallace (1956) where, despite referring elsewhere in his study to the extremely active role of charismatic prophets, he questions the degree to which religious change is conscious. If he is referring at this point to "persisting belief" his critique becomes somewhat more understandable.

Nevertheless, the exact mechanism by which men recreate their religious system needs to be examined in more detail and this can be done by reference to sociality.

### 2.2.3.2. Intercultural Sociality

It has already been shown that it is human sociality, or humans in relationship, that produces culture. However, it needs to be remembered that human relationships are not uniquely intracultural. They are, just as significantly, potentially intercultural. It is, though, necessary to once again guard against a misleading reification of "culture" or "society" since when we talk of the interconnectedness of societies what we essentially mean is that the people of different societies are in relationship. Therefore, whilst contact between societies can cause structural changes which themselves give rise to fertile circumstances for cultural transformation, the actual direction of this transformation is, to a great extent, determined by the relationships between the individuals and groups of the two societies. It is this intercultural sociality which is an important factor in the recreation of culture and the direction of change is dependent on the dialectic between the two systems of meaning through communication.

To appreciate the implications of intercultural communication it is, of course, necessary to maintain a notion of the distinctiveness of cultures (cf. Carrithers, in press). The members of a society, due to their common relationships, experiences and histories, develop categories that are comparatively homogeneous when compared with those of another society.

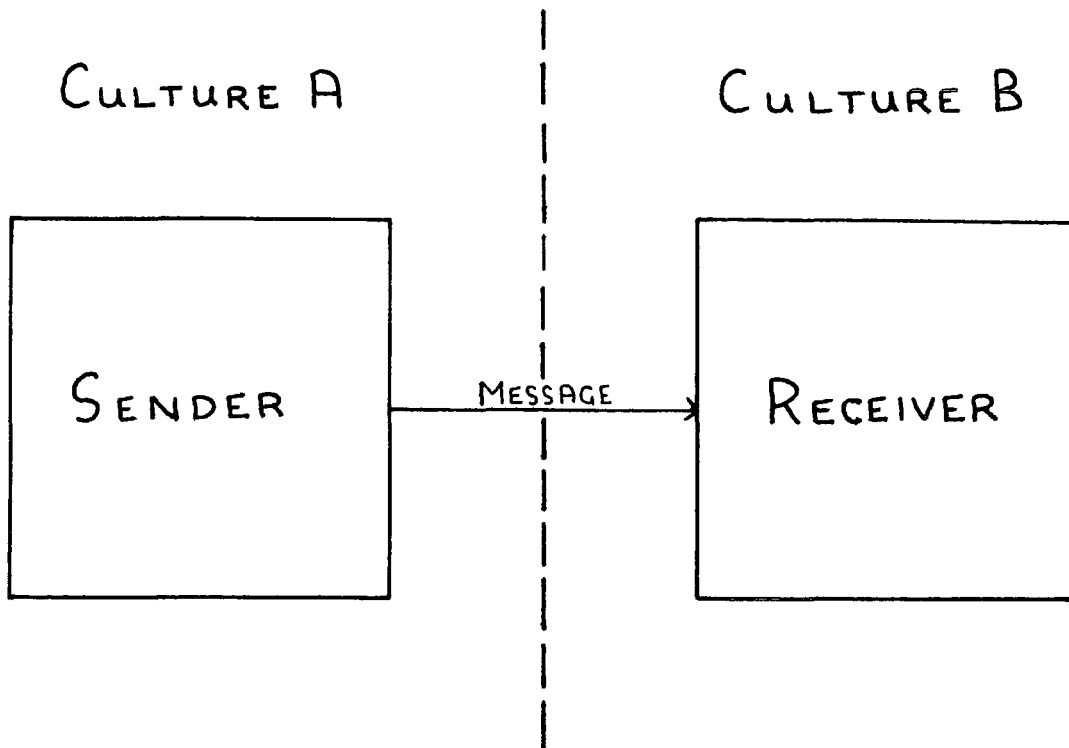
The process of intercultural communication is illustrated by fig. 2.2.. The sender and receiver belong to different cultures and, as such, possess distinct symbol systems. Consequently, the likelihood that they do not share a specific symbol's meaning is higher than if they were members of the same culture (Miller 1975, 477). Fernandez (1982, 277f) extended the argument by pointing out that not only is there the potential for dissonance of meanings but, indeed, different cultures have distinct modes of thought<sup>1</sup>. As a general rule Porter and Samover (1988, 22) stated:

The degree to which culture influences intercultural communication situations is a function of the dissimilarity between the cultures.

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<sup>1</sup>He asserted that western thought emphasizes the symbolic whilst cultures like the Fang have more enactive and iconic modes of thought.

**Figure 2.2. The Intercultural Communication Process**



The implications of intercultural sociality for the model of religious conversion can usefully be examined in more detail. Emphasis will be put on a crisis situation since this provides the greatest potential for intercultural communication to contribute to change.

As has been explained, when a subjugated people are in crisis they aim to recreate a more satisfying culture. This includes reasserting their control over the universe and regaining their integrity as men. They look to the obviously more successful dominating society for answers. The members of the colonizing power cannot help but communicate and, whilst it is frequently unintentional (cf. Fernandez 1982, 286), many dominators do intentionally aim to communicate with those they dominated. Although some, such as colonial officials, may have no explicitly religious objective others, especially missionaries, do. Since this thesis is concerned to a great extent with missionary-native interaction it is this relationship which will receive most attention. Indeed, many authors stress that it is frequently



the missionary that provides the main contact with the dominated (for example: Harwood 1978, 231; Ross 1978, 165; Jackson 1984, 54; and von Graeve 1989).

In analyzing any communication process it is essential to understand the character of the sender, in this case the missionary. Unfortunately, missionaries manifest a pronounced heterogeneity and, as a result, many purportedly general definitions are in fact rather limited in their scope. Consequently, each situation must be dealt with separately but as a general proposition a missionary can be defined as someone who encounters an alien culture believing that something in that culture needs to change and that he is able to contribute to its transformation. By his very nature, therefore, he communicates a message.

The content of the message is also situation-specific and, despite Burrige's (1991, 4) attempt at a general summary, it needs to be analyzed as such. Nevertheless, the common tendency to "misformulate" the message should be mentioned<sup>1</sup>. A number of examples can be given. Burrige (1991, 5) described how the content of the "Good News" is so overwhelming that in transmission the spiritual and ontological character of the message is often distorted into moral precepts and injunctions. In the same vein Wilson (1973, 57) mentioned how, in teaching the Bible, a much greater emphasis is put on miracles than would be the case if the communication was endogenous to the missionary's own culture and Miller (1970) described how missionaries, contrary to their intentions, end up as agents of secularization. However, the two most frequently mentioned examples of missionary mistransmission are the relating of illness and healing to supernatural action (e.g. Beidelman 1974, 245; and Riviere 1981, 9) and the tendency to equate christianity with European material and technical superiority (Wilson 1973, 220 and 341; Peel 1977, 128; Jackson 1984, 85; Fernandez 1982, 280; and Beidelman 1982, 188). Evidently, these messages fit in neatly with the ideological conceptions of traditional small-scale societies.

Nevertheless, whatever the content of the message it first of all needs to be encoded in such a way that, when decoded by the receiver, misinterpretation is minimized. Much of the literature deals with the difficulties of this process and the almost universal lack of success in translating from one symbol system to another.

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. irrespective of decoding, the message transmitted is different to what was intended.

Some of the best examples are: Horton (1971); Miller (1975); Whitten (1976, 220ff); Harwood (1978); Riviere (1981); Beidelman (1982, 137f); and Fernandez (1982, 276ff).

The channels used for transmission can vary considerably. Direct verbal transmission through preaching is common but success is dependent on the sender's expertise in, and understanding of, the receiver's language and culture. A more sophisticated version of verbal transmission is formal education since children are recognised as being more susceptible to understanding and accepting an alien message than adults and much more time can be spent in transmission. Great effort is often put into Bible translation since this is understood as giving the receiver direct access to what the missionaries believe to be the source of their message. Emphasis is also given to communicating by action or example (Burrige 1991, 239).

However, encoding the message can present many difficulties since many christian words and concepts just do not exist in non-christian cultures. Evans-Pritchard (1965, 14) highlighted this when he asked: "How do you render into an Amerindian language 'In the beginning was the Word'?" but the problem goes much deeper and can concern some of the most basic of cultural concepts. For example, Wilson (1973, 306) reflected on the problems caused by differing time perspectives and Taylor (1963) and Burrige (1991, 123ff) discussed the difficulty of introducing "guilt" into societies based on shame (cf. Obeyesekere 1981, 76ff) and "sin" into societies where something is only a wrongdoing if it comes to the notice of others or is responsible for causing some misfortune.

The lack of shared meaning in the symbols used by two societies that are in communication leads, through decoding, to misinterpretations and creative reinterpretations. Miller<sup>1</sup> (1975, 477) attempted to take the argument further by postulating that the more ambiguous a symbol the more likely its acceptance since it would provide a greater potential for reinterpretation. However, Miller did not adequately stress that in a situation of intercultural communication all symbols are potentially highly ambiguous.

One final point on intercultural communication is that, whilst the above model is based on the situation where the missionary is in direct contact with the

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<sup>1</sup>He is supported in this by Riviere (1981, 13) and Wright (1989).

majority of the members of the receiving culture this is, in fact, often not the case. Indeed, the missionary message is frequently directly communicated to only a few members of the receiving society. They, in turn, transmit it to the rest. Indeed, much of the literature emphasizes the importance of an autochthonous charismatic figure, often referred to as a prophet, through whom the message receives its initial reinterpretation before being further communicated. To a certain extent the prophet is an interstitial figure, having been socialized to think in traditional terms but aware of a universe of meaning outside the experience of his compatriots. He translates the message, reformulating it to make sense within the terms of the traditional concepts and ideological framework.

#### 2.2.3.3. Barriers to Change<sup>1</sup>

Despite what has been said about the inevitability of change, traditional cosmologies and ritual practices are, in fact, extremely durable (Horton 1971; Wilson 1973, 147; Harwood 1978, 239; and Beidelman 1982, 138). Whilst there have been cases reported, such as by Black (1978, 307), Jackson (1984, 72) and von Graeve (1989, 130), in which the traditional religious systems are said to have completely disappeared, this is highly unlikely to have occurred and probably reflects the investigators' lack of integration in the societies concerned; von Graeve admitted that he did not speak the indigenous language. In my own case it took a number of years before the Enxet trusted me sufficiently to reveal the existence of their traditional religion.

Most commentators agree that new religious ideas and practices have to fit in with tradition (e.g. Burridge 1969, 92; Riviere 1981, 12; Obeyesekere 1981, 84; and Moore 1984, 35). Two basic premises were referred to by Horton and Peel (1976, 482):

1. That where people confront new and puzzling situations they tend to adopt them as far as possible in terms of their existing ideas and attitudes,

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<sup>1</sup>cf. section 2.2.2.1.

even though they may have to stretch and develop them considerably in the process.

2. That where people assimilate new ideas, they do so because these ideas make sense to them in terms of the notions they already hold.

I would suggest two reasons why this is so. The first is related to the closed predicament of traditional small-scale societies that was referred to earlier and was postulated by Evans-Pritchard when discussing the use of the oracle amongst the Azande. He pointed out that (1976, 159):

...they reason excellently in the idiom of their beliefs, but they cannot reason outside, or against, their beliefs because they have no other idiom in which to express their thoughts.

Consequently, it is normally through new experiences and communication with people from other cultures that members of traditional small-scale societies begin to broaden their metaculture and thus begin to question their own constitutive rules. But this is a slow process and it is normal for the explanatory theory of alternative cosmologies to initially be incorporated into the existing constitutive rules which, themselves, remain resistant to questioning (cf. Layton 1989, 6f). Wilson (1973, 81) illustrated this when pointing out the assimilation of science as a particularly powerful magical agency into the prevailing explanatory system in Africa.

The second reason was highlighted by Fernandez (1982, 281) and Whiteman (1983b, 184) who pointed out the pragmatic nature of people in traditional, small-scale societies. They do not accept new ideas and practices if they lack evidence of their efficacy or, indeed, possess evidence to the contrary. Concomitantly, if traditional explanatory theory continues to be perceived as at least partly valid it will continue as one element of the new synthesis.

### 2.3. Summary

The result of the communication process is the development of an innovative religious system which, to some degree, synthesizes the traditional system and the christian message. This is part of the more satisfying culture that people attempt to construct when in crisis. As explained, two major aspects are the development of a model that more successfully explains, predicts and controls the transformed universe and the elaboration of a new conception of man in an attempt to restore the dominated's integrity as humans.

However, it needs to be emphasized that each situation is distinct and a general theory of religious conversion, such as presented here, cannot explain everything. In any study of a movement of religious change it is, therefore, necessary to investigate the factors unique to the situation.

The next chapters will consider religious change amongst the southern Enxet within the framework of this model, and an attempt will be made to assess its value.

### 3. THE ENXET PRIOR TO COLONIZATION

As a preliminary step in the examination of religious change amongst the Enxet, this chapter will attempt a partial reconstruction of their pre-colonial culture (cf. Whitten 1976). Since the limitations of space preclude an exhaustive ethnography, the reconstruction will limit itself to two basic aims: to describe, briefly, what the Enxet changed from and, more importantly, to highlight aspects of their culture which are essential in understanding the subsequent conversion movements. Seven aspects of the pre-colonial culture will be dealt with.

After considering some demographic aspects of the pre-colonial Enxet, the structures of contact between them and their neighbouring societies, especially with the white man, will be examined. They will be characterized as in equilibrium.

Next, the function of religion in Enxet culture will be considered and it will be shown that the Enxet conceived of the empirical and superempirical elements of their universe as intimately related. Their traditional religion was concerned with assumptions about power and they understood success and misfortune in the empirical world to be dependent on the manipulation of mystical sources of power.

The criteria by which prestige was judged in Enxet society will also be analyzed. It will be shown to have been essentially dependent on performance in subsistence activities, the ability to control mystical power, and the fulfilment of ethical values, especially the requirement to be generous. Furthermore, the ethnocentric nature of the Enxet will be pointed out.

The analysis of one of the conversion movements, that of the adoption of Anglicanism, will show that its character was very influenced by the Enxet's identity as immediate return hunter-gatherers. Consequently, this will be examined in more detail.

The explanatory model predicted that societies that maintain control of their productive resources through being in a relationship of equilibrium with neighbouring societies, tend to manifest a satisfactory sense of well-being. Their cultures adequately fulfil the needs and desires of their participants. This will be shown to have been the case amongst the Enxet.

The last section will illustrate the point that all cultures are continually changing and it will show how the culture of the Enxet, even in a state of intersocietal equilibrium, was continually being transformed, mainly as a result of their contact with alien societies.

### 3.1. Demographic Considerations

Unfortunately, but understandably, there is no exact data on the population of the southern Enxet in around 1880. However, there have been a number of estimates made (e.g. Robins, SAMS mag., 1889; Every, SAMS rep., 1904; Grubb 1914, 22; and Hack 1981, 103) and combining these with my own calculations based on band size and distance between bands, a population of 8,000 could be ventured.

They occupied almost the same territory as today and lived in bands of between 20 and 100 people, although most consisted of between 30 and 60 (Grubb, SAMS mag. 1890, and 1895; Pride, SAMS mag. 1894; and Turner, SAMS rep. 1910-11). For most of the year these bands resided near the permanent or semi-permanent water supplies separated by distances of between 7 and 30 kilometres (Robins, SAMS mag., 1889; Grubb, SAMS mag., 1890; and Hunt, SAMS mag., 1910-11) but were semi-nomadic due to the variable availability of subsistence resources (Grubb 1911, 60), flooding (Hay, SAMS mag., 1894), death (Grubb 1911, 160ff) and feasting (Grubb 1911 177ff). Feasts could last up to three months and bring together between 150 and 300 people.

### 3.2. The Structure of the Contact with Neighbouring Societies

Prior to 1885, the structure of the contact between the Enxet and the white man was one of equilibrium. The Spaniards, and their successors the Paraguayans, had never managed to successfully invade the Chaco. This can be partially explained by the perceived lack of valuable natural resources in the Chaco, but a significant factor was that the Chaco Indian nations in closest contact with the Europeans had managed to neutralize the latter's military advantage. Whereas

elsewhere in America the possession of the horse had enabled the European invader to be almost invincible (Hemming 1978), in the Chaco the Mbya, Lengua-Juiadge, Enimaga-Cochaboth, and Toba peoples were able to adopt the horse and integrate it into their culture some time before entering into intensive conflict with the Spaniards (Susnik 1981). When eventually they did so, it was on equal terms and it became impossible for the Spaniards, with the available technology, to successfully invade the Chaco.

Eventually, in the late nineteenth century, a number of the equestrian peoples had been so decimated by disease that they migrated north or else were incorporated into the other Chaco peoples (Susnik 1981). This allowed other tribes to migrate east and, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Enxet had reached the River Paraguay (Susnik 1981, 97, and 12ff; and 1983, 156). Consequently, they came into direct contact with the white man. However, the structure of the contact between the Chaco peoples and the white man remained unchanged and the Enxet retained total control of their territory and its productive resources. In fact, the situation became even more favourable for the Indians when, in 1865, the position of Paraguay was severely weakened by the outbreak of the Triple Alliance War in which it fought the combined power of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. The war lasted five years and left Paraguay devastated, with its population reduced by nearly two-thirds (Williams 1979; and Herken Krauer and Herken 1983, 61). The Enxet took advantage of the situation to raid Paraguayan settlements, including the towns of San Pedro and San Salvador, leaving the latter desolate (Grubb 1904, 2f; Grubb 1911, 105f). Captives were taken and the last were not released until 1890 (Grubb 1911, 105f).

Their relationships with the other autochthonous peoples were also in a state of equilibrium and wars were mainly minor affairs concerned with the capture of booty, women and children (Grubb 1911, 103f).

### 3.3. Enxet Religion

Burridge (1969, 6) defined religion as, "concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power, particularly those seen as significantly



beneficial or dangerous". This was clearly the case amongst the Enxet who understood that events in the material world were dependent on, and intimately related to, the activities of superempirical personal beings. Their understanding of the world, as perceived by their sensory receptors, was predicated on their mythology and cosmology and, by employing certain ritual techniques, they believed they could achieve communication with the superempirical beings and manipulate them to bring success and resolve misfortune. This section will describe their religious system in more detail.

### 3.3.1. ENXET COSMOLOGY AND MYTHOLOGY

The Enxet understanding of the universe was underpinned by a rich mythology<sup>1</sup> which described its origins. Included in this was the belief that elements of the material culture were not the products of man's inventive genius but rather were created in mythical times by the culture hero *Ya'ye* (Arenas 1981, 72f; cf. von Bremen 1987, 15). Even cultural activities such as hunting and gathering were first taught and made possible by *Ya'ye* (cf. Arenas 1981, 44ff).

The cosmology of the Enxet can be understood as: "a theory of.....the nature of the universe or cosmos" (Seymour-Smith 1986, 55). Its basic structure was conceived of as a series of worlds existing at different levels (Grubb 1911, 140; von Becker 1944, in Pages Larraya 1982, 68; and Loewen 1969, 124). The number of levels postulated varied between two and five and included an underworld (Grubb 1904, 33ff; 1911, 124; and Loewen 1969, 124) and up to three superior levels.

These different worlds were inhabited by a vast array of "beings" which were classified into two main categories: those of the empirical world and "unseen beings", visible only to the *yohoxma*.

The literature does not mention which beings inhabited the uppermost level but, considering the similarities between the different Chaco peoples, Miller's (1975, 493) information that the Toba understood its inhabitants to be the sun and moon could indicate a similar conception amongst the Enxet. Certainly the Enxet recognised the sun and moon as beings (Grubb 1904, 35) and Aylwin (SAMS mag.,

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<sup>1</sup>See Grubb (1914, 59ff) and Arenas (1981) for examples of Enxet myths.

1904) and Grubb (1911, 50) described how, when someone wanted to marry, he or she would say to the moon: "Will marry presently, Moon," and then expect the wish to be fulfilled.

The unseen beings of the inferior levels, all of which were potentially harmful to humans, manifested a tremendous diversity and only a few examples will be described here<sup>1</sup>. All animals and plants possessed *ekyokxa* or "owners" whose function it was to protect them (Metraux, 1963, 352; and Arenas 1981). Other unseen beings could be classified broadly as *enxet* (human), *aksok*<sup>2</sup> (non-human) and *eghag'ak* (ghosts) although both of the first two classes could also be *ekyokxa*.

The class of unseen beings known as *enxet* were, in general appearance, like humans and lived in a similar way. They were referred to as *enxet* because they became very angry if called *aksok*. One example was the *chonaegmen*<sup>3</sup> who were a race of short people inhabiting the swamps. They lived in houses and cultivated gardens.

The *aksok* were unseen beings possessing something that clearly distinguished them from humans. The most frequently mentioned *aksok* were the *kelyekhama*, a type of evil spirit that inhabited the layer immediately above the earth. They often descended to earth and, due to their particularly antagonistic attitude to man<sup>4</sup>, were regarded by the *Enxet* as especially dangerous. They were extremely varied in appearance (cf. Grubb 1911, 118ff). There were many other types of *aksok* some of which had an animal form such as the *yagwaeke*<sup>5</sup> and the *yagyatayem*<sup>6</sup>.

The *eghag'ak*, or ghosts, were either human or animal. After death, a deceased's *eghag'ak*, suffering from shock, would hang around the immediate area

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<sup>1</sup>The written sources with most information on the unseen beings of the *Enxet* cosmology are: Grubb (1911), Loewen (1969) and Arenas (1981).

<sup>2</sup>This also means "thing".

<sup>3</sup>Meaning: "those of the water". Arenas (1981) mentioned a *chonasagye* but from his description he seems to have been talking about the same being.

<sup>4</sup>This went back to mythical times (Grubb 1911, 115; and Loewen 1969, 118).

<sup>5</sup>Meaning: "similar to a cow".

<sup>6</sup>Meaning: "similar to an alligator".

for perhaps a month (Grubb 1911, 122) and during this time would be particularly dangerous to humans, especially their close relatives (Grubb 1904, 42). It would then depart for the land of the dead where life went on very much as it had on earth (Grubb 1904, 46). The Indians expressed varying opinions on the precise location of this land (Grubb 1911, 51f).

The *eghag'ak* of certain animals, especially the rhea and the jaguar, were potential sources of considerable danger to successful hunters. Therefore, killing one of these animals necessitated special ritual precautions (Grubb 1911, 126; 1914, 127; and Loewen 1969, 125f).

### 3.3.2. THE MANIPULATION OF THE SUPEREMPIRICAL UNIVERSE

The maintenance of harmony in the material world was an over-riding objective of the Enxet and they believed that achieving this was dependent on their successful manipulation of the superempirical universe through the correct performance of ritual. In this, the role of the *yohoxma*, the central figure of Enxet ritual behaviour, was crucial. His basic duty was to protect, restore harmony to, and ensure success for the members of his local band<sup>1</sup> (Grubb 1911, 145 and 161).

Although the office of *yohoxma* was open to anyone, the majority were men (Grubb 1911, 145; cf. Arenas 1981, 100). Their initiation took two possible forms, the most common, *nexpogwayam*<sup>2</sup>, being first undertaken during a communal festival in which the band clearly expressed its support for the candidates (Loewen 1967, 20; and Arenas 1981, 92ff). It entailed the placing of a substance (plant, animal or inanimate<sup>3</sup>) in a still containing water which would then be left to rot. With the appearance of flies' eggs, which were said to be the *ekyokxa* of the substance, it would be drunk by the aspirant who would then fast for between two days and one month<sup>4</sup>. At the end of the period the aspirant would meet the

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Butt (1965/6, 178) and Miller (1979, 29ff).

<sup>2</sup>This could be understood as studying.

<sup>3</sup>i.e. inanimate according to a western meaning system.

<sup>4</sup>Each substance had a determined period of fasting.

*ekyokxa* who would teach him a song and become his auxiliary spirit. Auxiliary spirits were referred to as the *akkyasenaekha*, that is, the "servants" of the *yohoxma*. Whenever the latter required assistance he would perform the song exactly as he had been taught it and the auxiliary spirit would be obliged to obey him. There was no limit to the number of auxiliary spirits a *yohoxma* could possess since he could practise *nexpogwayam* with as many substances as he desired. Indeed, the power of a *yohoxma* was dependent on the number and strength of the auxiliary spirits that he possessed.

The second means was involuntary and was the result of a chance meeting with an unseen being who would become an auxiliary spirit. This was often associated with some form of personal crisis such as illness or insanity.

An essential aspect of the protection of band members was the ability to predict future events and this was associated with communication with the beings of the unseen world. Two methods were dreaming and visions, and both were understood as the exteriorization of the *wanmagko*, the soul of a human, from his body (Grubb 1911, 127ff and 146; Susnik 1977, 255ff). Whilst anyone could dream, the most relevant dreams belonged to the *yohoxma* and they were the only ones who could experience visions. By these means they became aware of events that were both spatially and temporally distant. For example, they could guide the hunting of the band by observing the location of game (Grubb 1911, 130; and Susnik 1977, 170). They could also be aware of the actions of malevolent unseen beings and enemy *yohoxma* and take precautions to ensure that no band members were harmed<sup>1</sup>.

Omens were another common method of gaining knowledge of distant events and can be classified into two types. There were those that required little interpretation and could be understood by anyone. Examples were the appearance of solar halos which were a sign of war (Grubb 1904, 35) and a hen suffering from vertigo which warned of the approaching death of its owner unless it was first killed (Grubb 1914, 124). Other omens were less obvious and required the interpretation of the *yohoxma*. For example, animals possessed by spirits, *mose*, would

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. preventative medicine.

occasionally approach encampments bringing bad news and the *yohoxma* were the only ones capable of interpreting their cries<sup>1</sup>.

The techniques used by the Enxet to control the universe and restore harmony and obtain success in the material world were various and will be described in the context of health and illness, the subsistence activities, and other public rituals such as the rites of passage.

### 3.3.2.1. Health and Illness

To explain the Enxet's understanding of the maintenance of good health and the curing of disease, it is first of all necessary to examine their aetiology of illness. Essential to this was the concept of *wanmagko*, the soul of a human (Grubb 1911, 127; and Susnik 1977, 255ff). An individual was believed to possess twelve *wanmagko*, each progressively bigger than the other, with the largest corresponding to the *eghag'ak*. Illness had two interrelated causes: soul-loss (that is the loss of at least one *wanmagko*) and the intrusion of a foreign object (animate, inanimate, or spiritual) into a person (Metraux 1963, 361f; cf. Rogers 1982, 69ff). The *wanmagko* were lost either through being captured by an antagonistic *yohoxma*, for which task he would use his auxiliary spirits, or by a free-lance unseen being. The seriousness of the illness was positively correlated with the number and size of the lost *wanmagko* and the loss of the largest *wanmagko* was especially serious since any delay in its return to the body would result in certain death. Lost *wanmagko* were often replaced in the body by some kind of foreign substance. This could be caused by an unseen being entering a human of its own volition (Grubb 1911, 127 and 148) or could be the result of a malevolent *yohoxma* inserting an object into the body: Grubb (1911) gave cats, beetles and needles as examples.

The symptoms of the illness were directly related to events in the unseen world. For example, dizziness could mean that a *wanmagko* was being held in a whirlwind whilst spitting up blood was a clear sign that something was eating the patient's insides.

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<sup>1</sup>This was known as *segwapagkeso*.

When a member of the local band fell ill it was the job of the *yohoxma* to restore him to health. This involved recovering any lost *wanmagko* and extracting extraneous objects. Frequently a number of *yohoxma* would combine to heal a patient as this increased their power; Hunt (SAMS mag., 1895) recorded seeing twelve *yohoxma* in one healing session.

Healing was effected by the *yohoxma* gathering round the patient and the following description of a typical healing ceremony is based on an account by Pride (SAMS mag., 1894)<sup>1</sup>. A group of *yohoxma* would squat in a circle around the patient. One would begin singing and after a while the others would join in with a low but perfectly harmonized accompaniment. The singing activated the *yohoxma*'s auxiliary spirits and enabled the *wanmagko* of the *yohoxma* to leave their bodies to go in search of the patient's *wanmagko*. At times the singing would intensify and this would often signify crisis points associated with struggles with malevolent *yohoxma* and unseen beings. On recapturing the patient's *wanmagko* they would return it to the body but first of all any unseen beings or objects in the patient would have to be expelled. This was done by entering the patient to kill the object and then, on returning to the empirical world, they would extract it by sucking. Every so often the singing would cease and talking and laughter would commence. Healing sessions could go on all night and, if not immediately successful, continue for as many days as necessary.

### 3.3.2.2. Economic Success<sup>2</sup>

Success for the Enxet in their subsistence activities was achieved by both technical and mystical means<sup>3</sup>. It was important to be skilled in the correct techniques but it was just as necessary, indeed more so, to be able to manipulate the personal forces of the superempirical universe especially those directly related to the subsistence resources.

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<sup>1</sup>A good account of the healing of a horse was given by Craig (1935, 210ff).

<sup>2</sup>cf. section 1.4..

<sup>3</sup>cf. Jarvie (1970) and Jarvie and Agassi (1970).

The Enxet were hunter-gatherers, and information on the techniques used and animals and plants exploited is found in Grubb (1911, 82ff) and Arenas (1981). The abundance of water meant that fishing was also of great importance (see Grubb 1911, 81f; and Arenas 1981 54ff) whilst gardening and stock-rearing were activities of somewhat less significance (Arenas 1981, 51; and Renshaw 1986, 105ff and 130f). Gardens were small and because of the spatial variability of rainfall and the potentially devastating plagues of insects they were scattered over wide area to spread risk (Hawtrey 1901, 287; Grubb 1911, 77f; Metraux 1963, 250). Stock-rearing was mainly of sheep, goats, poultry, horses and cattle and reports on the number of animals per band ranged from one observer who described a village with seventeen cattle, five horses and forty sheep and goats as prosperous to others who mentioned up to five hundred goats and sheep, and one hundred horses and mares (cf. Freund, SAMS mag., 1893; Pride, SAMS rep., 1901; Aylwin, SAMS rep., 1902; and Susnik 1981, 151).

However, success in these activities was dependent on the relationship of man with the mystical forces of the universe. The *yohoxma* was a key figure in this and the Enxet believed that their economic success was directly related to his ability in influencing the *ekyokxa* of the animals and plants. Since the *ekyokxa* protected their animals, various mystical techniques were necessary to ensure success. The dreams and visions of the *yohoxma*, which enabled them to know where the game was located, have already been mentioned. The *yohoxma* could also do *nexpogwayam* with certain animals and plants to become the masters of their *ekyokxa*. They could then be controlled with the correct song, thereby ensuring success for those foraging.

There were many other minor rituals with which to manipulate the superempirical powers. Hunters could carry wax images of the animals desired, they could rub certain plants associated with specific animals on themselves or on their weapons, and they could prick themselves with animal bones (Grubb 1911, 138; and Pages Larraya 1982, 69). These were believed to influence the *ekyokxa* of the animals, and if performed correctly would result in a successful hunt. Menstruating women that ate meat were believed to be a cause of a hunter not killing an animal and this was resolved by rubbing the liquid of certain boiled plants

on the weapons (Arenas 1981, 50). Blighted gardens could be restored by the *yohoxma* through the use of charms (Grubb 1911, 148; and Metraux 1963, 251).

### 3.3.2.3. Public Rituals

The Enxet practised a number of public rituals, the most important of which were associated with the different stages of the human lifecycle (see: Grubb 1911, chs. 16 and 18; Loewen 1967; and Arenas 1981, 92ff). These rituals had many functions (see Loewen 1967) but one of the most important was to provide protection against the beings of the unseen world. This can be illustrated by examining the male and female initiation ceremonies, *kyaye* and *yanmana*. In both these ceremonies those being initiated were made to pass through physical trials which caused them to lose consciousness<sup>1</sup>. In *kyaye* the boy was given the poisonous juice of cassava, symbolizing the dangers of the cosmos, to drink (Loewen 1967, 18), and in *yanmana* the girl was dragged along the ground by young men dressed up as *sowalak*, a type of malevolent unseen being (Susnik 1977, 256f). On being resuscitated by the *yohoxma* they were understood to have developed a resistance to the dangerous powers of the unseen world.

The protective role was also clearly seen after someone's death. If the deceased was diagnosed as having been the victim of a *yohoxma* then revenge magic, *metaemog*<sup>2</sup>, was practised (Grubb 1904, 42ff and 128; 1911, 160ff; Susnik 1977, 222). This involved inserting a red hot stone and other objects into an incision made in the cadaver. These objects would seek out guilty *yohoxma* to strike him dead and thereby ensure that he would not kill anybody else. If performed correctly the *metaemog* could not fail to kill. Additionally, the corpse could be mutilated, and this would cause the *yohoxma* to die of the same wounds.

After burial, precautions would be taken to protect the band from the deceased's *eghag'ak*. The houses would be burnt and the whole community would

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<sup>1</sup>*Netsapma*, the word for "to faint" also means "to die".

<sup>2</sup>Meaning: "stone".



move to another location, normally no more than an hour away. Additionally the close relatives would have their faces painted black and their hair cropped, making them unrecognisable to the *eghag'ak*. They would spend a month living apart from the band, this period terminating with the *yoksak* ceremony which ensured that the *eghag'ak* would leave the area (Grubb 1911, 160ff; and Loewen 1967, 21).

In summary, the religious system of the Enxet dealt with relations of power and enabled the people, mainly through the relationship of the *yohoxma* with the beings of the unseen universe, to understand, explain, predict and control the events of the empirical world.

### 3.4. The Enxet as Immediate Return Hunter-gatherers

The previous section dealt briefly with the economy of the Enxet and the aim here is to look at their subsistence activities in a theoretical context, specifically that of immediate return hunter-gathering. This will help explain, in chapter six, the adoption of Anglicanism by a number of Enxet. Woodburn (1982) classified hunter-gatherer economies into two basic types: immediate return and delayed return. The Enxet, despite some anomalies, clearly belonged to the former category. Their characteristics were recognised very early on by the missionaries who pointed out that the Enxet (Grubb 1911, 189):

produces no more than is absolutely necessary for present needs....The clever hunter can bring in abundance of game, but he sees no need in unduly fatiguing himself, and is content with supplying his own immediate needs and the wants of those whom he desires to help.

Renshaw, (1986 and 1988) also came to the same judgement, concluding that an immediate return economy was characteristic of virtually all the autochthonous Chaco societies. The evidence for this will be briefly considered by comparing the Enxet's economy with the main features of hunter-gatherer economies as identified by Woodburn.

As a general hypothesis Woodburn proposed that: "People obtain a direct and immediate return from their labour." Consequently:

"They go out hunting or gathering and eat the food obtained the same day or casually over the days that follow. Food is neither elaborately processed nor stored."

This describes the Enxet economy very well. They perceived the natural environment as bountiful and potentially inexhaustible (cf. Renshaw 1988, 344) and any food was consumed almost immediately. Long-term storage was almost non-existent (cf. Grubb 1911, 189; and Arenas 1981, 60). Even the two economic activities most associated with delayed return economies, gardening and stock rearing, were both regarded by the Enxet in terms of immediate return. Little effort was expended in their production, and no attention was given to accumulation or profit-making. Rather, they were both treated as supplementary activities which provided food in times of shortage or for feasts (Grubb 1911, 66; Loewen 1967, 26; Susnik 1977, 176; cf. Renshaw 1986, 95).

Sharing of foodstuffs, another characteristic of immediate return economies (Woodburn 1982, 440ff), was so important in Enxet society that there was even a word, *nenmagkaxo*, which referred to generalized reciprocity. It was an intentional outcome of the hunting strategy and Grubb and Hunt (SAMS mag., 1895) described how male band members divided themselves into two groups which alternated each day between hunting and sleeping. In fact, anyone in the settlement, even visitors, could share the available food (Grubb 1911, 189). Furthermore, sharing was a positively valued ethic in that it was practised even when there was no need (cf. Renshaw 1988, 341). For example, Hunt (SAMS mag., 1895) described how, even when all the families in a band had *lolak*<sup>1</sup>, the head of each family would, after cooking, distribute a symbolic portion to all the other families.

In immediate return foraging economies the successful hunter is alienated from his kill (Woodburn 1982, 440ff). This occurred amongst the Enxet since it was the principal woman in each community that had the responsibility for meat distribution (cf. Bernau, SAMS mag., 1899; and Renshaw 1988, 343).

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<sup>1</sup>Mud fish.

Another characteristic is that sanctions exist on the accumulation of personal property beyond an acceptable level (Woodburn 1982, 442). This was so amongst the Enxet. They possessed only as much as they could carry and anyone with too many goods would be pestered to give them away (cf. Grubb 1911, 191) or would do so voluntarily for fear of being attacked by a jealous *yohoxma*.

Another feature of immediate return economies is that personal property can be circulated in ways that do not bind participants together in potentially unequal relationships. This seems to have been the case amongst the Enxet in that, although personal property was often lent or exchanged (Grubb 1911, 71; Grubb 1914, 74; Loewen 1967, 24ff) there is no mention of permanent exchange networks. Renshaw (1986) found none amongst any of the Chaco peoples.

The members of immediate return economies also "use relatively simple, portable, utilitarian, easily acquired, replaceable tools and weapons made with real skill but not involving a great deal of labour" (Woodburn 1982, 432). This would seem to describe most of the tools and weapons used by the Enxet (Arenas 1981) and, although they used some techniques more characteristic of delayed return economies, such as pit-traps for jaguars (Grubb 1911, 86), these were relatively rare and there is no indication that the prey was anything but immediately consumed.

Therefore, despite certain apparent anomalies, there would seem to be no doubt that the economy of the pre-colonial Enxet should be characterized as immediate return hunter-gathering.

### 3.5. The Enxet Perception of Well-being

The Enxet understood well-being by reference to the concept *nenmelae*. Literally, this meant "to be fat" but at a deeper level Susnik (1977, 214) identified it as synonymous with "good living"<sup>1</sup> understood as, "to have plenty of food, be of good health and in a state of tranquillity"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>"Buen vivir".

<sup>2</sup>"Hallarse bien de comida, de salud y con tranquilidad".

Did the Enxet perceive that they were satisfying their sense of *nenmelae* in the pre-colonial period? They certainly seemed to have confidence in the efficacy of their own culture which, they perceived, permitted them to understand, explain, predict and control events in the material world. This was the result of the prevailing conditions in the Chaco. For example, in the field of health there were few infectious diseases capable of harming the Enxet and one of the first doctors to work amongst the Enxet asserted that, apart from the epidemics, most illness was the result of over-eating (Lindsay, SAMS rep., 1901). The *yohoxma* were very successful in dealing with these ailments, as well as snake and insect bites, and even the early missionaries recognized that they had some effective therapeutic techniques (Grubb 1911, 159; cf. Rogers 1982, 132ff). The failures of the *yohoxma* were easily explained away by the use of secondary elaborations, the most common being to admit that the malevolent power or *yohoxma* was too strong.

In terms of subsistence the Chaco possessed an abundance of fauna and flora which made hunting, gathering and fishing relatively simple activities<sup>1</sup> (cf. Grubb, SAMS mag., 1890; Pride, SAMS mag., 1894; Crawford, SAMS rep., 1901; and Arenas 1981, 44). This can be further illustrated by reference to Sahlins' (1972) concept of the "original affluent society".

The aspect of Sahlins' thesis that is of interest is his assertion that foragers have a low ratio of work time to leisure time. In the Chaco, the missionaries frequently charged that the Enxet, especially the men, were lazy (cf. Grubb 1911, 189). They often slept during the day (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1895), and any food surplus was an excuse for feasting and dancing which could last for weeks (Hawtrey 1901, 297). Additionally, many hours were spent playing hockey (Morrey-Jones, SAMS rep., 1912/13) or gambling<sup>2</sup> (Hawtrey 1901, 297). Pride (SAMS mag., 1894) asserted that the men left to hunt as soon as the air was warm and returned just after noon<sup>3</sup> whilst women gathered for only one or two hours. Therefore, taking all the evidence into account, it can be concluded that over a whole year the average time spent collecting food on a daily basis was probably comparable with

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<sup>1</sup>cf. section 1.4..

<sup>2</sup>The main gambling game was *hastawa*.

<sup>3</sup>It needs to be remembered that men hunted only on alternate days.

the hours suggested by Sahlins. This led the Enxet to not question the efficacy of the *yohoxma* and the other ritual techniques employed in the subsistence activities.

Therefore, by no stretch of the imagination could the pre-colonial Enxet be described as in economic crisis since they easily satisfied their subsistence needs with relatively little effort. This is emphasized by Bird-David's (1992, 30) comment that foragers do not consider hunting, gathering and fishing as work but rather as social events. This was the case amongst the Enxet since *nentamhaekha*, the word translated as work, never described foraging activities<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, Susnik (1977, 177) observed that it did not even refer to gardening.

Their perception of their well-being was also seen in their sense of self-worth and concept of prestige, and will be dealt with in the next section.

### 3.6. Prestige

Prestige amongst the Enxet was bi-dimensional in character and concerned their self-worth *vis a vis* non-Enxet and the means by which they judged status and prestige in their own society.

#### 3.6.1. SELF-WORTH *VIS A VIS* NON-ENXET

The Enxet were markedly ethnocentric and convinced of their own superiority. This was manifested most clearly in their use of *enxet*, meaning "man", to refer uniquely to themselves. All other peoples, even those in the same linguistic family, were regarded as inferior, and as somehow not fully human. They were fiercely proud of their independence (Grubb 1911, 105) and convinced that their customs were superior to other peoples' (cf. Hawtrey 1901, 286; and Grubb 1911, 196). This was clearly seen in their language when encountering previously unknown objects. They would not adopt foreign words but would create new words

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<sup>1</sup>Salaried work is considered *nentamhaekha*. Its root is *nentamhe* which was used to describe the making of certain objects such as bows, arrows and canoes (Susnik, 1977, 45). The suffix *ækha* refers to continuity of action.

predicated on metaphors. For example, the horse was named *yatnaxeg*, that is: "similar to a tapir" whilst rice was called *hoyakkakkolpok*, that is: "similar to the eggs of an ant".

### 3.6.2. JUDGING PRESTIGE WITHIN ENXET SOCIETY

Prestige was gained in Enxet society through a combination of five interrelated factors: skill in hunting, success in war, acting in accordance with Enxet ethical values, age, and mystical power. They were epitomized in the figure of the *wese* and will be examined in turn.

#### 3.6.2.1. Hunting

As mentioned in section 2.2.2.2., one means by which prestige in small-scale subsistence societies is gained is through success in the subsistence activities. Amongst the southern Enxet the most prestigious activity was hunting and able hunters gained a great deal of respect. This was especially so in the case of those that killed the more dangerous animals, such as the jaguar (Loewen 1966c, 258f), and those that guided the hunting parties (Susnik 1977, 250).

#### 3.6.2.2. Success in War

The most successful warriors were highly regarded and this was clearly seen in a festival that was held on the return of the war-party with the intention of honouring those that had killed (Loewen 1967, 23; and Arenas 1981, 92f). During the festival the pretty women would undress for the hero and the least embarrassed would have sex with him (Loewen 1967, 23). Other men were eager to have their wives chosen since they hoped that some of the hero's power would be transferred to them.

### 3.6.2.3. Fulfilling Ethical Values

The fundamental ethical value of the Enxet was egalitarianism and this was directly derived from their identity as immediate return hunter-gatherers. It is defined as the elimination of all distinctions of wealth and power (Woodburn 1982, 434)<sup>1</sup>. How did this function amongst the Enxet?

Section 3.4. has already shown how the hunter was disengaged from his kill and that the obligation to share and, by implication, generosity, were important ethical values. This equality was reinforced in a number of ways: a dead person's goods were destroyed rather than inherited (Grubb 1911, 162 and 188); due to their peripatetic existence their personal possessions were limited to what they could carry; no individual or band owned or had exclusive rights to land (Grubb 1911, 188; cf. Renshaw 1986, 193ff and Layton 1986, 19); and finally competition was strongly discouraged (Hawtrey 1901, 292; Grubb 1911, 189 and 202; and Every 1929, 147).

The egalitarian values were further expressed in the holding of personal autonomy as a highly prized ethic (Loewen 1969; cf. Renshaw 1986, 272). Nobody was able to impose themselves on others and coercive power was strongly frowned upon and, indeed, practically unknown. So fervent was the respect for the individual that great emphasis was put on not hurting other people's feelings and, consequently, anger was regarded as almost as great a wrongdoing as murder. Instead, the Enxet aspired to exhibiting an exterior calmness.

Fulfilling all these ethical values were fundamental for those who desired respect and prestige.

### 3.6.2.4. Age

Grubb (1904, 75) and Susnik (1977, 244f) described how older people were respected. Even though they were not so active economically they could still give

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<sup>1</sup>Woodburn also defined it as the elimination of status but this was clearly not the case amongst the Enxet. However, as will be shown, status was divorced from wealth and power.

advice on the subsistence activities. They were the most expert story-tellers, another highly valued skill and, indeed, their stories continually reminded the younger men of their past prowess.

#### 3.6.2.5. Mystical Power

Since success in hunting and war was believed to be, ultimately, the result of successfully manipulating the superempirical forces of the universe, it is clear that prestige was also derived from mystical power. Indeed, the ceremony in which the *yohoxma* were first initiated was reserved for those who had distinguished themselves in hunting and war (Loewen 1967, 20). Therefore, being a *yohoxma*, as Wright (1990, 225) observed for the Toba shamans, conferred prestige<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, *yohoxma* were ranked so that those with the greatest number of auxiliary spirits, and consequently the most success, had the highest status. In practical terms this was largely related to their ability to perform "miracles". For example, in the early years of the Anglican mission the most highly regarded *yohoxma* was able to perform quite astonishing feats and once removed three cats from the stomach of a patient (Grubb 1911, 279).

#### 3.6.2.6. The *Wese*

The *wese* epitomized prestige amongst the Enxet. There was one in each band and early observers understood him to be "the chief". However, this was a misleading translation and it is necessary to examine, in more detail, his role and position.

The fundamental role of the *wese* was to protect and look after the interests of the local band (Grubb 1911, 145 and 161). Therefore, as a result of the flexibility of residence (cf. Grubb 1904, 62; Renshaw 1986, 224; and Layton 1986) people attached themselves to the bands of those *wese* who manifested superior

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<sup>1</sup>In contrast, Renshaw (1986, 286) mistakenly viewed the powerful shamans of the Chaco as marginal members of their communities.



ability and who could, therefore, more ably guide and provide for their fellows (Hawtrey 1901, 292; Grubb 1913, 208; Metraux 1963, 313). Consequently, they were renowned hunters and warriors and, necessarily, *yohoxma*<sup>1</sup>. They tended to be older men and were able speakers (Susnik 1977, 246). The person of highest prestige was the "war-chief".

However, the *wese* were obliged to function within, and fulfil, the egalitarian ethic of the Enxet. They were therefore required to be generous and give presents to their band members. As a result, they often seemed to be the poorest of the Indians (Grubb 1904, 65). Furthermore, their leadership had to be divorced from all forms of coercion (cf. Renshaw 1986, 288) and would be better described as a leadership of ideas, giving form to the aspirations of the community (p. 272). Therefore, to make an important decision, a *wese* would discover, by listening to the conversation of his companions, the wishes of the majority and then carry the idea through as if it were entirely his own (Hawtrey 1901, 292). To ensure that a *wese* did not become too powerful or too stingy, the band was able to exercise control over him, most effectively by abandoning him to join another band.

### 3.7. Change Among the Enxet Prior to Colonization

In chapter two it was pointed out that change is an essential part of culture. Therefore, it should not be thought that pre-colonial Enxet culture was in a "steady-state". It too was continually being transformed and, despite a balanced structure of contact with other societies, this change was caused by intersocietal contact.

The pre-colonial Enxet maintained relations with a large number of other peoples. On the tribal frontiers they often lived in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual communities and intertribal trading was common, not only within the Chaco

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<sup>1</sup>Renshaw (1986, 288) asserted that political leaders were distinct from the religious leaders. Metraux (1963, 303) was of the opposite opinion and it most certainly was not so amongst the Enxet. The *wese* identified in the early missionary literature were also *yohoxma*.

(Metraux 1963, 301) but even with the Guarani tribes of eastern Paraguay<sup>1</sup>. There was even communication with the Spaniards from the end of the eighteenth century when a small number of Enxet bands settled for a short while in the Catholic mission of Melodia, opposite Asuncion (Susnik 1981, 142ff; and 1983, 158). Trade with Paraguayans in the area of Concepcion was underway by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Susnik 1981, 146).

These contacts did cause change in Enxet culture. Sweet potato cultivation was adopted from the Guentuse and Chane-Arawak peoples (Susnik 1977, 177), the horse was obtained from the Enimaga-Cochaboth people (Susnik 1977, 180), dogs were adopted by the end of the eighteenth century, and sheep herding had begun by the end of the seventeenth century (Metraux 1963, 265). By the early nineteenth century woollen blankets had replaced skins as the normal clothing for men (Susnik 1977, 183). Metal and a few other elements of material culture were adopted from the Europeans.

However, these innovations did not fundamentally change the structure of Enxet culture. It has already been pointed out that the introduction of gardening and domestic animals did not significantly transform the immediate return economy. The same could be observed in the Enxet cosmology and ritual practice where new objects were merely incorporated into the existing meaning system. This was most difficult in the case of horses and dogs which did not fit neatly into existing categories. Their intimate relationship to man placed them in an anomalous position<sup>2</sup> and, as a result, they came to be regarded as different to other animals being inconsumable and the only possessors of *wanmagko* apart from man. They were never killed, except on the death of their owner, and their *eghag'ak* were regarded as extremely dangerous. They were also rapidly incorporated into myth (Grubb 1911, 127; and Susnik 1977, 179ff). However, all non-autochthonous artefacts were potential candidates for incorporation into the religious system. For example, the *yohoxma* added mirrors to their earrings to enable them to observe unseen beings and other people's *wanmagko* (Grubb 1911, 72).

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<sup>1</sup>It would seem that the stones for axes were provided by the Guaranis whilst Anglican missionaries found pots of Guarani origin in Enxet territory (Metraux 1963, 301).

<sup>2</sup>cf. Douglas (1966)

Evidently, change was at the level of diffusion. There was no rejection of their religious traditions and so the conclusion can be drawn that Enxet culture was functioning adequately in satisfying the people's sense of well-being<sup>1</sup>. This was directly related to the structure of contact between the Enxet and their neighbours in that they continued to maintain their independence and control over their productive resources.

### 3.8. Summary

This chapter has, therefore, provided a background to the conversion movements that occurred amongst the Enxet in the twentieth century. This has included a brief ethnographic outline of the pre-colonial Enxet and a description of aspects of their culture which will be of use in understanding the subsequent transformation in their religious system. Whilst change has been a normal and constant process within Enxet culture, it is now time to examine, within the context of the theoretical model of chapter two, the effect on the Enxet of European expansion and the resultant invasion and colonization of their territory.

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<sup>1</sup>cf. section 3.5.

## 4. THE COLONIZATION OF ENXET TERRITORY

In the theoretical model of chapter two it was suggested that the "structure of the intersocietal contact", as observed in the degree of domination of one society over another, was important in explaining the creation, or otherwise, of fertile conditions for religious change. Furthermore, the expansion of Europe was identified as one of the major causes of worldwide cultural change in the last five hundred years. This chapter, therefore, as a prelude to discussing the stimuli for religious change amongst the Enxet, will examine the metamorphosis that has taken place in their relationship with the white man in the last one hundred years.

As chapter two showed, prior to 1885 the structure of the contact between the Enxet and the white man was one of equilibrium. However, from the end of the nineteenth century this was replaced by a colonial situation characterized, following Beidleman (1982, 4) by:

...the interaction between disproportionate social groups which possess in different degrees the power to dominate.

The Enxet were about to enter into a situation in which they would play the role of "dominated" to the European "dominator", and in which, most crucially, they would lose control over the productive resources of their own territory<sup>1</sup>.

### 4.1 Paraguayan Appropriation and Sale of the Chaco

The antecedents of the territorial dispossession of the Enxet stretch back to 1825 when the Paraguayan government issued a decree requiring all citizens to present their land titles (Miranda 1982, 292). Land without a title was declared

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<sup>1</sup>Alternative models have been suggested with which to explain the relationship between the white invader and the American Indian. The two most prominent are that of "Frontier Society" (Hennessy 1978) and "Internal Colonialism" (Cardoso de Oliveira 1966, in von Graeve 1989). However, both terms describe, in essence, a colonial situation and I can see no advantage in using them.

fiscal property and the government used the decree to take legal possession of the Chaco (Kleinpennig 1984).

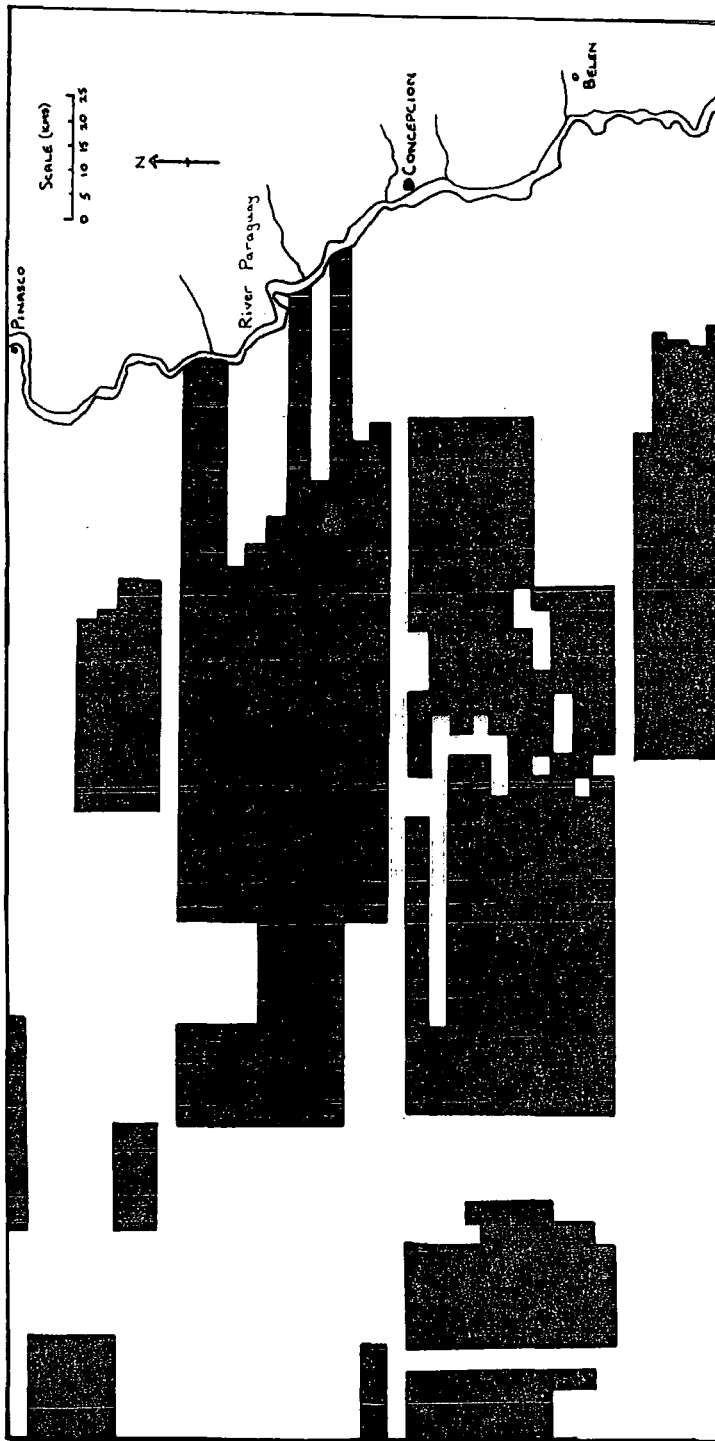
Of course, the government's appropriation of the land made no immediate difference to the situation on the ground since the Chaco remained under the control of the Indians. However, the next important step in the colonization of the Chaco occurred in 1885 when the Paraguayan government decided to sell off a large area of fiscal land (Pastore 1972, 223). Its intention was to repay part of its foreign debt and within two years sixty people acquired 115,591 km<sup>2</sup> in the Chaco (Pastore 1972, 234). Many of the purchasers were British and Map 4.1. shows how they bought up most of the central area of the southern Enxet's land. This was not surprising since at the end of the nineteenth century the British completely dominated the whole Paraguayan economy (Laino 1976, 105).

However, even at this time there was still no white settlement in the Paraguayan Chaco inland from the River Paraguay (Pride, SAMS mag., 1932). Indeed, to sell the land the government had to restrict itself to surveying the river bank and then drawing lines, a league apart, on a map of the Chaco.

## 4.2. The Colonization of the Chaco

The colonization of the Chaco was characterized by the fact that it was a venture of foreign private enterprise. Paraguay was still recovering from the effects of the Triple Alliance War and was not in a position to lead the conquest of its western territories. Consequently, the new landowners, tempted by the twin economic attractions of quebracho extraction and cattle ranching, took on the responsibility. Quebracho is a hardwood used in tannin production and in the early years of colonization it enjoyed primacy over ranching. It was a purely extractive industry and no thought was given to conservation or replanting. Processing was carried out in factories built on the bank of the River Paraguay. Cattle ranching followed closely behind although little effort was put into maximizing output. It

Map 4.1. Land Purchased by British Interests in Southern Enxet Territory



was extensively managed with minimal capital investment: cattle "harvesting" would have been a more appropriate term<sup>1</sup>.

As soon as they had bought the land, some of the new owners began investigating the quality of their purchases by sending armed exploration parties into the Chaco (Robins, SAMS mag., 1889). Some surveying of the land was carried out but inland from the River Paraguay this could only be done with armed protection (Freund, SAMS mag., 1894). Indeed prior to 1890 any new settlement activity was minimal and restricted to the area of the River Paraguay. The conditions for increased and permanent settlement in the territory of the southern Enxet were only made possible with the arrival of the South American Missionary Society (SAMS) in 1888.

#### 4.2.1. THE ROLE OF THE MISSIONARIES IN COLONIZING THE CHACO

SAMS were fully committed to the colonization of the Chaco and on commencing the Mission (Grubb, 1911, 293f):

...the South American Missionary Society gave instructions to their men ..... to attempt no less a task than that of opening up this unknown land.

The missionaries saw their role as influencing the Indians so that (Stirling, SAMS mag., 1889):

...by fair dealing and preparation of hearts and minds they may be led to welcome future settlers, and to share with them the advantages of civilization in return for land surrendered to its service.

However, the interests of the missionaries were not restricted to securing the penetration of the white man into the Chaco. They also aimed to prepare the Indians to serve as the workforce in the new capitalist economy. As a minimum

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<sup>1</sup>Even today fields of over 10,000 hectares are not unusual. If desired, a much more intensive management system is perfectly feasible in the in the Chaco.

step, this demanded that they be saved from extermination. As they pointed out, those (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1908/9):

...who have an interest in Chaco lands can surely not fail to see the benefit of a numerous, trained and willing population of workers, with whom to develop the lands in which they have placed their capital. The question of suitable labour will always be an important one in this world (and)...we are practical enough to not neglect such training as will fit these people to take their proper place in the world<sup>1</sup>.

It was not coincidental that it was a British missionary society which commenced its work in an area where the major business interests were also British. The initiative for the Mission came from Dr. Stewart, the British Consul in Asuncion (Hunt 1933, 44) and agent of the Council of Foreign Bondholders (Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1888), a group of mainly British businessmen who owned 243,750 hectares of Enxet territory (Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1889). This close association between Mission and landowners was a key aspect of Chaco colonization for many years and was most obvious in the position of Sir Herbert Gibson on the "Committee" of SAMS, the Mission's chief decision-making body. His company, Gibson Brothers, was one of the largest landowners in the southern Enxet territory, possessing 270,654 hectares in 1910 (Laino 1976, 155) and, additionally, his company administered the landholdings of the Paraguayan Land and Cattle Company, with 112,500 hectares in 1914<sup>2</sup> (Laino 1976, 135), and those of the Cooper ranch, with 176,250 hectares in 1910 (Gibson 1948, 129; and Laino 1976, 161).

The assistance given by the Mission to the process of colonization was both varied in character and significant in import. Fundamental was their role in the pacification of the Indians. By developing friendly relations with the Indians and gaining their trust, the missionaries were able to serve as a bridge between them and the white man. From the beginning of their work the Indians recognised the

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<sup>1</sup>This was a common opinion at the time and not restricted to missionaries (cf. Taussig 1987, 55).

<sup>2</sup>The other source is an agreement of the 18th of February, 1916 between the Paraguayan Land and Cattle Company and SAMS.



missionaries as different to other whites and as early as 1889 they were visited, in their mission station of Riacho Fernandez on the River Paraguay, by the Enxet war-chief Yaho Yespok who invited them to some day return the visit (Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1889). When potential conflicts arose the missionaries were quick to defuse any trouble: one example from 1891 concerned an Enxet band that stole some goods from the store of the Paraguayan Cattle Company at Riacho Fernandez. Grubb sought out the guilty party and persuaded them to repay the value of the goods in rhea feathers and skins (Grubb 1911, 36ff). When a massacre occurred in Caraya Vuelta in 1910, Grubb quickly returned from Argentina to deal with it (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1910/11). Indeed, a wide range of incidents contained the potential for conflict and the missionaries were frequently instrumental in calming and resolving them.

The influence the missionaries had on the Indians was recognized by the first settlers who were determined, for reasons of safety, to live in the vicinity of Anglican mission stations (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1919). Furthermore, the Paraguayan government, in 1892, presented Grubb, the leader of the Mission, with the title of "Comisario General del Chaco y Pacificador de los Indios". This gave him full power to appoint commissaries and sub-commissaries and the military and political authorities were compelled to render him assistance whenever required<sup>1</sup>. He held the post for twenty years (SAMS mag., 1913).

However, the pacification of the Enxet was not just the result of Anglican missionary activity. The Indians became aware that the military balance had shifted significantly, mainly as the result of the introduction of the repeating rifle (cf. Hennessy 1978, 65). This was made abundantly clear to them by a number of incidents. There is no doubt that they knew about the genocidal wars of extermination being waged by the Argentinian government against the Toba Indians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Cordeu and Siffredi 1971; and Miller 1979). However, they also directly experienced the power of the white man through two massacres perpetrated by Paraguayan soldiers in Caraya Vuelta in 1888 and 1910 (Susnik 1983, 161; and Grubb, SAMS rep., 1910/11). With typical pragmatism the Enxet chose to avoid a large-scale military confrontation and the success of pacification can be seen in the fact that, apart from two isolated incidents

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<sup>1</sup>From an article in *La Patria* newspaper, reprinted in SAMS mag., 1901.

in 1920 and 1929 (SAMS mag., 1920 and 1929) and another mentioned by Craig (1935, 174f), there is no other record of the southern Enxet killing Whites subsequent to 1890.

Another key role played by the missionaries was the development of a network of cart-roads in the Chaco by means of which they serviced their mission stations. They took their first cart into the Chaco in 1892 (Grubb 1911, 47) and by 1895 a permanent central mission station had been established at Waekxategmagyalwa<sup>1</sup>, 110 kilometres to the west of Concepcion (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1896). In 1899 another mission station was opened on the Enxet/Nivakle frontier at Elyowe Am'ak, a further 130 kilometres west (Hunt 1933, 204). Initially, the missionaries entered the Chaco along a road they had constructed from Caraya Vuelta but, in 1897, a new one was opened from Concepcion to Waekxategmagyalwa. This permitted the penetration into the Chaco of many more white men and served as the main artery along which the colonization of the Chaco progressed (Hunt 1933, 165). By 1910 the Mission had made a total of 700 kilometres of cart-tracks (Grubb 1911, 294).

However, one of the most significant acts of the Mission was the establishment, in 1901, of the Paraguayan Chaco Indian Association (P.C.I.A.) on land lent by Gibson Brothers at Maroma, fifty kilometres inland from Concepcion (Hunt 1933). Although it was set up by the missionaries and was initially managed by them, it was, in fact, quite independent of SAMS. Its original financial backing came from SAMS' supporters in Britain who gave a total of £1,300 and, in return, became shareholders in the company. It functioned essentially as a cattle-ranch which was dedicated to employing and training Indian labour. It was so successful that in 1905 it was replaced by a new company "The Chaco Indian Association Ltd" (C.I.A.), which was registered in London with a capital of £10,000 (Grubb 1914, 214). By 1907 it had 3,500 head of cattle, but a non-missionary manager had been appointed and Paraguayans were being employed as well as Indians. Eventually, in 1908, Gibson Brothers took the C.I.A. completely out of the missionaries' control and turned it into a purely business concern with a capital of £70,000 (Grubb 1914, 216f). Although the Mission and Gibson Brothers remained on excellent terms, it is clear that the main beneficiaries of the enterprise were the latter who, with little

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<sup>1</sup>In 1907 this was transferred to Makthlawaiya, five kilometres to the south-east.

effort, had gained a highly profitable business concern. However, the major significance of the venture was that it was the first cattle ranch to be established in the interior of the Chaco and served as an example to the other landowners of the economic possibilities.

The Mission assisted the landowners in many other ways. Friendly landowners' interests were protected as shown by Henriksen's (SAMS mag., 1889) remark that at Riacho Fernandez the missionaries acted as policemen for the Paraguayan Land Company. This type of assistance was, at least once, ensured legally as evidenced by the agreement signed in 1916 between the Paraguayan Land and Cattle Company and SAMS in which it was specified that:

The Society (i.e. SAMS) agrees to undertake through its Mission Settlements to represent the Company's interests in its outlying lands in respect of trespass and squatters thereon to link up the Company's base at Estancia Loma Porã with its other properties by bullock roads or tracks from settlement to settlement and generally to exercise the representation of the Company in conserving and fomenting its interests in its outlying properties.

The missionaries also helped the landowners in the surveying and exploration of their lands (Robins, SAMS mag., 1890; Pride, SAMS mag., 1914; Grubb 1919, 162) and until the 1940s, the Mission also provided Indian work-parties, supervised by missionaries, for the ranches of the area.

#### 4.2.2. A CHRONOLOGY OF THE COLONIZATION OF THE CHACO

Nevertheless, despite the intervention of the Mission, colonization was slow to get off the ground. In 1899 Grubb (SAMS mag., 1899) still described the Chaco, except for some unimportant settlements on the River, as being in the hands of the Indians. Even in 1910 Grubb (1911, 105) was able to say:

It is the proud boast of these Chaco peoples, who are practically independent to the present day, that they have never been conquered.

Indeed, in 1910, apart from the mission stations, the ranch at Maroma was the establishment furthest from the River Paraguay (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1908/9). Nevertheless, at the River the white man was becoming increasingly dominant and by 1911 eight tannin factory-ports had been established, although all of them were to the north of the southern Enxet territory (Kleinpennig 1984). Between Maroma and the River there were a number of prosperous cattle ranches (Grubb 1911, 249f).

The process of capitalist penetration soon began to speed up and, in 1914, the Paraguayan Land and Cattle Company established a ranch at Yesamatathla, approximately 20 kilometres to the west of Makthlawaiya (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1914). By 1921 ranches were said to be springing up everywhere up to a distance of 65 kilometres to the west of Makthlawaiya (Thomas, SAMS mag., 1922) although even in 1930 Yesamatathla still had only 7,500 hectares fenced in (Gibson 1934, 77). In the immediate vicinity of Makthlawaiya the density of ranches was higher than elsewhere due to the fact that the owner of 187,500 hectares in the surrounding area, a Mr. Busk, had, in 1888, sold it off to 45 different individuals<sup>1</sup> (Laino 1976, 154). Much of this land was bought up by former administrators and foremen of the large cattle companies. Nevertheless, even in 1932 land in the far west of the Enxet territory remained unoccupied by commercial interests (Pride, SAMS mag., 1932) despite the establishment, in 1916, of a mission station at Nanawa, 170 kilometres west of Makthlawaiya<sup>2</sup> (Hunt 1933, 301).

As indicated earlier, the Paraguayan government showed little interest in directly assisting the process of colonization. At the diplomatic level, negotiations were carried on with Bolivia to determine the precise boundaries of the two countries' claims to the Chaco (Pastore 1989) but it was not until 1906 that the military paid their first visit to Waekxategmagyalwa (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1910/11) and 1917 that the first military expedition reached the western Chaco (Thomas, SAMS mag., 1947). However, as the Bolivians began to penetrate into the Chaco from the west, Paraguayan interest correspondingly increased with the result that,

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Deed of sale of Nakte Amyep by SAMS to Carlos Bischoff, 1962. In the Palacio de Justicia, Asuncion.

<sup>2</sup>This was to replace the mission station at Elyowe Am'ak which had been closed in 1902 (Ed, SAMS rep., 1902).

in 1924, the Chaco was occupied by the military. Two forts were established in southern Enxet territory, one at Orihuela, to the north of Yesamatathla, and the other on the Mission's land at Nanawa (SAMS mag., 1925).

Due to the extensive nature of the economic exploitation of the Chaco, the total non-Indian population in the Chaco remained low. In 1925 it was 37,500 with virtually all of these in the tannin factory-ports on the River Paraguay (Kleinpennig 1984). The first major non-Indian settlement in the interior of the Chaco only commenced in 1928/9 when the first wave of Mennonite settlers arrived from Canada; they were followed in 1930/31 and 1946/47 by others from Europe (Loewen 1966a, 32). By 1980 they had purchased 917,286 hectares of northern Enxet territory (Kleinpennig 1984) and, taking advantage of a very cheap Indian workforce and extremely favourable financial inducements from the government, they were able to develop a prosperous Germanic enclave based on cash farming and cattle production. The Mennonite labour market served as a magnet to dispossessed Indians with the result that the nearly 11,000 Mennonites (Kleinpennig 1984) are now outnumbered by the more than 12,000 Indians settled in the same general area (INDI 1982).

However, the most significant event of twentieth century Chaco history was the Chaco War of 1932-35 (von Schey 1984). Paraguay defeated Bolivia and, as a result, extended its boundaries to the west and north. It also strengthened Paraguay's commitment to the Chaco and provided a stimulus for further economic development. However, this commitment was mitigated by the land tenure system, the owners being reluctant to subdivide and sell off their extremely large landholdings<sup>1</sup> to smallholders. The basis of the economy continued to be extensive cattle ranching with quebracho extraction gradually diminishing in importance.

The government attempted to modify the situation with the promulgation of the Agrarian Statute of 1940 which permitted the expropriation of non-rationally exploited lands owned by non-residents of Paraguay (Pastore 1989, 77f). However, the unstable political situation militated against its effective implementation although its existence did encourage many landowners to sell, or put into production, large areas of previously unutilized land. For example, in 1943 the

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<sup>1</sup>See Pastore (1989) for a map of the landholdings at that time.

International Products Company<sup>1</sup> began to fence in and stock with cattle the last open hunting ground of the Sanapaná Indians about eighty kilometres north of Makthlawaiya (Train, SAMS mag., 1943), and in 1944 Gibson Brothers fenced in the area to the north and east of Makthlawaiya which had been the last land on which local Enxet had been able to hunt and fish freely (Train, letter, 1944). In 1944, J. Sanderson (SAMS mag. 1944) remarked on the large number of new settlers and the proliferation of fencing in the Chaco, observing that the best swamps and lagoons had, by then, been settled by whites.

#### 4.2.3. THE DOMINATION OF THE ENXET BY THE WHITE MAN

By the 1950s the landowners' control of Enxet territory was total and the Enxet themselves had been almost entirely deprived of their freedom. They could only reside where they were given permission to by the owner of the land and were therefore restricted to villages next-door to the Paraguayan ranch settlements. Economically, they were completely dependent on the will of the landowners who severely restricted their freedom of movement and frequently denied them permission to hunt, gather, fish, garden, or keep livestock. As a result the Indians were converted into a source of very cheap labour for the ranches. The landowners' dominance even extended into the political and social realms of Enxet life in that no social events were allowed without the prior permission of the owner, and the political leadership of the community was dependent on the owners' approval.

In contrast, the government had little direct influence over the Indians. Although, following the Chaco War, the government had placed the Indians officially under the authority of the Military (Prieto et al. 1991, 14), this made little difference to the situation on the ground. The government, at no time, secured land for Indian settlement and since all the Enxet territory was in private hands, it was quite happy to delegate practical responsibility for control of the Indians to the landowners.

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<sup>1</sup>This was an American company with its local headquarters in Puerto Pinasco.

This situation continued until the 1980s. The land holdings remained dominated by large ranches and in 1981, 98% of southern Enxet territory was still held in properties of over 1,000 hectares (Kleinpennig 1984). Indeed, ranch sizes still reached to over 300,000 hectares and 3,000 hectares was considered a small landholding. To date, the government has still not addressed the grievances of the Enxet who are increasingly demanding the return of at least some of their land and, although some Enxet have settled on the approximately 19,000 hectares purchased for them through the Anglican church, the majority still spend most of the year completely dependent on the will of the landowner.

### 4.3. Summary

Following on from the proposition in chapter two that the extent of religious change in a small-scale society is dependent on the structure of its contact with other societies, this chapter dealt with the transformation that occurred in the relationship between the Enxet and their non-Indian neighbours. Whereas prior to the end of the nineteenth century the relationship between the two societies was in equilibrium, this began to change with the sale of the Chaco to foreign capitalists. The result, for the Indians, was a gradual process of alienation from their land as the new owners, allied with the South American Missionary Society, increasingly imposed their control over their properties. By the 1930s most of the territory of the southern Enxet was under the direct domination of the landowners and, by the 1950s, it was entirely so. The influence of the Paraguayan government was very much secondary.

What occurred was a process of colonialism in which the Enxet were transformed from the independent "owners" of their territory into a subjugated people inhabiting a small part of the periphery of the world-wide capitalist system. They lost control over the productive resources of their land and were themselves converted into a dominated people dependent on the landowners for their welfare.

It was this colonial process which created the stimuli for religious change. The Enxet moved into a situation of crisis and it is the character of this crisis which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CRISIS IN ENXET SOCIETY

It was suggested in chapter two that when the structure of an intersocietal contact was characterized by a colonial situation this frequently resulted in the development of a crisis in small-scale subsistence societies. This was defined as a reduction in the sense of well-being experienced by the members of the subsistence society which was intimately associated with both an inability to adequately understand, explain, predict and control the transformed material conditions and a concomitant diminution in their prestige and self-worth.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the effect on the Enxet of the colonization of their land by the white man. It will be shown that their sense of well-being, "*nenmelae*", rapidly came under threat and this process will be analyzed by looking separately at four aspects of the resultant crisis: health, subsistence, social organization and prestige.

### 5.1. The Health Crisis

Increased contact with Europeans exposed the Enxet to new diseases against which they possessed no immunological defences. These included smallpox, measles, the bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid, pleurisy, scarlet fever, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria, mumps, whooping cough, influenza, the common cold, and probably typhus, tuberculosis and syphilis<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, present-day Enxet identify at least twenty-six infectious diseases as originating with Europeans, each of which is a potential killer, capable of devastating Indian communities.

#### 5.1.1. A HISTORY OF EPIDEMICS

Appendix 1 lists the epidemics that were recorded amongst the Enxet prior to the commencement of the Chaco War. Despite being almost certainly

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<sup>1</sup>Based on Thornton et al. (1991).



incomplete, it is a remarkable testament to the consequences of European-Indian contact even prior to colonialism really taken hold. Between 1884 and 1903 there were three or four smallpox epidemics; measles occurred in 1895, 1901, 1908, and 1925; between 1889 and 1927 there were sixteen bouts of influenza or common colds; whooping cough hit five times between 1903 and 1930; and there were also outbreaks of scarlet fever, dysentery and malaria. In fact, Ruddle (SAMS mag., 1936) suggested it was much worse with some districts being assaulted by epidemics up to four times yearly.

Most epidemics resulted in fatalities but in some the mortality rate was particularly high. For example the smallpox epidemic of 1884 is thought to have reduced the population by one-third, "hundreds" were killed in the measles outbreak of 1901, in 1903 smallpox devastated whole villages, and in the 1930 whooping cough epidemic 30 children died in Makthlawaiya alone, about 15% of the population. Many, if not most, of the deaths probably resulted from the secondary effects of the epidemics (cf. Thornton et al. 1991, 38). For example, people, once ill, were more susceptible to other ailments as happened during the measles epidemic of 1901 when many of the sick also suffered from pneumonia and bronchitis (Hunt 1933, 201ff). Furthermore, the afflicted were incapable of providing their own sustenance and in situations when virtually the whole community was ill this could result in starvation (cf. Lindsay and Westgate, SAMS rep., 1901).

For many Enxet, especially those further west, the situation deteriorated further with the Chaco War in which it is believed that more soldiers were killed by typhus and typhoid than by the enemy (Webb, SAMS mag., 1937). These diseases spread to the Indian population and informants remember large numbers of Indian deaths at this time.

Epidemics, continued until relatively recently and although they were not as devastating as in the early years of contact, they could still cause significant damage. For example, in Makthlawaiya there were five deaths from whooping cough in 1963 and in 1968 thirty from measles and chicken pox<sup>1</sup> (Diary 1963 and 1968), whilst in a survey of two ranch communities in the 1970s, Paterson (1980) found that 35%

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<sup>1</sup>This seems to have included patients from outside Makthlawaiya who came in for treatment at the health clinic.

of children died before the age of five, mainly from measles, diarrhoea, and respiratory diseases. Only in the late 1970s, with the commencement of an immunization campaign by the Anglican Mission, did epidemics cease causing havoc.

However, it is possible that the most significant cause of death amongst the Enxet this century has not been these highly visible, one-off epidemics but rather tuberculosis which has become endemic in the area (Paterson 1980). Anglican medical personnel suggest that 50% of today's adult Enxet population either have, or have had, tuberculosis. It is a long-term debilitating disease affecting Enxet of all ages and results in certain death if not treated by western medical personnel.

Parasites are also endemic and their frequency is the direct result of the decrease in hygiene associated with sedentarization (cf. von Graeve 1989, 82). A survey of Makthlawaiya in 1926 found that 100% of the population over two years old had hookworm (Farrow, SAMS mag., 1926) whilst Paterson (1980) tested 83% of stools as positive.

### 5.1.2. THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE EPIDEMICS

Due to the lack of reliable censuses, the demographic consequences of the epidemics are difficult to determine. Grubb (1919, 159) did remark that the population had been greatly reduced in the previous thirty years but he did not say by how much. The only apparently exact data for the Chaco was provided by Coryn (1922, 230) who reported that the population of two Enxet communities had, between 1895 and 1909, been reduced from 75 to 37<sup>1</sup>. An estimate of a total population reduction of 75% (i.e. from 8,000 to 2,000) by 1920 would not seem unreasonable<sup>2</sup>.

This scale of population reduction is perfectly consistent with experiences elsewhere in America. Amongst the Paaa Nova of Brazil, between 65% and 80%

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<sup>1</sup>Coryn insisted that he had meticulously checked his data and that this reduction was due to deaths and not migration.

<sup>2</sup>See Thornton et al. (1991, 30) for a discussion on the difficulties of calculating population decreases in epidemics.

of the population died within months of pacification (von Graeve 1989, 81) whilst, in the Chaco in 1961, nearly 50% of an Ayoreo community died in the first week of contact with Roman Catholic missionaries (Escobar 1988, 79). Indeed, Ribiero (1979, 245) has pointed out for Brazil that, in areas with a pastoral economy, 30% of tribes became extinct between 1900 and 1957.

### 5.1.3. SHOCK AND A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

However, population statistics are not sufficient to convey the horror of epidemics in a native American population. With each epidemic, a general fear would arise amongst the Enxet (Pride, SAMS rep., 1901). They would scatter in an attempt to isolate themselves (Grubb 1914, 203), but this often led to the infection being spread more widely. The fear of contagion was such that those accused of carrying the infection were, at times, executed (Grubb 1914, 199). Epidemics frequently caused whole bands to become ill and Westgate (SAMS rep., 1901) and Grubb (1911, 59f) observed communities in which almost everyone was lying helpless in an emaciated condition. They were often incapable of burying their dead or even of stopping vultures eating the corpses. During smallpox epidemics the victims could become so disfigured that they were no longer recognisable (Thompson, SAMS rep., 1903). The shock would have been enhanced by the fear of the deceaseds' *eghag'ak* especially if the survivors were too ill to accomplish the mourning rituals (cf. Westgate, SAMS mag., 1901).

A further significant consequence of the epidemics was the crisis of confidence they provoked in the efficacy of the traditional ritual practices, especially in the ability of the *yohoxma*. Whilst prior to colonization the *yohoxma* had been considered capable of healing most ailments, their failure to adequately explain and control the epidemics was painfully obvious. They attempted to combat the devastation but, instead, their own deaths testified to their impotence. This was further evidenced in the explanations developed by the *yohoxma* to account for their inability to effect a cure. For example, one told me how the tuberculosis *ekyokxa* cause a ball of blood to form inside the body. He said he was capable of removing this blood but could not destroy the *ekyokxa* who would always recreate

the ball of blood. Another *yohoxma* explained how he could never recognise the *ekyokxa* until the patient was dead and he would then observe it leaving the body like a puff of smoke. Indeed, the most powerful indication of the Enxet's perception of their own impotence was seen in the generic term they created for European infectious diseases. It was *negmase*, literally, "we die".

Nevertheless, although the Enxet lost confidence in their *yohoxma*, they did not question the constitutive rules. This was evident in their assertion that the *yohoxma* of the past were much stronger than the contemporary ones<sup>1</sup> (cf. Grubb 1911, 146). It was also seen in the way they developed aetiologies of the new diseases within the traditional ideological framework: all *negmase* were conceived of as possessing *ekyokxa* and it was these which caused the outbreaks.

## 5.2. The Subsistence Crisis

The alienation of the Enxet from their land and their integration into a capitalist economic system were the major causes of the subsistence crisis.

In the early days of colonization the Indians were free to choose the extent of their participation in the capitalist economy. White penetration into the Chaco was minimal so they suffered no restrictions on their freedom of movement and liberty to forage. They limited their contact with Whites to the trading of hides and feathers or short-term employment. However, as their desire for western goods increased, hunting to obtain skins for exchange began to take precedence over subsistence. The quantity of animals killed increased and by 1916, despite the tremendous reduction in population, the Indians were complaining that "the game is finished" (Pride, SAMS mag., 1916). Concomitantly, the gradual occupation of the land by the white man began to dramatically reduce hunting possibilities as the landowners increasingly prohibited Indians entering their land without permission. Even when allowed to hunt, they found the game becoming scarcer as the white man's cattle drove it away (Thomas, SAMS mag., 1922).

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<sup>1</sup>This is still commonly said by present-day Enxet.

With the fencing in, by the 1940s, of the last open land, all hunting became subject to obtaining permission from the landowner amongst whom there was a variety of attitudes (cf. Chase-Sardi 1972, 203; and Stahl et al. 1982, 7). In general, the bigger the ranch the more likely it was to allow resident Indians to hunt and, even in 1982, one community on the ranch of Quebrachales Colon S.A.<sup>1</sup> still obtained 95% of its income from traditional activities (Stahl et al. 1982, 9). With the overall paucity of employment opportunities in the area the large ranches tended to have the most populous communities. However, this produced a negative feedback effect in that the higher populations resulted in a scarcity of game in the immediate area of the settlements (cf. Stahl et al. 1982, 10). It also needs to be stressed that for the majority of the communities, obtaining permission to hunt was extremely difficult.

The other traditional economic activities also became increasingly less viable. Gathering, as a result of the high sedentary populations, suffered from a decrease in per capita available resources. Pastoral activities almost disappeared partly because the ranchers prohibited Indian herds but mainly because of their immediate return economic philosophy. Since it was normal for livestock to be consumed in times of shortage, the increased frequency and length of these periods of need meant that the herds were rapidly exhausted. Gardening was often not allowed by the landowners (Chase-Sardi 1972, 202f) and, even when it could be practised, it was usually not worthwhile because of the vulnerability of the cultivations to destruction by cattle. Fishing was the activity most likely to prosper under the transformed conditions, but it too suffered from the localized high density populations and inability to travel freely.

The demise of the traditional economy obliged the majority of the Indian population to seek employment in the business enterprises of the area but the difficult conditions they faced were implicit in the comments of an early missionary (Grubb 1914, 278) who remarked that:

...experience has taught us that we must not as a general rule expect money-making concerns to consider the welfare of their employees, except in so far as it suits their purpose.

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<sup>1</sup>Formerly, the Paraguayan Cattle Company.

The tannin industry employed Indians mainly in the extraction stage in which the aim was to maximize production and minimize time. In such a situation the Indians were bound to suffer and a missionary commented that (Grubb 1914, 279):

Natural humanity is the only check upon such a business, and when dividends are concerned we must not be surprised if humanity is pushed aside: ....the lust for wealth tends to kill all other sentiments.

The conditions, therefore, were extremely difficult for those working for the quebracho companies (cf. Casaccia et al. 1986) but they were little better on the ranches. Once the basic ranch infrastructure was established (i.e. fencing, corrals, water supplies) labour requirements were minimal resulting in a surplus of Indian labour. This gave the landowners tremendous advantages in the labour market.

Chase-Sardi (1972, 202ff) described the working conditions of the Enxet. They were often employed for only short periods during the heaviest work. Payment was usually in kind, normally provisions, alcohol and clothes, but the prices were so inflated that the Indians only got a small proportion of what they had actually earned (cf. Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1888). A typical example of working conditions concerned a group of Indians who were employed for eight or nine months clearing forest. Whilst working they received only food and on completion of the task they were given a pair of trousers, a pair of underpants, a shirt and a pair of cheap shoes. Many Indians were encouraged to accept credit but, once in debt, they were made to work for only food (cf. Thomas, SAMS mag., 1922). Furthermore, the nutritional value of the provisions received, being mainly carbohydrates, was significantly inferior to the traditional food sources and, when combined with the consumption of Paraguayan caña<sup>1</sup>, was extremely detrimental to the health of the Indians (Susnik 1977, 219).

My own experience of present-day working conditions of the Enxet suggests that Chase-Sardi was not exaggerating (see Kidd 1992). I found that despite a woefully inadequate statutory minimum wage of US\$5.30 per day<sup>2</sup>, many Indians earn less than US\$2.00 per day. There are ranches that promise reasonable wages

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<sup>1</sup>A very strong liquor with a high degree of impurities.

<sup>2</sup>In 1991.

to the Indians, but in the end give nothing more than provisions, and there is at least one ranch on which the Indians do not know their monthly wage and are paid once a year at Christmas. During the year they are given food and clothing on credit which, at Christmas, is discounted from their wages so that they only receive in the region of between US\$50 and US\$100 per annum. They do not know the prices of the goods they receive and also work long hours, seven days a week, with three days holiday per year. Many Indians have told me that this used to be a much more common practice. Women employees are in an even more precarious position and I know of some who are paid as little as US\$0.21 per 11 hour day. The only reason for working is because they receive a small quantity of rations.

Within the framework of Sahlins' (1972) concept of the "original affluent society", it is clear that colonization resulted in a significant deterioration in the Enxet's economic situation. The time spent in subsistence activities increased dramatically and there was a concomitant reduction in the occurrence of times of abundance. This was reflected in the decreasing frequency of feasts and Craig (1935) mentioned that a group of Indians, who worked for a few months on the ranch of which he was foreman<sup>1</sup>, had only one all-night dance over a period of a number of months. The situation was exacerbated by an increase in the desires of the Enxet as they came to "need" many of the white man's goods. They had to work for longer to produce a surplus with which to purchase the required goods. Furthermore, activities classified as *nentamhaekha*, or "work", began to replace "enjoyable" activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering, as the main means of subsistence.

The subsistence crisis also further challenged the credibility of the *yohoxma* in much the same way as occurred with health. The Enxet understood that by practising the correct rituals they would be successful in their economic activities. However, as game became scarcer so the *yohoxma* were regarded as becoming less powerful. Furthermore, they were clearly unable to influence the landowners, who were becoming the major source of subsistence. This idea was reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup>The International Products Corporation.

opinion of some informants that although the *yohoxma* can kill other Enxet, they cannot kill foreigners<sup>1</sup>.

### 5.3. The Organizational Crisis

By 1914, after twenty-five years of endeavour, it was clear to the missionaries that the social organization of the Enxet was breaking down (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1914). In general terms this was expressed in a decreasing respect of the societal norms and other people. How and why this came about will be examined in more detail.

Von Graeve (1989, 81) suggested that a breakdown in social organization was a common occurrence amongst American Indian peoples afflicted by epidemics. Amongst the Enxet the rapid decrease in population, the amalgamation of bands to enable them to once again become economically and socially viable, the deaths of key people such as the *wese* and *yohoxma*, the loss of spouses and the increase in orphans all challenged the existing social organization.

Sedentarization caused more problems since the traditional social organization and mechanisms for conflict resolution were predicated on the dynamics of a peripatetic society. Traditionally, the congregation of large numbers of Enxet was restricted to short periods during feasts, but, with colonialism, independent bands were increasingly locked into permanent co-residence with other groups. These communities were much larger than the traditional bands and, according to the 1978 census, 60% of the people resided in communities of more than 75 and some had more than 200 (Faulkner 1978). In the past the feasts were sufficiently short so that interpersonal conflicts had little time to arise, and if they did they were resolved when the bands dispersed with the termination of the feasts. However, with sedentarization this tension-resolving mechanism became difficult to practise just when, with intensified competition for limited resources, interpersonal conflict became more common.

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<sup>1</sup>It should be stressed that this is not the opinion of all the Enxet.



Tensions were also exacerbated by the increased consumption of alcohol, especially of Paraguayan caña which was much stronger than the traditional chicha. As Siskind (1973, 30) has pointed out, alcohol exposes emotions, thoughts, and feelings that are normally prohibited. This was probably a useful safety valve in traditional Enxet culture and behaviour that would usually be unacceptable was permitted during drinking bouts. For this reason drinking was restricted to controlled situations, such as feasts, when it was normal practice for the community to delegate a number of men who would abstain and be responsible for looking after the drunks (Grubb 1911, 184). These practices began to break down with colonization. Whereas in the past the consumption of chicha was restricted by the *yohoxma* who were responsible for its preparation, in the market economy caña was available to anyone at any time. Consequently, drunkenness became a disorganized and daily event and normally prohibited emotions, thoughts and feelings were expressed more frequently, contributing to a significant increase in intracommunal tensions.

Further problems were caused for the Enxet by the subordination of their social organization to that of an alien social structure. On taking control of his property the non-Indian landowner imposed a hierarchical social structure which contrasted sharply with the egalitarian, non-coercive character of traditional Enxet social organization. The new system was reflected in the geography of the settlements and as little seems to have changed since the commencement of colonization I will describe the normal situation on today's ranches.

The main house belongs to the owner, or his representative, and with him lies absolute control<sup>1</sup>. Below the owner, and living in close proximity to his house, are the Paraguayan employees amongst whom there is also a clearly defined hierarchy. The Indians are most definitely at the foot of the hierarchy and, correspondingly, live much further away. Within the Indian community the organization is still based on egalitarian values but one Indian, referred to as the *akkemhapmomye*<sup>2</sup>, is recognized by the Paraguayans as having a higher rank and

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<sup>1</sup>Most owners do not live on their ranches but visit only occasionally. The day-to-day running of the ranch is usually delegated to an "administrator".

<sup>2</sup>This is derived from *amomye* which means "before" or "first". It is translated into Spanish as *puntero* which is used to refer to the leader of work-parties etc.

has the function of liaising between the two communities. *Wese* no longer exist amongst the Enxet, and there probably have not been any for sixty years.

The major consequence of the hierarchical social structure for the Enxet was that they were alienated from the ultimate authority in their own communities. They became dependent on the will of a foreigner and, whilst under a benign owner the difficulties were minimized, most landowners took advantage of their position to abuse and exploit the Enxet.

#### 5.4. The Prestige Crisis

The invasion of their land meant that the Enxet had to deal on a regular basis with a new category of person, the white man, against whom they had to measure themselves. Prior to colonization, the Enxet had controlled their encounters with Whites, meeting them only when they chose and restricting them to the margins of their territory. Relationships were almost exclusively limited to trade and the Enxet, with a typically ethnocentric attitude, were convinced of their superiority.

With the ascendance of the white man his superiority, and the concomitant inferiority of the Enxet, became evident. The symbol of this domination was the gun (cf. Wilson 1973, 269) which could be used with impunity against an Indian giving the clear message that the white man considered Indian lives to be worthless. As late as 1970, killing an Enxet was not regarded as a crime (Chase-Sardi 1972, 203; cf. Grubb 1904, 3) and examples of the arbitrary murder of Indians abound. The two massacres in Caraya Vuelta were mentioned in chapter four and during and immediately after the Chaco War things were particularly bad. Both Bolivians and Paraguayans killed the Enxet without warning and one woman told me how her grandfather was strung up then split open down the middle. Even an Indian evangelist, Juan Koine, from the Anglican Mission was shot and killed<sup>1</sup> (Every, letter, 1934). To escape, the Indians were forced to live concealed in the forest (Webb, SAMS mag., 1937). In the 1940s communities of Sanapana were being

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<sup>1</sup>Juan Koine, through being baptized, would have had Paraguayan citizenship.

massacred (Sanderson, SAMS mag., 1941) and, even later, Chase-Sardi (1972, 203) reported having seen many Enxet with scars from bullet wounds.

The Indians were well aware of their impotence when faced with these expressions of the white man's power and superiority. This was illustrated by Craig (1935, 222) who reported a conversation with a group of Enxet who were contemplating taking revenge on a Paraguayan who had kidnapped one of their women. They said that they had hesitated in following him because they had heard that it was not permitted to kill a christian and that if they did then the soldiers would come after them to kill the men and take the women away. Indeed, the Enxet word for soldier, *selpextetamo*, is derived from the verb, *pextetke*, "to bind", and means, literally, "those who bind us".

As can be imagined from the ease with which Indians were killed, brutal treatment was common. For example, in 1955 four women from Makthlawaiya were whipped and lassoed by soldiers whilst collecting palm hearts (Diary 1955). It was also common for Indian women to be raped by Paraguayans<sup>1</sup> and Chase-Sardi (1972, 203) described how Indian communities, under the threat of being killed, had to temporarily give their women to the members of military expeditions that passed through their area<sup>2</sup>.

Of course, the above types of incidents were not everyday events. Rather, they were held in the conscience of the Enxet, continually reminding them of their inferior status in the new social order and the potential consequences of not accepting white domination. It was in the workplace that the Enxet most regularly received the message of white superiority since it has been, and is, normal practice for the Enxet to be treated much worse than Paraguayan employees. Even when doing the same work, an Enxet is paid much less than a Paraguayan. Those given positions of responsibility on ranches are always non-Indians. Furthermore, as Burrige (1991, 108) pointed out, prestige in subsistence societies is predicated, in part, on performance in the subsistence activities. The Enxet continued to use these same criteria within the context of the new economic activities and the highest

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<sup>1</sup>This is still common.

<sup>2</sup>It even occurred in Makthlawaiya in the early 1980s and the main defence of the Enxet was to kill the off-spring from these relations.

prestige in ranch-work came to be reserved for those working on a horse<sup>1</sup> (Susnik 1977, 161). However, this was generally restricted to Paraguayan employees, and the Enxet were given jobs on the ground such as land clearing and fencing.

The above experiences of the Enxet were but manifestations of a deeply rooted racism within Paraguayan society which on a daily basis was transmitted to and experienced by the Enxet. So strong was this racism that, in a survey of the Paraguayan population carried out by Chase-Sardi and Martinez Almada (1973), 77% considered Indians to be like animals and a mere 0.6% regarded the differences between Indians and Paraguayans as merely cultural. This deep-rooted racism was experienced in daily social life such as in the refusal of Paraguayans to share *terere* with Indians<sup>2</sup>.

The crisis of prestige was not restricted to Indian-white man relations. It also arose within the Enxet communities themselves. The traditional activities in which prestige could be gained, such as hunting and war, lost importance. Generosity became much more difficult to practise since the production of surpluses for redistribution became increasingly difficult and rare. Indeed, the older and traditionally most prestigious members of society, found it harder to compete with the younger men in terms of production since those over forty-five years old experienced great difficulty in obtaining paid employment (Susnik 1977, 244f). As a result, it was the younger men who had most money and food and therefore the greatest possibilities of redistribution.

This was combined with less defined social roles as a consequence of the increasing failure of, and loss of confidence in, the ritual system. This was manifested in the tendency to make fun of the *yohoxma* (Susnik 1977, 216; cf. Grubb 1911, 149ff and 287) and was also seen in the gradual abandonment of the various "rites of passage" which had the important function of determining a person's status and role in the community. These "guideposts" disappeared and the loss of efficacy was symbolized in one of the last *yanmana* to take place, in

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<sup>1</sup>I have even seen extremely capable Enxet carpenters insulted by other Enxet on the grounds that they do not work with horses.

<sup>2</sup>This is an event of great importance in Paraguay in which people participate several times per day. It involves drinking in turns from the same container and it is inconceivable to not include others unless their status is substantially inferior.

Yesamatathla in 1975, in the way the girl did not lose consciousness despite being dragged around by the *sowalak* for a long time<sup>1</sup>.

The crisis of integrity was exacerbated by the imposition of an alternative discourse on prestige by the white man. This was characterized by Burrige (1969, 41ff; and 1991, 107f) as being predicated on wealth, specifically on the possession of money. Wealth, in "complex" societies is to be retained and accumulated rather than dispersed. It confers coercive power and is a "quantitative" measure of man contrasting sharply with the "qualitative" traditional criteria of the Enxet in which produce was to be redistributed and the most prestigious members of society were generally those with least possessions<sup>2</sup>.

The influence of this innovative discourse was most clearly observed in the metamorphosis of the term *wese*<sup>3</sup> (cf. Moore 1984). Its meaning became that of "possessor of wealth and coercive power" and was used to refer to the landowners and missionaries. It was no longer employed for Enxet leaders who were incapable of competing with the white man within the framework of the new discourse: their egalitarian ethic meant that the social controls within their communities impeded the accumulation of wealth and power and, anyway, as already explained, they were seriously disadvantaged by colonialism and the concomitant structural transformations in the land tenure and economic systems of the Chaco.

Within the communities the white man's discourse began to cause confusion and was evidenced in a tendency to want to accumulate possessions. This was facilitated by sedentarization which meant that the Enxet were no longer required to limit their possessions to what they could carry. Nevertheless, the traditional criteria have proven resilient and within any Enxet community there is a tension between the desire to accumulate and the obligation to share. Two examples illustrate this well, the first being the phenomenon of "shops". Those Enxet who attain a momentary abundance of goods frequently commence "shops" in which the invaders' discourse is manifested in the desire to not share goods but rather to sell

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<sup>1</sup>Pages Larraya (1982, 78) suggested that the demise of the initiation ceremonies resulted in the creation of adolescence and a corresponding rise in social and psychological problems amongst young people.

<sup>2</sup>See section 3.6.2.3..

<sup>3</sup>See section 3.6.2.6.

them. However, the rest of the community always manages to impose the traditional obligation to share by forcing the "shopowner" to give credit which is often never paid back. Consequently, every shop run by an Enxet has failed. The other example was provided by an Indian pastor, of about seventy years old<sup>1</sup>. For the last few years he has helped the Anglican Mission in Bible translation and to do this he has stayed periodically in the mission station of Sombrero Piri. In mid-1992 he had left a few biscuits and some sugar in the house he used and when he was not there some other Indians, who were passing through, helped themselves to part of the food. On returning to Sombrero Piri, the conflict between the desire to possess and the requirement to share was so intense, even over such a seemingly minor matter, that he broke down in tears.

The loss of prestige that the Enxet have suffered in the last one hundred years was summarized in the words of one Enxet who wrote (Bogado 1991, 19):

The Enxet of long ago were good. They were not savage. They were always powerful. Their name did not used to be Lengua<sup>2</sup>.

"Lengua", the name given by the white man to the Enxet, is recognized by the latter as pejorative. It symbolizes their loss of dignity and worth and is contrasted with their aspiration to once more become *Enxet*, to be known as fully human. A similar point was made by Loewen (1966a, 27f) who remarked that when Chaco Indians were asked what was their deepest current desire, they replied, "To become a person".

## 5.5. Summary

As was predicted in chapter two, a transformation in the structure of the contact between the Enxet and the white man from equilibrium to colonialism, resulted in a corresponding deterioration in the situation of the Enxet. Their sense

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<sup>1</sup>Source: T. Curtis (personal communication).

<sup>2</sup>*Tasek hekñat, enxet'ak nano. Meeko exnekñat apkelo. Apmelyeha'ak hekñat kemata enxet. Apkelwesee hawee sekxok apkelwesee Lengua*".

of well-being, *nenmelae*, was substantially reduced and a crisis situation became manifest in many aspects of Enxet culture. Their disorientation and alienation was epitomized in a significant increase in cases of insanity (cf. Loewen 1969, 132).

Furthermore, the theoretical model suggested that two important aspects of the crisis would be the inability to understand, explain, predict and control the new situation and a concomitant loss of prestige. This was found amongst the Enxet who suffered profoundly disnomic conditions. New diseases killed the majority of the population, subsistence could no longer be adequately satisfied, and they became increasingly disorganized as a society. Consequently, it became clear that their ritual practices could no longer adequately control the cosmos. They also came face-to-face with a clearly superior being in the white man resulting in a loss of self-worth and a confusion on how to measure a man's true value.

However, an important observation was made by Wilson (1973, 289) that:

...the only evidence for such "felt"<sup>1</sup> deprivation....is the behaviour that follows the objective circumstances of change.

Therefore, the next chapter will consider the Enxet's response to this crisis in terms of their attempts to understand it and to resolve the disnomy by reconstructing their culture in a more satisfying way.

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<sup>1</sup>My emphasis.

## 6. CONVERSION MOVEMENTS AMONGST THE ENXET

The theoretical model of chapter two proposed that a common response of the members of small-scale subsistence societies in crisis is to attempt, as social actors, to reconstruct their societies with the aim of restoring a satisfactory sense of well-being. This frequently concentrates on two main themes: an improved understanding of the causes of the crisis which will permit those in crisis to regain control of the cosmos and, secondly, a recovery of their prestige and sense of worth as people. It was shown that a common mechanism for achieving these ends was intercultural sociality whereby innovative explanations and techniques of control are sought amongst neighbouring societies perceived as more successful.

Chapter five outlined the crisis that assaulted the Enxet from the end of the nineteenth century and the aim of this chapter will be to examine some of the efforts of the Enxet to create a more satisfying culture. It will be shown that much of their response can be adequately explained within the terms of chapter two's theoretical model, but an attempt will be made to highlight the influence of local factors in giving a distinctive character to conversion movements. Unfortunately, as explained in the introduction, space does not permit a consideration of all the conversion movements that have taken place in the last one hundred years amongst the southern Enxet.

Due to the importance of intercultural sociality in the process of religious change it is necessary to initially examine the participants in the intercultural communication system that came into being with colonialism. Since chapter three has already considered the Enxet, the next section will limit itself to describing the message transmitted to the Enxet by members of the dominant society. This will concentrate on a group of christian missionaries who intentionally set out to communicate a message to, and influence, the Enxet.

### 6.1. The Missionaries and Their Message

The missionaries under consideration belonged to the South American Missionary Society (SAMS), a British evangelical Anglican Mission, whose work



commenced amongst the Enxet in 1888 (Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1888). For thirty years they were the members of the colonizing society that were in closest contact with the Enxet, and they have remained influential ever since.

Characterizing a group of people over a period of a century is, of course, pregnant with difficulty. Nevertheless, it is clear from both the literature and my own experience that the SAMS' missionaries have exhibited a remarkable homogeneity over the years in terms of the dominant ideologies to which they subscribed. These will be summarized in the following section and it will also be shown how they influenced the attitudes, aims and message of the missionaries.

The overall aim of the SAMS amongst the Enxet was encapsulated by Grubb (1911, 293f) when he asserted that:

...the South American Missionary Society gave instructions to their men, not only to enter into and dwell in their land, whatever the risk, but to attempt no less a task than that of opening up this unknown land, of revolutionizing the native customs, habits, modes of life, and laws, and of ameliorating the condition of the people by winning them over as Christian disciples.

These aims were heavily influenced by two dominant ideologies, the first being an evolutionary view of human development. This held that it was both natural and desirable for "primitive" societies to "rise" to a "civilized state". Consequently, the SAMS' missionaries viewed the Enxet as occupying the bottom layer of the evolutionary scale, living an animal or half-animal existence (Westgate, SAMS mag., 1900; and Grubb 1914, 217), and related their putative inferiority to the "repulsiveness" of their features (Grubb 1914, 108; and Pride, SAMS mag., 1916). However, it was paradoxically also understood as being socially and environmentally determined (Grubb 1914, 73; cf. Layton 1989, 11). This evolutionary perspective still lingers, in a somewhat less crude form, amongst current missionaries but, even as recently as 1949, the superintendent of the Mission characterized the Enxet as "mentally backward" (Train, SAMS rep., 1949). One practical consequence of this view has been a paternalistic attitude to the Indians in which they were regarded, and treated, as children (cf. Grubb, SAMS mag., 1914; and La Herencia 1989).

The other main ideological impulse of the missionaries was derived from Evangelicalism. Its roots were in the Second Evangelical Awakening, a revival

movement which started in the United States of America before making its way to Europe (Neill 1965, 324). Amongst the Chaco missionaries this was combined with Anglicanism which they considered, ecclesiastically, as being, "as near to the ideal as can be reasonably expected" (Grubb 1914, 98).

Evangelical Anglicans were characterized by a strong emphasis on the Bible and prayer (Neill 1965, 324; and Beidelman 1982, 48f). Their hermeneutical approach to the Bible was fundamentalist and anybody was considered capable of Biblical interpretation. Consequently, the direct access of the Enxet to the Bible was regarded as, "the most efficient means of making known the Saviour's message" (SAMS rep., 1901). A high priority was thus given to Bible translation and literacy work and its importance was reflected in the assertion that, "the school is the centre and the hope of our work" (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1898; cf. Richards, SAMS rep., 1968).

Humans were also regarded as capable of direct communication with God through prayer, both individual and corporate. Consequently the missionaries stressed praying techniques in their teaching (cf. Hunt 1933, 121) and prayer meetings were held every day as well as playing a prominent role in the daily religious services; by 1898 there were already nine religious services per week in the central mission station<sup>1</sup> (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1898).

The doctrinal message of the SAMS' missionaries was orthodox evangelicalism. It emphasized the need to "accept Christ as Saviour" with eternal damnation as the alternative (cf. Westgate, SAMS rep., 1901). During each service this orthodoxy was expressed in an Anglican format through the use of the Prayer Book translated into Enxet (Westgate, SAMS rep., 1900). However, one of the most prominent messages to be transmitted was the evangelical Anglican definition of true religiosity which Beidelman (1982, 50) characterized as, "self-denial, abstinence from drinking, smoking, dancing, gambling, and many forms of play". In the Chaco this was expressed in the missionary emphasis on behavioural change in converts rather than correct doctrine (Grubb 1914, 102; cf. Burrige 1991, 5). The Indians were expected to follow a christian lifestyle which was understood as the abandonment of most of their traditional customs. From an early date, these

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<sup>1</sup>As late as 1985 daily religious services were still the norm on Makthlawaiya.

customs came under fierce attack as will be illustrated below (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1896).

The *yohoxma* were regarded by the missionaries as their greatest opponents and in the early years of the Mission much effort was put into destroying their position and influence. This involved attempting to expose them as charlatans (cf. Grubb 1911, 152ff) and, as the missionaries became more powerful, banning the practice in the vicinity of mission stations<sup>1</sup>, and threatening and punishing those caught practising. This included the threat of not helping the sick during epidemics (Lindsay, SAMS rep., 1901) and expelling Indians from the mission stations (Diary 1901 and 1948).

Although the missionaries initially participated in Indian feasts as a means of gaining their confidence and trust, they soon began to restrict and later ban dances and initiation ceremonies on the mission stations (Grubb 1911, 187; 1914, 253; and Pride, letter, 1936). All the accompanying "vices", such as sex and drinking, were also prohibited (Grubb 1914, 146 and 231; and Farrow, SAMS mag., 1919 and 1925) and these regulations were even backed up by whipping those caught (Diary 1951).

The practice of infanticide received priority attention from the missionaries who used two strategies to abolish it. One involved giving financial inducements to mothers to encourage them to keep their children (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1908/9; Gourley, SAMS rep., 1910/11; and Pride, SAMS mag., 1923), whilst the other, once again, was predicated on instilling fear into the Indians. The normal punishment was to not employ, speak to, or sell any goods to the guilty parties (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1897; Graham, SAMS mag., 1897). However, punishments could be much more severe and one woman was forced to dig up her dead child at night so that it could be reburied, a quite terrifying experience for an Enxet (Hunt 1933, 217). The opportunity was also taken when preaching to frighten the Indians with the prospect of vengeance by the spiritual powers<sup>2</sup> (Grubb 1911, 171ff and 236).

The missionaries were also committed to the destruction of the Indian economic system, especially the "evil of sharing" (Grubb 1911, 191; 1914, 208ff; and

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Rules and Regulations in force in the Paraguayan Mission, as adopted 1937. These were an update of a much earlier, but similar, version.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix 2 for an example of a sermon.

Pride, SAMS mag., 1932). They aimed to make the Indians settle down and become property-holders (Grubb 1911, 218) and the whole economic strategy of the Mission was aimed at this end<sup>1</sup>. It was believed that if the Enxet were to accumulate private possessions then they would have to cease their nomadic lifestyle (Hunt, SAMS rep., 1905/6).

One final consideration involves the "channel" used by the missionaries for communication. They employed the Enxet language but it is clear from language materials available that no missionary ever spoke it fluently. The major written work on grammar, by Powys in the 1930s, included many errors, the most fundamental being the lack of the subjunctive tense which is extremely common in normal everyday usage. Prior to Powys the situation was, of course, much worse. For example, Grubb, the missionary of most significance in the early transmission of the christian message, was notorious for his poor Enxet, breaking nearly all the grammatical rules (Hunt, SAMS mag., 1930). Indeed, in the first ten years it is likely that the missionaries were almost unintelligible to the Indians as illustrated by a translation they made of the Lord's Prayer (Pride, SAMS mag., 1895). In one sentence they attempted to say, "We wish to make you our chief" but in fact said, "She wants you make our chief"<sup>2</sup>.

However, it needs to be borne in mind that the missionaries were not in continual communication with all of the Enxet. In fact, from 1895 most missionary work was on the mission stations and so their direct influence was limited to resident Indians or visitors who usually stayed only for short periods. Consequently, at any one time 95% of the Enxet population was not in contact with the missionaries and the majority were in direct relationship with the missionaries for perhaps less than three days a year.

The rest of the chapter will consider the response of the Enxet to the crisis they faced and examine the influence of the missionary message in the creation of a more satisfying culture.

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<sup>1</sup>See section 6.5.

<sup>2</sup>"Aminyí elana Thliyip ningwístia". My translation into English is just as non-sensical as the original would have been in Enxet. The intended English version was supplied by Pride.

## 6.2. The Initial Response of the Enxet

The first decade of missionary endeavour was characterized by a markedly conservative Indian response (Hawtrey 1901, 286). They were unwilling to adopt innovations and, according to Grubb (1911, 196):

...when urged to adopt a better and more practical way, they simply shrug their shoulders and say with a superior air, "Ikhawe nintime inningkoo" (That is not our custom).

This conservatism was also evidenced in their reaction to previously unknown objects, explanations of which were achieved within their existing meaning system. For example, when lantern slides were first shown they were interpreted as spirits jumping out of the box and onto the screen (Hunt, SAMS mag., 1925) whilst the functioning of a compass was explained as the action of a spirit trapped inside (Grubb 1911, 100f).

During this period insignificant change was noted in their religious system, and indeed, they were quite willing to criticize the missionaries' own beliefs. For example, when Grubb told one Indian that his explanation of a woman's illness being caused by a jaguar in her stomach was impossible, he received the reply that his own story of Satan entering a serpent to tempt Eve was just as ridiculous (Grubb 1904, 51f).

Undoubtedly, this conservative response reflected the relatively minor nature of this crisis in a period when the Indians were still, in practical terms, independent. It was, furthermore, the result of the Indians' profoundly ethnocentric character and kinds of "barriers to change" that were outlined in section 2.2.3.3..

However, by the end of the nineteenth century it was clear that the crisis was deepening for the Enxet. Although colonization was still almost insignificant, epidemics were provoking a demographic catastrophe. As a result, the first indications of the emergence of a new religious movement began to appear.

## 6.3. The Egyapam Cult

### 6.3.1. DESCRIPTION

The emergence of the *egyapam* cult was directly related to the measles epidemic of 1901 and the smallpox epidemic of 1903 which, according to the missionaries, produced a "spiritual awakening" (Lindsay, SAMS rep., 1901; Westgate, SAMS rep., 1901; and Hunt, SAMS rep., 1905/6). It also found its roots in the work of the missionaries who baptized their first Enxet in 1899 (Bernau, SAMS mag., 1899). The conversion to Anglicanism will be considered in detail later in the chapter, but its relevance to the *egyapam* cult is found in the fact that the converts began to travel through the region preaching the "Good News" (Westgate, SAMS rep., 1900; and Lindsay, SAMS rep., 1901). Concomitantly, many Indians visited the various mission stations for short periods: for example, in 1902, 672 Indians visited Waekxategmagyalwa and 700 visited Paeseyamyalwa (Diary 1902). Whilst there, they were able to hear the missionary message and also observe the new christian rites. They were most impressed by prayer, and by 1901 it was a widespread practice amongst the Enxet bands to hold prayer meetings every night (Pride, SAMS rep., 1901). They did not, though, abandon their traditional ritual practices (Pride, SAMS rep., 1901; and Grubb 1914, 145).

The nature of the Indians' prayer was clearly petitionary and included asking for success in hunting (Grubb 1914, 129), healing of the sick (Pride, SAMS rep., 1902), safety from danger (Hunt 1933, 218) and in general terms "laying their most trivial cases before Him" (Hunt 1933, 198).

The missionaries' non-acceptance of the validity of the cult, expressed in their unwillingness to baptize its adherents, meant that this wider movement became separated from Anglicanism. Although the practice of holding prayer meetings seems to have remained an essential part of the cult (Pride, SAMS mag., 1916), other elements were incorporated so that by 1912 a vigorous new religious movement was clearly identifiable. The documentary sources for the following description are: Diary (1912); Pride (SAMS rep., 1912/13 and SAMS mag., 1913); Grubb (1914, 173) and Sanderson (SAMS mag., 1919). Other information was provided by Enxet informants.

A sign that a community was following the cult was often the presence of a long pole with a white flag and during a ceremony the band members would gather round a mosquito net or blanket. They would begin to sing and, at a certain point in the meeting, it would be announced that *egyapam*, "our father", had arrived. A voice would then emerge from under the mosquito net. At times the participants believed that there was no-one under the net, whilst at other times the cult leaders would openly climb under the net to communicate with the *egyapam*. The voice could also come from above, or out of the mist of the morning, or even from the depth of the forest. Other aspects of the cult included carrying a cross in procession and the receiving of written messages on paper from above, that is from a superior level in the cosmos. Examples of these pieces of paper were twice observed by missionaries: one was a page of a former missionary's diary whilst the other contained red lines and a red spot. The "writing" on the paper was interpreted by *yohoxma*, who were the leaders of the cult, and were also carried round by emissaries of the cult as they announced their message.

Information on the teaching of the cult, although sparse, does exist. Early on in its development, when the Anglican converts were playing a significant role, a lot of the preaching centred on a "new world". This was illustrated by the following sermon given by the first convert Kemapsexyo who, in comparing Satan's land with God's, said (Grubb 1904, 138):

His is a bad country, dark, hot, and waterless. No sleeping-places, but savage men and beasts abound. Heaven is quite different. The food is plentiful, and the water sweet and abundant. Here the ostriches<sup>1</sup> are comparatively rare, but in heaven they are fine and numerous.

Kemapapagkyake, another convert, gave a similar account (Hunt, SAMS rep., 1898) whilst a non-convert, when talking about the plentiful supply of food and water in heaven, included sugar in the contents (Pride, SAMS rep., 1902). Later accounts, post 1912, tell of how the *egyapam* claimed, that it had been to England where it had seen lions<sup>2</sup>, elephants and rhea running wild. Another time, an Enxet

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. rheas.

<sup>2</sup>It is not specified whether this referred to pumas or African lions.

arrived in the region of Makthlawaiya and announced that the *egyapam* had been seen at the River Paraguay and was shortly coming inland bringing guns, powder, shot, sheep, horses, biscuits and yerba mate.

Other messages of the *egyapam* were rather more specific to the local bands. It advised on where to hunt and fish and could also predict misfortune such as illness or food shortage. It was also concerned with the morality of the local community and in the evening meetings would publicly identify those who had transgressed societal norms of conduct during the course of the day. Related to this was the teaching of the ten commandments.

Early on in the cult the Indians were exhorted to follow the teachings of the missionaries and in 1910, on a trip to the Caraya Vuelta area where the cult was extremely popular, a missionary found that he was exceptionally well received (Grubb 1914, 255f). Indeed, many of the Anglican converts participated, for a time, in both the Anglican service and the cult. This ceased in 1912 when the missionaries discovered what was going on and punished the offenders. It is probable that this resulted in a change in the attitude of the *egyapam* who began to criticize the missionaries for not giving the Indians all they wanted. Furthermore, it was announced that the *egyapam* of the cult would be much more generous than one about whom the missionaries taught. The Enxet were also told to hate foreigners and the letter with red marks was, in fact, an exhortation to annihilate them. The people were told that if they did not follow the *egyapam*'s teaching they would be punished by having their houses blown down and gardens destroyed.

## 6.3.2. ANALYSIS

### 6.3.2.1. Sources of the Movement

Clearly, many of the elements in the movement were derived from the teaching and example of the Anglican missionaries and, later, reference will be made to how specific elements of the missionary message were interpreted. Under



consideration here is why the Enxet identified the missionary message as providing a potential solution to the crisis.

As was shown in chapter three, the Enxet understood success in the empirical world to be dependent on an effective manipulation of the unseen world. The perceived success of the missionaries combined with their declaration that they possessed knowledge of the unseen world that was inaccessible to the Enxet, led the Indians to conclude that the missionaries were powerful *yohoxma* (Grubb 1911, 25). This was seen in the requests for the missionaries to heal the sick (Robins, SAMS mag., 1889; Grubb, SAMS mag., 1893; and Pride, SAMS mag., 1895), and make rain<sup>1</sup> (Pride, SAMS mag., 1894). They were even integrated into the Enxet explanatory theory of misfortune in the same way as *yohoxma* (Grubb 1911, 102 and 166).

The Enxet, of course, had no other way of understanding the missionaries since, given the latter's perceived characteristics and abilities, *yohoxma* was the only category in the Enxet world view in which they made sense. Indeed the influence of the Enxet constitutive rules in screening out aspects of the missionary message can be seen in the Indians' reaction to missionaries' attempts to discredit the *yohoxma*. One example was given by Grubb (1911, 154f) who had discovered the existence of a supposedly highly poisonous root, which the *yohoxma* were said to be capable of eating with impunity. To prove that this was a hoax, he gave the root to a *yohoxma*, challenging him to eat it. On doing so without any ill effects, Grubb also took a bite. He suffered no harm either but noted that:

...no sign of annoyance was evinced by the wizard such as he would have shown had he feared that my action would damage his reputation.

I was surprised at this, but later, in the presence of number of Indians, I referred to the incident, and said: "You have all feared this root, and have believed that only a witch-doctor could eat of it, and not die; but you saw me eat it, and no harm has come of it." I thought I had scored a great point, but old "Red head"<sup>2</sup>, who was present, quietly said: "We were not surprised, because you yourself are a witch-doctor."

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<sup>1</sup>This was a function of the *yohoxma*.

<sup>2</sup>The name of the *yohoxma*.

Events also conspired to reinforce this perception. For example, when the missionaries first obtained cattle for the Indians, they made a rule that they could not be butchered without their prior permission. This rule was broken on two occasions, and both times the Indians concerned suffered serious injuries (Grubb 1911, 245). Given the Enxet cosmology, it is not surprising that they interpreted this as a manifestation of the missionaries' mystical power and for many years no cow was killed without missionary permission<sup>1</sup>.

In response to the crisis the Indians decided to master the techniques for controlling the missionaries' sources of mystical power. This had started as early as 1891 when two youngsters attached themselves to Grubb to be trained as *yohoxma*<sup>2</sup> (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1891). However, it was only in 1897, after an attempt on Grubb's life, that the Enxet really began to search for the key to the missionaries' power (Grubb 1911, 266f). This was stimulated by the perceived miraculous nature of his survival which led them to conclude that he had either risen from the dead or been possessed by another being.

The missionaries were not the only exogenous influence on the new movement and the introduction of the mosquito net, or blanket, seems to have been derived from the Toba, the Enxet's southern neighbours, whose shamans traditionally entered blankets to receive messages from the unseen world (Miller 1975, 485). It is known that the Toba were travelling into Paraguay at this time preaching to the other tribes. For example, in 1916 a group of Toba arrived in Maroma (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1917) announcing that they had come to "civilize" the Enxet, to unite all Indians as one people, to teach that tribal wars should cease, and that all who did not agree would be crushed. Three years later, Sanderson (SAMS mag., 1919) heard that the Toba were preaching to the Maka and it seems likely that the Tobas were already preaching amongst the Enxet by 1910. The eclectic nature of the movement was further emphasized by the incorporation of Paraguayan cultural elements, such as crosses.

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<sup>1</sup>For another example see Hunt (1933, 153f).

<sup>2</sup>Grubb, at the time, believed that the youngsters wanted to become "pastors", an example of how he misinterpreted messages from the Indians.

### 6.3.2.2. The Millennium

A significant aspect of the movement was the proclamation of a new world as the definitive solution to the crisis. It was conceived of as a synthesis of both the old and the new. The presence of abundant rhea, the Enxet's favourite hunted food, was symbolic of a desire to return to the pre-crisis situation but the new world was also to include the most attractive elements of the white man's culture as symbolized by sugar, yerba mate, biscuits, guns, powder and shot. However, the call to destroy foreigners indicates that it was to be reserved for the Indians.

The idea of the millennium was derived from the missionaries' preaching of Jesus' "second coming", a key element of evangelical doctrine. However, the Enxet concept of time resulted in its radical transformation. Whilst the missionaries understood time to be a linear continuum, for the Chaco Indians time was circular and future events could not be conceived in anything but immediate terms (von Bremen 1987, 14; cf. Burrige 1969, 148). Consequently, the millennium was transformed from a distant future event into something imminent.

### 6.3.2.3. Understanding, Explanation, Prediction and Control

The available sources give little information on the Enxet's explanation and understanding of the crisis. There is no record of the development of a myth-dream (cf. Burrige 1960) although incipient examples have been noted among neighbouring peoples such as the Nivakle (Chase-Sardi 1981, 211f) and Toba<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the antipathy shown to the white man and the desire for his destruction imply that he was regarded as the cause of the crisis.

The Enxet perceived that the sources of the missionaries' power could provide solution to the crisis. Therefore, they determined to learn the ritual techniques by which these beings could be controlled. The difficulties of intercultural communication meant that this was not a straightforward task as will be illustrated by examining the missionaries' communication of the identity of the christian deity.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: A. Buckwalter (personal communication).

When the missionaries first arrived they informed the Indians that they had come to teach them about Nihomatasi, which they translated as "Good Spirit" (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1891 and 1891; and Hay, SAMS mag., 1896). However, this was a classic case of mistransmission. Nihomatasi was a compound word, the first part of which, "Nihoma", was a mispronunciation (or misprinting) of *kelyekhama*, a class of evil spirit<sup>1</sup> which the missionaries translated as the generic term for "spirits"<sup>2</sup>. "Tasi" is the verb meaning "it is good" and was frequently misused by the early missionaries as an adjective<sup>3</sup>. For the Enxet, it was impossible for a *kelyekhama* to be good, and the result was that they initially perceived the missionaries to be teaching about one of the most feared unseen beings (Grubb 1911, 25). Indeed, it was only in 1898 that the missionaries resolved to not use *kelyekhama* to refer to "any person of the Deity"<sup>4</sup>. However, the same words in reverse order, "*tasek kelyekhama*" continued to be used to describe angels. When the missionaries showed the Enxet pictures of angels they were interpreted literally, as illustrated by Grubb's (1911, 242) account of how the Indians:

...on seeing the picture of an angel, ..... evidently puzzled over it for a long time, and eventually remarked that they could not understand how he could use his wings, since they sprang from the backbone, instead of from the shoulder. It was a hard task to make it clear that angelic wings were only symbolical.

The Indian interpretation of these messages resulted in their creation of a new class of unseen being. Its characteristics reflect their attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction of a good *kelyekhama*. They are described as men with long white gowns and wings and, although they inhabit the same level of the universe as the *kelyekhama*, their home is at one side in an area filled with light symbolizing their goodness. Their ambiguous nature is reflected in the lack of definition of

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<sup>1</sup>This was made clear by Pride (SAMS mag., 1894) who wrote *kelyekhama* as "nekomah".

<sup>2</sup>Even the most recent dictionary of Enxet, compiled by E. Richards in the early 1980s, made the same error.

<sup>3</sup>The adjectival form of "good" is *takmela*.

<sup>4</sup>Source: the minutes of a missionary conference of 1898.

their name - they are said to be *maxa Dios*<sup>1</sup> *akkyasenaekha*<sup>2</sup>, "like God's servants", but at other times the *yohoxma* refer to them as *dios egagkok*, "our gods"<sup>3</sup>.

Another name used by the missionaries to express the christian deity was *egyapam*<sup>4</sup>. This was derived from the Lord's Prayer which commenced with the words "*egyapam negko'o*", that is "our father" (Pride, SAMS rep., 1912/13). The recitation of the Lord's Prayer was prominent in each Anglican service and so it is understandable that the Enxet came to regard *egyapam* as one of the main sources of missionary power. How the Enxet conceived of the *egyapam* is difficult to know but there are indications that they related it/them to the present-day "gods" of the *yohoxma*. This can be inferred from Sanderson's (SAMS mag., 1919) giving of "Short Blanket" as an alternative name for *egyapam*. He described it as a traditional spirit which sometimes appeared as a man of short stature. When I consulted a *yohoxma* about it he told me that the correct name in Enxet was *pense apawa* and that it was a class of *chonaegmen*, short unseen beings that live in the swamp (see section 3.3.1.). They are among the most common of auxiliary spirits used by *yohoxma*. The link with the "gods" of the *yohoxma* comes from an informant's information that *Dios* awards strong christian leaders amongst the Enxet with *Dios akkyasenaekha*, "angels", to protect them and which function as auxiliary spirits. The description given for them corresponds to that of *chonaegmen* which suggests a connection between them and the Short Blanket of Sanderson and, therefore, with the *egyapam*. When it is taken into account that the "gods" of the *yohoxma* are described as similar to angels then the conclusion that all these beings are one and the same becomes a distinct possibility. At the very least, this confused but intimate conjunction of *chonaegmen*, *Dios akkyasenaekha*, *egyapam* and the gods of the *yohoxma* within the Enxet meaning system suggests a tremendous fluidity in

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<sup>1</sup>*Dios* is the name now used by the Enxet to refer to their concept of the christian deity.

<sup>2</sup>*Dios akkyasenaekha* is one of the current words for angel.

<sup>3</sup>A similar re-interpretation occurred as the result of the missionary naming of Satan as *asamche kelyekhama*, "bad *kelyekhama*". It lead to the Enxet locating hell above the earth, in the world of the *kelyekhama*, instead of below.

<sup>4</sup>Meaning: "our father" or "the father".

the transforming cosmology of the Enxet as they attempted to interpret the message of the missionaries in the context of the *egyapam* cult. The ambiguity was not aided by the fact that the missionaries, on realizing their error with Nihomatasi, began to use the English word "God" to refer to the Supreme Being, this later being replaced, in 1906, with the Spanish term "Dios" (Editor, SAMS rep., 1906/7).

However, in whatever way these new unseen beings were understood, they were certainly used, within the context of the cult, to predict and control events in the empirical world in much the same way as the autochthonous spirits functioned in the traditional religion. Indeed, the concerns of the cult were similar to those of the traditional ritual practices, and included guidance on where to hunt and fish, the prediction of catastrophes, and healing. This is not surprising given the fact that it was the *yohoxma* who were the leaders of the movement.

The movement provided at least two methods by which the Enxet could receive guidance and predict events. The first was by direct revelation through the voice of the *egyapam* and the second involved the mediation of the *yohoxma* who interpreted the pieces of paper received from above. By considering the meaning of paper and writing for the Enxet, further light will be shed on how they creatively interpreted the world of the white man within the parameters of their constitutive rules.

Paper has frequently figured prominently in new religious movements amongst non-literate peoples and Wilson (1973, 312) indicated why this has been so when he described non-literate people's first perception of paper with writing on as something, "intrinsically powerful, because in response to (it) action was summoned and decisions communicated". Indeed, the Enxet, from their very first contact with the missionaries, were impressed by paper, and one of their first requests of the missionaries was to be taught to read (Robins, SAMS mag., 1890). They also made a direct association between the English and paper as was exemplified by their custom of leaving pieces of paper whenever they wanted to inform others that an Englishman was in the area (Grubb 1904, 75). Paper came to be regarded as the means, *par excellence*, by which the *egyapam* communicated with the missionaries, an assumption no doubt confirmed by the priority put on reading and writing by the latter and their declaration of the Bible as the "word of God". How this message was understood by the Enxet is illustrated by the

experience of a contemporary Indian who, during his initiation as a *yohoxma*, was taken to a world above in which many *Dios akkyasenaekha*<sup>1</sup> were sitting working at typewriters, evidently preparing messages to send below.

By receiving messages on paper, the Enxet *yohoxma* possessed definite proof that they had achieved an effective link with the European unseen beings. Moreover, by translating the message they continued to fulfil their traditional role as mediators between man and the unseen world. Indeed, paper itself functioned in much the same way as omens had<sup>2</sup>. The continuation of the traditional mode of thought was also evidenced in the use of red marks as the signal to destroy Europeans; in the past, war had been announced by taking a red arrow round the various bands.

The structure of the traditional religious system also determined the techniques by which the Enxet attempted to control the white man's sources of power. In contrast to the missionaries' conception of God as the supreme power in the universe, the Enxet conceived of the christian spirits as subject to the authority of the *yohoxma*, in the same way as auxiliary spirits. They could therefore be manipulated by the correct practice of rituals. Since the *yohoxma* controlled their auxiliary spirits by singing, they developed the same method to manipulate the *egyapam*. Unfortunately there is no information as to whether the songs were of christian or autochthonous origin.

Prayer fitted into the same shamanic structure, and its adoption by the Enxet probably reflected the emphasis put on it by the missionaries. From the evidence of prayer amongst today's Enxet, it is clear that, as with any ritual, they understood that it would bring certain success if performed correctly. Consequently, the form and words employed were exact copies of the missionaries' style (Hunt, SAMS rep., 1898). This understanding was reinforced by the missionaries' teaching that, "whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing we shall receive"<sup>3</sup>.

Once prayer was accepted as efficacious and integrated into the traditional structure, it is almost certain that its failures were explained away by secondary

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<sup>1</sup>He was probably referring to the "gods of the *yohoxma*".

<sup>2</sup>See section 3.3.2..

<sup>3</sup>Source: Minutes of a missionary conference 1898.

elaborations. How this functioned can be illustrated by reference to prayer as practised nowadays amongst the Enxet. They describe prayer, metaphorically, as a telephone call. However, to reach *Dios*<sup>1</sup> the line has to pass through the world of the *kelyekhama* who are capable of blocking it if the person praying is not sufficiently strong. A person's strength to pray is related to their living a moral life so, if a prayer is not answered, it is not the concept of prayer that is questioned but rather the morality of the person praying.

Many other innovative actions of the Enxet at this time, such as using a flag and carrying the cross in procession, clearly had a ritual function and may have been related to realizing the millennium.

However, it must be stressed that becoming aware of the white man's unseen beings did not imply a renunciation of their traditional pantheon of spirits. This was shown by the continued performance of their traditional rituals which were still regarded as possessing a certain efficacy (Pride, SAMS rep., 1901; and Grubb 1914, 145), and also indicated that the white man's unseen beings were not regarded as all powerful.

The resolution of the crisis was also addressed by the movement in a more direct way as seen in one aspect of the response to the breakdown in social organization and the disrespect shown to the norms of conduct. For an Enxet it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to confront someone who was guilty of wrongdoing. The deeply ingrained ethic of respecting other people's autonomy would not permit what they regarded as an assault on another person. However, this restriction did not apply to the *egyapam* who was able to name all those guilty of breaking the norms. The potential shame of being named exercised a powerful control over the band members.

#### 6.3.2.4. Prestige

Another major function of the movement was the restoration of the integrity of the Enxet which had been threatened by the crisis and their coming into contact

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<sup>1</sup>Nowadays, *Dios* is conceived by the Enxet as inhabiting the uppermost level in the universe.





with the obviously more successful white man. Their desire to gain equality with the white man was expressed in the promise of the *egyapam* to provide them with guns and was related to the development of magical techniques that would render them immune to bullets (Grubb 1911, 155). Wilson (1973, 269) has noted that this is a common phenomenon amongst societies under threat and has been interpreted by Burrige (1969, 39) as symbolizing, and protesting against the fact that a man of quality and courage had no alternative but to die or bow the head before any kind of man with access to guns. However, this interpretation suffers from a failure to accept that people can really believe in the efficacy of their ritual practices and a more reasonable interpretation can be inferred from Wilson's (1973, 269) remark that it is an "attempt to cope with the principal agency of the white man's power, the cardinal manifestation of his superior magic". By being able to nullify, or obtain in sufficient numbers the most powerful symbol of white superiority, the Enxet could regain their integrity as men and regard themselves as equal to the white man. The millennium, by proposing the re-attainment of a satisfactory sense of well-being and the destruction of the white man, was a further step along this road.

The promise of the *egyapam* to bring material goods indicates the influence that the white man's discourse on prestige was beginning to have on the Enxet. The Enxet realized that to compete with the white man on the latter's terms, they needed to obtain wealth. Since, for them, all material goods had been produced in some mythical period of time, the production of goods in factories was an idea that could not make sense to them. Consequently, they looked to the white man's spirits, which they would have regarded as responsible for the mythical creation of these goods, to provide them. On receiving the goods they would once again, according to the criteria of the white man, be *wese*.

The movement also served to re-validate some of the traditionally prestigious roles in Enxet society, especially that of the *yohoxma*. They had come under particular severe attack by the missionaries who had tried their utmost to discredit them (Grubb 1911, 148ff and 278ff). There were also indications that people were beginning to lose their respect for them (Grubb 1911, 149f). By occupying the leading roles in the cult the *yohoxma* were, implicitly, having their status legitimated by the white man's sources of power which, furthermore, effectively denied

potential challengers access to the new sources of power (cf. Wilson 1973, 349f).

#### 6.3.2.5. Duration of the Movement

According to my informants, the *egyapam* cult was still being practised as late as the early 1950s. However, it had, by this time, gone through a certain transformation, the most obvious aspect being the shedding of its revolutionist orientation as expressed in its call for a new world. It increasingly presented a purely thaumaturgical character, a common tendency amongst failed millennialist movements (Wilson 1973, 382), and came to be little more than just one other technique of the *yohoxma*.

### 6.4. Yannenpaewa<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.4.1. DESCRIPTION

During the period between the peak of the *egyapam* cult in around 1920 and the appearance of the next major independent new religious movement in the 1950s, the Enxet seem to have continued their traditional religious practices with very few significant innovations. They remained in contact with the Anglican church, but from 1928, due initially to restrictions put on their movement by the military, followed by a lack of personnel, the missionaries became markedly less active. Concomitantly, the crisis faced by the Enxet deepened as the pace of colonization increased. However, whilst it is certain that an understanding of the causes of the crisis, as expressed in mythical terms, continued to develop and

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<sup>1</sup>*Yannenpaewa* means: "similar to evangelical christianity".

influence the Indians, for some reason this putative "myth-dream" was not activated. This changed in the 1950s with the appearance of the *yannenpaewa* cult<sup>1</sup>.

The roots of this movement extend back to 1950 when the Nivakle people of the Mennonite Colonies heard that a "Saviour" had arrived in Mision La Paz, an Anglican Mission in the Argentinian Chaco. They immediately departed to see for themselves and on their return a few weeks later they began to hold religious meetings every night. One of the leaders of the new movement was a shaman called Duarte<sup>2</sup>. He had worked for many years in the sugar refineries of Argentina and had also been in contact with the Anglican Mission there. Whilst in Argentina he had become seriously ill and had been healed, through prayer, by a Nivakle preacher. As a result, he abandoned traditional shamanism and began preaching.

The first news the southern Enxet had about Duarte was in approximately 1954 when some of their people, who had heard him preach, returned home from working in the Mennonite colonies. There are various versions as to what they said. In one they announced that a fire from above was going to destroy the world within fifteen days and that if people wanted to be saved they would have to go to Duarte. Another version holds that they foretold a long drought and that "Jesucristo" would soon arrive in the west bringing food. Furthermore, the old would become young and the dead would be resurrected.

The message made a dramatic impression on the non-Anglican Enxet communities in a band stretching from Pozo Colorado almost to Concepcion<sup>3</sup>. They immediately departed for the west, leaving behind their jobs and many of their possessions.

They reached Duarte, who was probably located in Para Todo<sup>4</sup>, and began to listen to his message and wait for the millennium. He held services every

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<sup>1</sup>My information on this movement was mainly provided by Enxet participants. Other information was obtained from non-participating Enxet who observed the movement and there are also three works that give details on the movement amongst the Nivakle and Maka and which are useful in providing supplementary information: Regehr (1979 and 1981) and Braunstein (1981).

<sup>2</sup>Called Avojes in Nivakle and also known as Eduardo.

<sup>3</sup>Those to the north of Makthlawaiya did not take part.

<sup>4</sup>A Mennonite village.

evening, for which people met in a circle dressed in white, and he preached the "Good News" in Spanish and Nivakle. The sick were then lain on the floor in the middle of the circle and were healed by the laying on of hands and the singing of Spanish and Nivakle hymns. Duarte lead the singing from a book, which he claimed to be able to read in the dark. However, Bartel (1972, in Regehr 1979), a Mennonite missionary, observed that the book was in German and held upside down. Seemingly, Duarte was also able to miraculously produce food by putting a small amount outside his hut at night, such as a small cup of yerba mate, and in the morning it would be transformed into a whole sack. The following description of Duarte was provided by Bartel:

He liked to wear a long cassock-like coat of dark green material with yellow buttons, and with it a sort of priest's cap, and occasionally, also, he would put on a cross on a chain. Another time, however, he would appear in highly polished boots and officer's uniform, with rather a lot of stars and shoulder straps.

Some more critical accounts of what went on are presented by non-participants. Bartel mentioned that Duarte was paid for curing people and an Anglican informant told me that, if they wanted to receive the *magyaseyam*<sup>1</sup>, people were expected to give presents to Duarte. Women who could not give presents supposedly had sex with him. This is also said to have occurred when Duarte went to Asuncion to preach to the Maka (Braunstein 1981).

The content of his teaching is not absolutely clear. Regehr (1981, 109 and 113) confirmed that he did announce that the old would become young and the dead would rise and that those who did not repent would suffer a future catastrophe. People were to be saved by means of the Good News which, according to Braunstein (1981), signified a rejection of the traditional life. Dancing and drinking were forbidden, men were to cut their hair, and they were to abandon their traditional material culture. They were to dress like white men and to be kind and faithful to their spouses. Smoking cigarettes was banned but, according to my informants, they were told to smoke pipes, and during services they would all light up. The exclusivity of the movement is illustrated by the account of an Anglican

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<sup>1</sup>This is Enxet for "we do not doubt" and is used to mean "faith".

Indian, a friend of many of the participants, who passed through Para Todo at the time and was condemned as a follower of Satan.

The millennium did not arrive and instead, despite the perceived miracles of Duarte, the people began to suffer hunger and the children and old people began to die. After two months the Enxet returned to their ranches. However, they continued to follow Duarte's teaching and every night they held long services in which the sick were healed by prayer and singing in Nivakle. According to an Anglican Indian observer, the participants also shouted out the names of the virgin Mary and other biblical figures such as Noah, Moses, Abraham, Elijah and St. Paul. Paper continued to be important but, when an Anglican Indian once produced a Bible in Enxet, it was rejected for having a black cover and because they insisted that the Bible needed to be read in Spanish. They also possessed biblical text cards which were in German and English (Hawksbee, SAMS mag., 1956). The lives of the people outside the services were also transformed as was evidenced by their abstaining from alcohol and giving up dancing. Each community had a cult leader who, in all the cases I am aware of, had formerly been a *yohoxma*.

Duarte himself died only a few years later (Regehr 1981, 110) and this seems to have been associated with a reduction in enthusiasm. Most Enxet agree that he was killed by a *yohoxma*, although one informant insisted that he had not died but had risen up to heaven. However, the cult has never fully died out and there are still healers, known as *apteme yannenpaewa*<sup>1</sup>, who cure by singing in Nivakle.

## 6.4.2. ANALYSIS

### 6.4.2.1. Sources of the Movement

After many years in which the crisis had gone unresolved, Duarte was clearly perceived by the Enxet as someone who could bring meaning to their situation. He was, however, from a different tribe and the probable reason why an Enxet did not have a similar influence amongst his own people is that in egalitarian societies a charismatic leader or prophet needs to be an outsider, since social restrictions

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<sup>1</sup>Meaning: "those who do *yannenpaewa*".

endogenous to the society prevent its own members taking on such a role (cf. Burridge 1960, 42). Of course, once a cult is initiated from outside, any further leaders are capable of being produced from within the local society, as happened in each community that followed *yannenpaewa*. However, their authority was quite clearly morally subordinate to and dependent on Duarte. A similar situation happened in the *egyapam* cult in that, although there is no indication of the appearance of a single charismatic figure, the leadership that developed was clearly perceived as dependent on an outside authority, initially the missionaries and later probably the Toba. Furthermore, there is evidence that whenever independent Enxet prophets arose they were quickly rejected by other Enxet and, indeed, condemned as insane (Bevis, letter, 1927).

The sources of Duarte's message were various. The Anglican mission in Argentina, which had started in 1911 as an off-shoot of the Paraguayan Mission (Hunt 1933, 265) was clearly an influence. In fact, the Enxet claimed that Duarte had also previously been taught by the Paraguayan Anglicans (Hawksbee, SAMS mag., 1956), and this may have occurred in the mission station of Nanawa which functioned between 1917 and 1928 (Hunt 1933, 301ff). Other elements in the cult suggest that Duarte had been in contact with the Roman Catholic Missions on the River Pilcomayo and had been influenced by Pentecostalism through the Tobas.

However, although much of the original message had originated in the teaching of missionaries, its transmission was mediated by Duarte. It must, therefore, have been reconstructed to some degree by Duarte himself. Furthermore, since Duarte taught in Spanish and Nivakle, the majority of the Enxet would not have been able to directly understand his message. As a result, it would have been further mediated and re-interpreted by the few bi-lingual Enxet acting as translators<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Many Enxet that had lived on the frontier with the Nivakle and Maka were multi-lingual.

#### 6.4.2.2. The Millennium

As with the *egyapam* cult, the promise of an imminent new world was an integral part of the message. Unfortunately, little information is provided about the characteristics of the millennium, but in contrast to that of the *egyapam* cult it was no longer identified exclusively with the Enxet but, rather, was restricted to the followers of Duarte. This binary classification of man into good and evil was an attempt to deal with the disnomy of the crisis. Life had become confusingly multifaceted and so the division of the cosmos into two was an attempt to make it both more comprehensible and manageable (cf. Burrige 1969, 147).

#### 6.4.2.3. Understanding, Explanation, Prediction and Control

The *yannenpaewa* cult was a further attempt to gain control over the unseen beings of the white man. However, whilst in the *egyapam* cult the persistence of the traditional ritual practices had revealed a continuing confidence in the power of the autochthonous unseen beings, so their complete abandonment in *yannenpaewa* was evidence of a contrasting withdrawal of confidence. It did not imply a denial of these beings' existence but, rather, just as the *yohoxma* chose which beings to gain control over as auxiliary spirits, so the participants in *yannenpaewa*, predicating their choice on their perceptions of relative power, opted to prioritize their relationship with the white man's sources of power.

However, as the ontological non-rejection of the autochthonous unseen beings implies, participation in *yannenpaewa* did not indicate a fundamental transformation in the structure of the Enxet religious system. As in the *egyapam* cult, their conception of the white man's unseen beings was predicated on the traditional category *yohoxma*:auxiliary spirit. Since they were unable, or unwilling, to conceive of a spirit with a free will that could not be subjected to human ritual action, the white man's unseen beings came to be regarded as auxiliary spirits. This was evidenced in the form of the *yannenpaewa* rituals which were predicated on the *yohoxma*'s practices. Healing sessions made use of both the circle and singing, and although the latter was characterized by its christian content, its performance

continued to be shamanic in nature. Since it was essential when activating an auxiliary spirit in the traditional culture, to reproduce the song in the exact form that it was taught, so the Enxet continued to sing just as Duarte had shown them. This was therefore in Nivakle and the fact that it was unintelligible was irrelevant. The key was in the performance. The shouting out of the names of biblical figures, which was probably derived from a mixture of Pentecostalism and Catholicism, seems to have had a similar function and this is confirmed by a present-day *apteme yannenpaewa* who described how, whenever he healed, Noah and St. Paul arrived to assist him<sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately, the sources give no other information on the Enxet perception of the character of the European power sources. Jesucristo was specifically mentioned in the role of a messiah but little else is known. However, what is certain is that the Enxet and missionaries did not share the same perceptions of these beings. This can be illustrated by the example of a present-day *yohoxma*, who is also a pastor. He claims to possess only one auxiliary spirit, "Jesucristo", who he regards as so powerful that he has no need of any others. He describes him as a "good lad" who comes whenever he is summoned and always does whatever the *yohoxma* tells him. The contrast with the all-powerful Son of God of the missionaries is obvious.

Paper, with writing, also persisted as a perceived means of obtaining revelation. However, in contrast to the *egyapam* cult in which all paper had a potential mystical function, the followers of Duarte emphasized the Bible. This undoubtedly reflected an improved understanding of the missionary message that the Bible was the source of God's revelation. However, their illiteracy and concomitant insistence that the correct version of the Bible needed to be in Spanish indicates that their fundamental conception of writing had not changed. This is further confirmed by a present-day *apteme yannenpaewa* who possesses a Bible which he insists he received from "above". Indeed, an informant suggests that this conception was widespread at the time and tells of an Anglican Indian evangelist who, in the late 1940s, used to predict misfortune by pretending to read the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: C. Wallis (personal communication).



As with the *egyapam* cult, this movement also contributed more directly to a resolution of the crisis. By banning drink, many of the social problems resulting from the uncontrolled consumption of alcohol were avoided. Furthermore, the landowners' practice of giving alcohol to the Indians on pay-day, so that they were more easily cheated out of their wages, was no longer possible and this permitted an improved diet. The prohibition of feasting which could, literally, liquidate increasingly scarce resources overnight, had the same effect.

#### 6.4.2.4. Prestige

Re-affirming their integrity as men was the other major function of the movement. This was implicit in the announcement of the millennium, but Duarte went further by proposing the creation of a new man. The model for this new man was the missionary and, following missionary teaching, it involved a repudiation of their traditional customs and the adoption of the ways of the white man. Duarte was clearly regarded as the epitome of the new man and the use of white clothes was symbolic of their new-found "civilized" condition with which they would be able to compete with the dominator (Braunstein 1981). However, the repudiation of the past was not wholesale as was evidenced by the continued use of the pipe.

As had happened in the *egyapam* cult, the movement was also used to re-validate the position of the *yohoxma*.

#### 6.4.2.5. Duration of the Movement

Once the chiliastic propositions of the movement were proven to be unfounded, the initial revolutionist orientation gave way to predominantly thaumaturgical concerns in much the same way as had happened with the *egyapam* cult. Their disappointment at the non-arrival of the millennium did not, however, lead to a rejection of Duarte. Indeed the pragmatic nature of the Enxet was revealed in the way they absolved Duarte from all blame by accusing the Enxet mediators of Duarte's message of deceiving them. Indeed, his influence continues

today in the work of the small number of remaining *apteme yannenpaewa*. However, as a mass movement it seems to have died out by the late 1950s or early 1960s and the Enxet returned once more to their traditional practices. It was not until the mid-1960s that there was a further religious movement which this time involved the wholesale conversion of the Enxet to Anglicanism, and it is the relationship of the Enxet to the Anglican church which is the subject of the next section.

## 6.5. The Relationship of the Enxet to the Anglican Mission

The *egyapam* and *yannenpaewa* cults were typical examples of conversion movements in small-scale subsistence societies in that they aimed to restore prestige and provide an understanding of the crisis so as to enable a reimposition of control on the cosmos. However, specifically local factors can, at times, also exert a great influence on the character of a conversion movement. This can be illustrated by an examination of the minority of Enxet who responded to the crisis by settling on mission stations. Special attention will be given to the community of Makthlawaiya, the location of the central mission station from 1907 to 1991<sup>1</sup>.

The conversion of the Enxet to Anglicanism occurred in three distinct waves. The first took place between 1899 and 1910 when 149 Enxet were baptized and settled on the central mission station (Grubb 1911, 299). The next movement happened in the west of the Enxet territory and followed the founding of the mission station of Nanawa in 1916 (Hunt 1933, 301). In the period 1926 to 1936 there were 120 baptisms of these western people (Price, SAMS mag., 1936) most of whom subsequently moved onto Makthlawaiya in the late 1930s. The third wave was a mass conversion movement and between 1964 and 1970 there were more than 890 confirmations<sup>2</sup>.

The argument to be presented here is that the fundamental motive for the self-identification of the residents of mission stations with the Anglican church has

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<sup>1</sup>This will also include the colony of El Estribo which was settled by Indians from Makthlawaiya in 1985 and 1986.

<sup>2</sup>Sources: the Mission diaries and annual reports of the SAMS. Many of these were Sanapana and Angaite.

been economic and that it can be best understood as a response of hunter-gatherers to transformed economic circumstances. Furthermore, it will be shown that the Anglican identity of these Indians is not synonymous with the reality of their religious experience.

As hunter-gatherers, the location of the bands in the pre-colonial period had been determined by the availability of foraging resources. This continued to influence their residence decisions in the transformed post-colonial conditions. The Anglican mission stations were perceived by the Indians as areas of economic abundance and, consequently, many were attracted there to take advantage of what was on offer. This was done within the conceptual framework of immediate return hunter-gatherers<sup>1</sup>. The following section will describe the types of resources available on the missions and the techniques used by the Indians to exploit them.

The reason for an abundance of subsistence resources on the mission stations was a Mission policy which aimed to encourage the Indians to settle there (Grubb 1914, 58). The missionaries believed that this would enable them to give consistent teaching to the Indians (Bevis, letter, 1932). Essential to the policy was the provision of employment through the development of a vigorous and prosperous Mission economy. The first large-scale attempt was the establishment of the Paraguayan Chaco Indian Association<sup>2</sup> and, on its dissolution by Gibson Brothers, the missionaries commenced, in 1908, the Chaco Indian Cooperative Society (I.C.S.) (Hunt 1933, 252). This was centred on Makthlawaiya, and was essentially a cattle ranch with some adjacent small industries such as a leather shop and a carpentry (Caddow, SAMS rep., 1909/10). At its peak the I.C.S. possessed 22,500 hectares<sup>3</sup> and any resident Indian was entitled to employment<sup>4</sup>. Up to one thousand Indians could be provided for at any one time<sup>5</sup> (Train, letter, 1951). Although the I.C.S. was incorporated into the SAMS in 1936 (Bevis, letter, 1936), the ranch and other industries continued to function normally until the early 1960s when most of the

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<sup>1</sup>See section 3.4.

<sup>2</sup>See section 4.2.1.

<sup>3</sup>Source: The South American Missionary Society Trust Deed 1923.

<sup>4</sup>Source: Information for Missionary Candidates 1937.

<sup>5</sup>i.e. approximately 150 to 200 workers.

land was sold off<sup>1</sup>. Only the 3750 hectares of Makthlawaiya remained but the Mission did continue to provide work for a small number of Indians.

The offer of work proved irresistible to a minority of Enxet who took up permanent residence on the mission stations. They received guaranteed subsistence and, as Renshaw (1986 and 1988) has shown, paid employment did not necessarily contradict the Indians' deeply held egalitarian values since their income could be treated in immediate return terms. This was amply illustrated by the custom of the Makthlawaiya Indians who, whenever they required work during a drought, used to set fire to the cattle pasture<sup>2</sup>. To extinguish the fires the missionaries were obliged to hire large numbers of Indians for periods of up to 6 days (Diary 1968).

However, wage labour was not the only economic benefit associated with mission station residence. From an early date, various categories of Indian were provided with food on a daily basis. They included the old, the school children (Pride, SAMS rep., 1898), young babies (Gourley, SAMS rep., 1910/11) and patients. The attraction of free provisions can be judged by the epidemic of fish-bites that once afflicted a good number of old men on one station (SAMS mag., 1938). The patients initially received free food but, when the provisions stopped, there was a corresponding remarkable decrease in the number of cases.

Development projects have been a further popular source of recollection from the Anglican church, especially since the sale of the land and the reduction in employment opportunities. Wallis (1985) and von Bremen (1987) have shown that this is a Chaco-wide phenomenon and have described how the Indians impose their own concepts on the missionary-defined objectives of the projects. Consequently, long-term strategies aimed at the sedentarization of the Indians are transformed into immediate return foraging resources. In Makthlawaiya this has resulted in a series of projects which, from the missionaries perspective, have completely failed but which are remembered by the Indians as moments of rare abundance. Farming, normally a delayed return activity, is one example, and, indeed, Makthlawaiya was initially settled so that Indians without jobs could live by gardening (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1907/8). However, they quickly showed a marked

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Station diaries 1958 to 1962.

<sup>2</sup>Source: informants in Makthlawaiya.

disinclination to work their own plots and preferred to be paid to work on the Mission's garden (Morrey-Jones, SAMS rep., 1912/13). Again, in the early 1980s, a large number of Makthlawaiya Indians were encouraged to cultivate cotton. To enable them to eat prior to harvest they were given food-for-work and food credit and, during this period of immediate return, the project seemed reasonably successful. However, the debts the Indians built up were so large that they were impossible to repay, leaving the missionaries with no choice but to cancel them. No more credit was given, with the result that cotton cultivation ceased entirely - it no longer functioned as an immediate return activity.

A bakery was another project of the early 1980s and, although it was originally managed by the Mission with three Indians employed as bakers, the eventual aim was for the Indians to own and manage it themselves. While under Mission management it was a great financial success and the three bakers were probably the best-paid Indian employees in Makthlawaiya. However, when it was finally handed over to the bakers, production ceased almost immediately. They did make various successful requests to the Mission for credit to restart it but the bakery only functioned until the money ran out. Eventually, when in need of immediate cash, they sold off the machinery extremely cheaply. This was followed by the sale of the tin roof and, as a final measure, one of the bakers dismantled the oven and sold the bricks.

It could be argued that these examples show that the Indians have lacked awareness, knowledge, or understanding. However, this was not the case and, as Wallis (1985) pointed out, what was actually occurring was an intentional distortion of the projects to fit in with their own concepts and ideals. Indeed the whole concept of "*proyecto*" is regarded by them as signifying "money" and bears no resemblance to the western understanding of plan or programme (cf. Miller 1971, 152).

Even church activities have been converted into subsistence resources as exemplified by the Indian attitude to Bible schools. These have been regarded by missionaries as crucial elements of their work since, by gathering groups of Indians together for periods of between a week and a month, relatively intensive teaching can be undertaken. The Indians ostensibly share this objective and, indeed, frequently request Bible schools themselves. Whilst it is probable that one reason

for their enthusiasm is a desire to discover the secret of the white man's success in fact, for the Indians, a Bible school without provisions is almost a contradiction in terms. It is certainly unheard of. Furthermore, their participation in the schools is predicated on their assessment of the availability of other subsistence possibilities, and a decision on whether to hunt, fish, work or attend a Bible school would seem to be based on a kind of optimal foraging decision-making process. Certainly, when employment opportunities are scarce, Bible schools become extremely popular. For example, in 1940, when there was less work available on Makthlawaiya than at any time in its history, the "Annual Evangelists' School" was attended by record numbers (Train, SAMS mag., 1941).

One final example of mission stations as foraging resources concerns the availability of cattle. The Enxet view their custom of killing the white man's cattle as originating in mythical times (Bogado 1991, 7f) and, until at least the 1950s, it remained a popular activity. However, as colonization progressed, it became increasingly dangerous as many Indians were shot in reprisals (Sanderson, SAMS mag., 1941). In contrast, mission stations were relatively safe areas and, at the same time as the Indians were abandoning the practice elsewhere, it began to reach almost epidemic proportions on the stations. The Mission diaries for the late 1940s and early 1950s tell a story of almost continual cattle thieving. Indeed, in 1946 the mission lost 319 cattle in one year (Caddow, letter, 1946) and in 1950 a shortage of 1,182 cattle was noted over a period of perhaps four years (Train, letter, 1950). Talking today with Indians who were involved in the killings they have fond memories of this period and they laugh about the ways they used to fool the missionaries whenever they were caught. They knew that by showing a suitable degree of contrition they would be punished lightly and they vividly describe how they used to bow their heads and pretend to hold back the tears of sorrow for having committed such dreadful acts. Punishment was frequently restricted to working without pay, but since they continued to receive provisions, this was regarded by the Indians as a further benefit because it, at least, guaranteed subsistence.

The suspicion that the Indians viewed the Mission in purely the same terms as other business enterprises is suggested by the fact that, for most of the period under consideration, it had no more success than other ranches and quebracho

companies with similar employment opportunities in attracting Indians. Indeed, during the first decade of this century, the most active period of missionary enterprise, the river settlement of Puerto Cooper had a similar population to the central mission station (Morrey-Jones, SAMS rep., 1912/13). Furthermore, during this same period when the only non-Mission employment in the Chaco was near the River Paraguay, there were, in fact, no converts from that region (Grubb 1911, 41). A similar situation exists today as only those communities that benefit from Anglican financial assistance have churches.

This hypothesis is further confirmed by experiences on the mission stations themselves since there has been a close correlation between the availability of subsistence opportunities and the religious enthusiasm of the Indians. For example, when, in 1906, the prices of goods rose dramatically a number of Indians "fell away" (Grubb, SAMS rep. 1906/7). Again, in 1949, when the amount of work available was reduced there was a clear drop in church attendance (Train, SAMS rep., 1949).

Further evidence for the economic relationship between the Indians and the Mission was provided by the resistance of Indian women to the missionary message (cf. Gourley, SAMS rep., 1911/12; and Pride, SAMS mag., 1923). Traditionally they had provided the bulk of the food and produced most of the material culture (cf. Shimfield, SAMS mag, 1892; Pride, SAMS mag., 1894; and Grubb 1911, 69), but this pre-eminent economic position began to be threatened by the missionaries who favoured the men with the new economic opportunities. The women, therefore, strongly opposed the missionaries and were much slower than the men in converting. A similar pattern has been observed elsewhere in the Chaco (Loewen 1966b; and Seelwische 1974, 164).

The degree of allegiance that the Indians of Makthlawaiya felt to Anglicanism was clearly exhibited in the period 1953 to 1959 when the SAMS handed Makthlawaiya over to the American New Tribes Mission (NTM)<sup>1</sup>. The resources of the Americans were vastly superior to those of the Anglicans, and gave a definite impression of greater power. For example, whereas the Anglicans had

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<sup>1</sup>My sources for this period were the SAMS' annual reports and magazines, the mission station diary, and various informants, both Indian and Paraguayan, who lived on Makthlawaiya at the time.

normally travelled by horse and ox-cart, the Americans maintained two aeroplanes in Makthlawaiya. Furthermore, although one Anglican did remain during this period, he was clearly subordinate to the Americans. The response of the Indians was to ally themselves with the new power and between 1956 and 1958 a total of 106 Indians, almost the whole adult population of Makthlawaiya, were rebaptized as followers of the NTM.

As the Indians tell it today, it was a purely pragmatic response and they showed the same degree of level-headedness when the NTM left and the Anglicans re-asserted themselves in Makthlawaiya. In 1963 the missionaries decided to re-impose Anglicanism and to help in this process a former superintendent of the Mission, who had left in 1953, returned with the intention of preparing a small number of Indians for ordination as Anglican pastors. The day after his arrival in Makthlawaiya an Indian delegation formally requested the re-introduction of the Anglican communion service, thereby confirming their return to the fold (Diary 1963).

Switching denominational alliance is common amongst Chaco Indians (Miller 1971, 151; and von Bremen 1987, 23) and, at the level of intentionality, it still continues amongst the Indians of Makthlawaiya and El Estribo. The threat of abandoning Anglicanism is one of the techniques the Indians use when they want to force the Anglicans to give some economic benefit and, in the last three years, the Makthlawaiya and El Estribo Indians have threatened, at various times, to become Catholics, Pentecostals or Mennonites. These are no idle threats and I have attended meetings in El Estribo in which the Indians have resolved to intensify their contacts with both Mennonites and Pentecostals with the aim of persuading them to construct a church building. In these discussions the doctrinal and ecclesiological distinctions between the denominations are irrelevant, and the only interest of the Enxet is in which group of missionaries is most likely to provide the greatest financial help.

However, this behaviour can only be fully understood when it is recognised that the Enxet of Makthlawaiya and El Estribo have maintained a clear distinction between their relationship with the Anglican Mission and their true religious identity. They have created a facade of orthodox Anglicanism behind which they were able to develop an independent syncretistic religious system of which the



missionaries remained blissfully unaware. In doing this they have manifested both an excellent understanding and parallel rejection of many aspects of the missionary message. Their success has been predicated on following a dual strategy of hiding their traditional culture and mastering an acceptable Anglican discourse.

The missionaries' condemnation of the vast majority of Enxet customs was apparent to the Indians from the early days of the Mission. Although they initially opposed the missionaries, the defeat suffered by the *yohoxma* in a rebellion in the central mission station encouraged them to change their strategy (Diary 1900; Grubb 1911, 278ff; and Hunt 1933, 202ff). They quite deliberately and systematically began to hide a wide range of traditional practices from the missionaries. The *yohoxma* quickly learnt to sing quietly and as a result were able to continue their healing ceremonies on the mission stations without the missionaries' knowledge. This process started as early as 1901 as shown by the *yohoxma* who was caught having carefully closed the doors and windows of a hut before beginning to sing (Diary 1901). The Indians' rapid success can be inferred from Grubb's (1911, 288) assertion that:

...it would be difficult to-day to find an Indian within the mission sphere of influence so bold as to admit that he had anything to do with witchcraft.

In fact, there is no indication that the people of Makthlawaiya ever abandoned shamanism. Members of the older generation affirm that, for as long as they can remember, the *yohoxma* have always practised in Makthlawaiya without the missionaries' knowledge. Indeed, so successful were they that two *yohoxma* were able to become paid evangelists in the 1930s and of the three Enxet chosen to be pastor in 1963, two of them were practising *yohoxma*. Nowadays, it is normal for church leaders to be *yohoxma* and many of them, unbeknown to the non-Indians, are regular attenders at the Synod of the Anglican church.

The Indians responded to the Anglican prohibitions on dancing and drinking by ostensibly supporting them but, whenever they wanted to dance or drink, they used to leave the Mission for a time. One old Indian woman, who in the 1920s lived with a missionary family, told me how the majority of the Enxet used to leave Makthlawaiya in the evenings to dance in a neighbouring ranch. Although she also

wanted to participate she was always sent back by the other Indians who told her that if the missionaries missed her then they would all be found out. The Indians always ensured that they returned in time for the church service. When the time came for the initiation of their children, the parents used to take them away on trips so that the ceremony could be performed elsewhere.

Infanticide also continued without the knowledge of the missionaries. It was so well hidden that even when an Indian woman had two children by missionaries, they were killed without the missionaries ever knowing of their existence. Infanticide was also disguised by changing the technique employed to that of starving unwanted babies (cf. Padbury and Wedgwood, letter, 1960). This could be presented to the missionaries as an event outside the control of the Indians involved.

Mourning rites were also difficult to continue due to the proximity of the missionaries. Nevertheless, because the Enxet continued to regard a deceased's *eghag'ak* as potentially dangerous, they remained a necessity. The Indians responded by adapting the rites so that they remained efficacious but no longer offended the missionaries. This was achieved by desisting from the practice of burning their houses and moving to another location, and, instead, they began to merely modify their houses, such as by changing the location of the doors and windows. This practice commenced as early as 1894 (Grubb 1914, 121) and continues today. Its purpose is to confuse the *eghag'ak* which can no longer recognise its house and is therefore unable to find its relatives to harm them. The modifications usually go unnoticed by the missionaries. The continuation of other death rites, such as the *metaemog* revenge magic, has proved more difficult due to the fact that the missionaries presided over many of the funerals. I do not have information on the Mission Indians' response in the early days of contact, but at the present time the *metaemog* is still commonly practised on both Makthlawaiya and El Estribo.

The other strategy used by the Indians to hide their traditional customs was their exposition of an orthodox Anglican discourse, and their ability to say just what the listener wanted to hear was remarked on by Grubb (1914, 96). One aspect of this was a denunciation of their traditional culture in terms that were learnt from,

and as strong as, those used by the missionaries. An example of this was seen in the introductory chapter and will be examined below.

All Enxet, when ill, look to the *yohoxma* for help. At the same time all Indians, even *yohoxma*, fiercely denounce shamanism to the missionaries. This was clearly observed in the behaviour of Sixto and Anselmo but, for a better understanding of the events described, it is necessary to explain my role in El Estribo more fully. At the time I was responsible for the Anglican church's development projects in El Estribo. Therefore, for the Indians to obtain economic benefits I was the person who had to be influenced: in effect, I was the foraging resource. The people, at the time, viewed me as a missionary and, consequently, attributed the same attitudes to me that they had observed in other missionaries. They assumed, therefore, that if I was to find out that they still followed the *yohoxma*, then I would refuse to give them financial support. For this reason I was presented with an articulate discourse that denounced the *yohoxma* in terms that I could understand and which had been learnt from the missionaries of the past. Nevertheless, certain elements, such as the two deaths of the *yohoxma*, continued to provide evidence of the persistence of the traditional world view.

However, the falseness of this discourse was revealed when I managed to observe the *yohoxma* at work. When I did not condemn what I saw but, rather, was extremely positive about it, there was a complete change in the behaviour of the Indians towards me. They realized that it was pointless continuing with the same tactics since it was not going to make any difference to the *proyectos* they would receive and from that time our relationship was able to develop along more honest lines.

The Enxet have also learnt to expound Anglican theology so well that they can give an excellent impression of doctrinal orthodoxy. Much of their success in this has been due to the formation of "partial equivalence structures". This refers to the consistently distinct interpretation of specific behaviours by members of different cultures without their suspecting that it signifies something quite different for a member of the other culture (Harwood 1978). For example, whenever the name Jesus is mentioned, it is understood by the Enxet to be referring to an auxiliary spirit, and by the missionaries to the all powerful Son of God. However, one of the best examples of this process has been the use of the term *ayasaxma*.

From an early date this was understood by the missionaries to mean "sin" or "sinner" (Hunt, SAMS rep., 1898). However, the Enxet did not possess a concept of sin (cf. Obeyesekere 1981, 76ff; and Burrige 1991, 123ff) and the correct meaning of the word was "ignorant" or "insane". For the last ninety years both missionaries and Indians have maintained their respective, and distinctive, understandings of *ayasaxma* without realizing that it meant something quite different to the other party.

The Enxet were facilitated in their strategy by the missionary emphasis on behavioural change as evidence of conversion (Grubb 1914, 213). By understanding how they were expected to act as converts they could convince the missionaries of an inner conversion. Further unintentional assistance was provided by the "routinization" of the Mission that occurred with the establishment of mission stations (cf. Beidelman 1974, 242f). During the first ten years of the Mission there had been close contact between the missionaries and the Enxet, but as the Mission became much more of a business the relationship became increasingly formal with the result that the missionaries lost contact with what was happening in the Indian village<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, although the mission station Enxet have intentionally presented to the missionaries an image of Anglican orthodoxy, the reality of their religious identity has been quite different. As residence on the mission stations was only permitted if certain rules were followed and since "converts" were clearly perceived as being in the most advantageous positions, it was viewed by the Indians as a necessary strategy to enable them to enjoy the economic benefits offered by the missionaries. However, religious change amongst the Mission Indians was not restricted to the creation of an Anglican facade. They too had suffered from the crisis and, consequently, attempted to reconstruct their culture in much the same way as the non-Mission Enxet. Although this was done independently of their identity as Anglicans, it did not preclude the incorporation of aspects of the Anglican message into their traditional religious system. Furthermore, by imposing their own meanings on Anglican rituals, even those in which the missionaries

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 3 for the observations of a non-Christian Englishman who worked in the Chaco during the 1920s and was aware of the situation on the mission stations.

participated, they were able to assert their *de facto* autonomy without the missionaries ever realizing what was happening.

An example from El Estribo illustrates the character of the imposed alternative meanings. When this colony was first settled in 1985 the missionaries decided not to take up residence there, but rather to visit periodically. Since then the Indians have attempted to obtain from the Anglican church a resident missionary, a brick church and various development projects. After five unsuccessful years a young Indian church leader announced to the people that the reason they had not been successful in their objectives was because they were not practising the sacraments correctly. He pointed out that, prior to the 1950s, the Makthlawaiya Indians had been much better off and that this had been the result of the way they celebrated the sacraments. Consequently, to realize their contemporary desires it would be necessary to return to the former methods of celebration. Therefore, after an old evangelist had taught the correct performance, they put it into practice with the intention of activating *Dios* into fulfilling their requests.

Clearly, the Mission Enxet were able to reinterpret Anglican rituals within the conceptual framework of their traditional religion despite the fact that the form of the rituals was outwardly orthodox. Therefore they believed that correct performance would bring the desired results. However, just as in hunting it was necessary to follow a dual strategy of influencing the mystical powers and being skilful in the practical techniques of the hunt, so the same conception was applied to their relationship with the missionaries. They attempted to control the power sources of the missionaries whilst simultaneously employing more practical techniques. These included pleasing the missionaries by seemingly fulfilling their message, presenting an impression of poverty, begging, and threatening to abandon the Anglicans if their requests were denied. The fact that many Indians still identify with the Anglicans is a testament to the success of the Enxet in achieving their ends.

## 6.6. Summary

This chapter has examined the response of the Enxet to the colonization of their land by the white man. It was shown that in the early days of colonization, at a time when the Enxet were still virtually independent, religious change was minimal and observers were much more impressed by the conservatism of the Enxet. However, as colonization progressed and epidemics became more frequent and damaging, the Enxet began to perceive that their culture was in crisis. Assuming an active role as social actors, they began to search for ways to recreate their culture with the aim of restoring their sense of well-being.

Three separate conversion movements were considered, and it was shown that the *egyapam* and *yannenpaewa* cults manifested two major concerns. The first was a desire to understand and explain the crisis that they were experiencing. This was viewed as having a superempirical cause and they aimed to resolve it by regaining control of the unseen world. The second concern was to recover their prestige, threatened, and eventually lost, by their transformation into a dominated people. The mechanism by which they achieved this was intercultural sociality, and the most significant relationship they developed was with the missionaries of the South American Missionary Society. These missionaries transmitted a message to the Enxet which was interpreted within the framework of the latter's traditional religious system. This process conforms to the propositions of the theoretical model presented in chapter two.

However, the third movement had a seemingly quite different character. It entailed conversion to Anglicanism and residence on mission stations and, although converts were preoccupied with the same concerns as the participants in the other two movements, their strategy for coping with the crisis was heavily influenced by a culturally specific factor, their identity as immediate return hunter-gatherers. They realized that the Mission could be a source of subsistence in the changed economic circumstances, and therefore decided to enter into a relationship with the owners of the resource. This necessitated conversion to Anglicanism but it has been shown that this has been no more than a technique to guarantee access to the economic benefits on offer. The real religious identity of these Enxet converts was

hidden behind a facade of orthodox Anglicanism and much of it could be explained by the propositions of the theoretical model.

Further consideration of these conversion movements will be left to the next chapter in which an overview of the whole process of religious change amongst the Enxet will be undertaken.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the argument presented so far and, in particular, consider the whole process of religious change amongst the Enxet in the context of the explanatory model developed in chapter two. This model attempted to provide a theoretical framework within which conversion movements in small-scale subsistence societies could be understood. However, as a first step, some consideration will be given to the methodology employed.

### 7.1. Methodological Considerations

This investigation has, unfortunately, suffered from two failings derived from the methodology: an incompleteness of data and a pre-interpretation.

The incompleteness of the data has been due to a number of factors. In the literature, information was limited to what observers were able and willing to record. Since the missionaries tended to restrict themselves to their mission stations, observations from non-Mission communities were necessarily limited. Furthermore, the fact that the Indians hid much of their behaviour from the missionaries meant that a large part of what went on could not be observed. This was, of course, even truer of the Indians' metaculture. All of this was compounded by a missionary self-censorship in that they recorded only what was of interest to them. The data from informants was limited by the experiences of the people involved and their ability to remember events.

The information from both the literature and informants was also influenced by the interpretation of the observers. How the missionaries understood and recorded their observations was dependent on their ideologies and prejudices and this distorted the data to a certain extent. Informants' information suffered from similar difficulties and, additionally, past events were subjected to a reinterpretation in the light of more recent experiences.

Nevertheless, I believe that it has been possible to obtain enough information of sufficient quality to fulfil the aims of this study. This has been facilitated by using a wide range of very different sources and also by my own



experiences amongst the Enxet which have provided insights into past events which would otherwise have been impossible to understand. The task now is to examine the whole process of religious change amongst the Enxet within the context of the explanatory model.

## 7.2. The Structure of the Intersocietal Contact

The model suggested that a key explanatory factor in religious conversion could be derived from the principle of the interconnectedness of cultures and was defined as the structure of the contact between societies. As a general rule it was proposed that this could be conceived of in terms of the degree of domination of one society over another and that the greater the differential in the relative domination between two societies then the more likely it was for the pre-conditions for religious change to appear in the dominated society.

In chapter three it was shown that, prior to 1885, the societies of the Enxet and the white man could be said to be in equilibrium in that neither was able to dominate the other. However, as described in chapter four, the sale of the Chaco to foreign speculators and the commencement of the invasion of Enxet territory by the white man resulted in a change in the structure of the contact. Initially, this was a slow process and in the first twenty-five years White colonization was limited to the land near the River Paraguay. However, from 1910 White penetration began to speed up significantly and the Enxet soon found themselves in the position of a dominated people in their own land. They were alienated from the control of the productive resources within their own territory and were obliged to become a pool of cheap labour for the capitalist invaders.

The Enxet, therefore, became victims of the worldwide expansion of Europe and it is clear that the metamorphosis of the structure of the intersocietal contact was fundamental in causing a transformation of the empirical environment in which the Chaco Indians existed.

### 7.3. The Development of the Pre-conditions for Religious Change

Change, as was pointed out in chapter two, is a normal process in any society. However, its scale and rapidity is a function of the success, or otherwise, of a culture in satisfying the needs and desires of its participants. This is directly related to the material conditions of the total environment which, as just mentioned, are dependent on the structure of the intersocietal contact and the degree of control a society has over the local productive resources.

The model proposed that, amongst societies in equilibrium, change would be minimal. This was the situation in the Chaco prior to 1885 and, as shown in chapter three, the traditional culture did provide an adequate sense of well-being (*nenmelae*). Change occurred in this period but, although it was directly related to contact with neighbouring societies, including that of the white man, it was characterized as "diffusion"<sup>1</sup>. Elements of neighbouring cultures were received and were judged according to their usefulness and compatibility, and those perceived as advantageous were adopted. As chapters three and five showed, these new elements were understood and explained within the terms of the traditional world view. Therefore horses and dogs had *eghag'ak*, mirrors could make unseen beings visible to the *yohoxma*, and compasses functioned by means of captured spirits. It is clear that there were no fundamental transformations in the religious system.

With colonialism there was a dramatic change in the situation of the Enxet. The increased contact with the white man and the loss of control over their productive resources resulted in the development of a crisis which, in chapter five, was shown to be all-encompassing. Even before colonization was in full swing, the Enxet were exposed to white diseases which assaulted them in the form of epidemics. Communities were devastated and the population was drastically reduced. The pre-colonial economy came under threat and with its demise the Enxet were forced to enter the labour market in an extremely disadvantaged position. This resulted in a subsistence crisis in which the Enxet were obliged to spend many more hours per day in attempting to satisfy, frequently unsuccessfully, their subsistence requirements. Their society became increasingly disorganized, as

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<sup>1</sup>See section 2.2.2..

was manifested in a lessening of respect for societal norms and other people and their concomitant integration into an alien and hierarchical social structure in which they occupied the most marginalized position. Finally, their sense of integrity as humans suffered a tremendous blow as they came up against an obviously more successful being, the white man, who backed up his superiority with the symbol of his dominance, the gun.

The Enxet's perception of the crisis led them to draw the conclusion that their culture was no longer functioning adequately and chapter two suggested that this could be conceived of by reference to two key aspects of culture. The first involved the function of religion in Enxet culture which, it was suggested, dealt with assumptions about power and was used to understand, explain, predict and control the cosmos with the aim of achieving success in the empirical world<sup>1</sup>. The crisis was evidence that their cosmology no longer enabled them to adequately understand and explain their experiences and that their ritual practices were no longer sufficiently efficacious in manipulating the superempirical sources of power. The second aspect referred to prestige: their encounter with the white man resulted in a reduction in their sense of self-worth and confusion within their own society over the criteria for judging status and roles.

#### 7.4. The Response of the Enxet

The response of the Enxet to the crisis was examined in the context of three conversion movements. These were attempts by the Enxet to construct a more satisfying culture, and they will be examined, in the following sections, with reference to the theoretical model developed in chapter two.

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<sup>1</sup>See sections 2.2.2.1. and 3.3..

#### 7.4.1. THE ENXET AS SOCIAL ACTORS<sup>1</sup>

The response of the Enxet was both dynamic and creative. As social actors they embarked on a process of imposing meaning on their experiences within the context of the transformed environment. As mentioned in chapter two, Wilson (1973, 327) identified two elements in this process. The first was the development of an immanent and inchoate understanding of the crisis within the society as a whole, which has been characterized as a "myth-dream". Unfortunately, the literature provided little direct evidence for its existence amongst the Enxet. Nevertheless, given its presence amongst neighbouring and culturally similar peoples, plus the evidence for its activation, it is safe to assume that it did develop amongst the Enxet<sup>2</sup>. This "activation" was referred to by Wilson as "spasmodic cults", that is the development of conversion movements usually due to the action of charismatic individuals. These cults clarify and give meaning to the myth-dream by stimulating the creation of a more satisfying culture, one which will restore a sense of well-being to those in crisis. This study has examined a number of examples of this activation. The impulse for the *egyapam* cult came, in its early stages, from the preaching of the first Anglican converts. As it developed, others took on the leading roles although, unfortunately, there is little information about them except that they were *yohoxma*. The movement's early innovators seem to have used the authority of the missionaries to back up their claims and propositions, and in the later stages of the movement this function seems to have been fulfilled by Toba preachers. After the *egyapam* cult became less active there was a period in which there were no conversion movements. Undoubtedly the myth-dream continued to evolve, but no individuals arose who were capable of activating it. This changed in the 1950s with the commencement of the second movement examined, the *yannenpaewa* cult. This arose from the initiative of a Nivakle, Duarte, who, through his preaching, was able to activate the myth-dream once more. The final example of an exceptional individual, although much less dramatic, concerned the young leader in El Estribo. He came to a realization of

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<sup>1</sup>cf. sections 2.1.1. and 2.2.3.1..

<sup>2</sup>Burridge (1960, 27) pointed out that: "the fact that a myth-dream may not have been reported does not mean that it did not exist."

how the Enxet could fulfil their desires and was able to convince the people to follow his suggestions.

#### 7.4.2. INTERCULTURAL SOCIALITY<sup>1</sup>

The explanatory model in chapter two suggested that intercultural sociality is a mechanism of religious change. Societies in crisis find the sources for the reconstruction of their cultures in the cultures of their neighbours, especially in those of the dominant societies which are regarded as both successful and the cause of the crisis. By a process of intercultural communication, the members of a society in crisis are able to obtain information about what they perceive to be the secret of the success of the dominant society.

It was shown that this was the case amongst the Enxet. They received innovations from a number of societies but predominantly from the colonizers of whom one group took on the principal role of attempting to change the Enxet: the SAMS' missionaries. The transmission of their message took the form of an intercultural communication network. In chapter two it was proposed that the greater the differences between cultures, the more difficult it is to achieve effective communication, defined as occurring when the transmitter's intended meaning is the same as that inferred by the receiver (cf. Whiteman 1983b, 433). This difficulty is the result of the differences of meaning in the symbols employed by the respective cultures. To achieve effective communication the meaning of the symbols should be shared by both the transmitter and the receiver (cf. Miller 1975, 477).

Effective communication did not occur between the Enxet and the missionaries for various reasons. The missionaries did not understand the symbol system of the Enxet well enough to be able to encode their messages correctly. This was partly due to their inadequate understanding of the Enxet language but was also a result of their incorrectly receiving messages from the Indians. To a certain extent this was caused by their prejudices and could be conceived of as

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<sup>1</sup>See sections 2.1.2. and 2.2.3.2..

"noise"<sup>1</sup>. The missionaries could not perceive certain Indian messages because they conflicted too much with their constitutive rules. For example, they could not conceive of a universe in which God did not exist as anything but evil and Indian messages which said otherwise were ignored. Again, since they had no experience of a universe with a vast number of different classes of spirits, they understood all Indian unseen beings to be "demons" and even transformed the word for one class of evil spirit, *kelyekhama*, into the generic term for "spirit". Consequently, when the missionaries transmitted their message it was predicated on a misunderstanding of Enxet symbols.

The inherent ambiguity of the message allowed the Enxet to actively re-interpret its contents and how this was done will be examined in terms of the two key aspects of the crisis that were identified, that is, the recovery of control over the cosmos and the restoration of the Indians' integrity and self-worth<sup>2</sup>. The Enxet's attempts to regain control centred on the development of efficacious ritual techniques with which to manipulate the unseen beings of the universe. Regaining their integrity was bi-dimensional in character and involved both competing with the invader according to the terms of his discourse on prestige, and the re-ordering of the criteria for judging status and roles within their own communities and society.

#### 7.4.2.1. Regaining Control of the Cosmos

The Enxet looked to the representatives of the seemingly successful dominant society, the missionaries, for information on how to understand and control the transformed conditions. This was because the success of the white man was taken as evidence of the power of his unseen beings. The Enxet, therefore, determined to develop a relationship with these power sources and the means by which they conceived of achieving this were consistent with the constitutive rules of their traditional religious structure. They thus understood, and subsequently

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<sup>1</sup>See section 2.1.2.v.a.

<sup>2</sup>See also section 2.2.2..

practised, the missionaries' techniques for communicating with their deity, that is prayer and biblical revelation, within a shamanic framework. The christian spirits were interpreted within the terms of the Enxet's constitutive rules governing the behaviour of unseen beings, and so when it came to influencing them they were regarded as no more than potential auxiliary spirits. They could therefore be controlled through the correct enactment of the relevant rituals. These rituals were identified as those of the missionaries and were also conceived of within a shamanic structure. They included prayer meetings, the procession of the cross, singing and the Anglican sacraments.

Even when the central figures of Enxet ritual, the *yohoxma*, were discredited, the religious structure remained the same and, indeed, this was manifested by the continued activity of the *yohoxma* in the conversion movements, although in a different guise. However, the clearest evidence for the persistence of the traditional religious structure is in the character of the contemporary religious system of the Anglican Indians. Despite one hundred years of intimate contact with the missionaries, who have never ceased trying to influence the Enxet, the fundamental aspects of the traditional religious structure have remained intact. The Enxet still view the universe as multi-levelled, they continue to conceive of a vast pantheon of unseen beings, many of them virtually unchanged in character from pre-colonial times, and even the *yohoxma* continue to play extremely prominent and important roles in the communities. Indeed, many of the pastors are *yohoxma*, and even those who are not still function within a world view that is structurally shamanic. Christianity has in no way replaced the traditional religion, but, rather, elements of it that have been deemed useful and efficacious by the Indians have been incorporated by them into a fundamentally unchanged framework.

#### 7.4.2.2. Recovering Integrity and Prestige

As mentioned, the attempts of the Enxet to deal with the crisis of prestige had a bi-dimensional character. With respect to the white man, they aimed to compete with him within the terms of his own discourse which was predicated on the possession of wealth. Therefore, they attempted to understand how the white

man obtained his abundance of possessions and this they did within the terms of their own constitutive rules. For the Enxet, all goods had originated in mythical times and their availability was dependent on the action of the *ekyokxa* of the object. The concept of capitalist production was meaningless to them. Therefore, they understood that the white man had obtained his wealth and power through his relationship with his unseen beings, the *ekyokxa*, of his goods. In the first movement considered the *ekyokxa* was identified with the *egyapam* and in the *yannenpaewa* cult a similar role was probably played by Jesucristo. The Enxet believed that these spirits would bring them these mythically created goods so as to enable them to compete with the white man. Even in 1991 in El Estribo the Enxet manifested an incomplete understanding of the workings of the white man's world; they continued to believe that obtaining projects and beneficent missionaries depended ultimately on influencing the unseen world rather than writing a convincing proposal to an international development agency.

The other dimension was endogenous to their society and dealt with the re-establishment of criteria for determining status and roles amongst themselves. This was ultimately understood, again, in terms of the manipulation of the unseen world since success in the activities that traditionally conferred prestige was predicated on the control of unseen beings. For example, no one could be a successful hunter or *yohoxma* without having mastered the relevant mystical techniques. Consequently, the ability to control the sources of power of the white man became an essential element of judging status amongst the Enxet as was seen in the way the *yohoxma* took a leading role in the conversion movements.

#### 7.4.3. BARRIERS TO CHANGE

To a certain extent the Enxet had little choice on how they interpreted the missionaries' messages in that the range of possible understandings was limited by the existing constitutive rules. Therefore, in the early colonial period, the meaning imputed by the missionaries to certain symbols was almost impossible for the Enxet to conceive of even if the missionaries had been able to encode their messages more accurately. For example, the delayed millennium of the missionaries,



predicated as it was on a linear view of time, was interpreted by the Enxet, in accordance with their circular concept of time, as immediate. However, as time passed, new experiences and the persistent transmission of messages from the invaders did lead to modifications in the world view of the Enxet and a consequent broadening of their categories of meaning. This resulted in a narrowing of difference in the meanings imputed to symbols by missionaries and Indians. This was observed in the case of paper: in the *egyapam* cult, all paper with writing on was considered a potential means of communicating with the white man's spirits whilst in *yannenpaewa* the understanding had evolved so that only the Bible was regarded in this way. However, the underlying conception of how this communication functioned did not vary and remained structurally shamanic.

Why traditional structures are so persistent is difficult to know for certain but it does seem that whilst modifying peripheral elements of a religious system is relatively easy, the wholesale structural transformation of the constitutive rules is a much different proposition. It implies paradigmatic transformations of such significance that cultures in closed predicaments are almost incapable of carrying them out (cf. Horton 1970; Wright 1989, 228) and, as mentioned in section 2.2.2.1., certain constitutive rules are just not open to question. Indeed, the experiences of the Enxet seem to uphold the notion of "barriers to change" discussed in section 2.2.3.3..

Related to this is the pragmatic nature of the Enxet. The incorporation of innovations into their religious system was based on their perceived efficacy. Therefore, in the *egyapam* cult the missionaries were copied once the Enxet had observed the missionaries' power in action as epitomized in the returning to life of Grubb. In the *yannenpaewa* cult, the miracles of Duarte proved the veracity of what he said and did, and in El Estribo the memories of the former prosperity of the Mission Enxet was taken as evidence of the efficacy of the sacraments in the form in which they were practised prior to the arrival of the NTM. Pragmatism also explained the persistence of many elements of the traditional religion which continued to be viewed as contributing to an understanding and control of the universe. For example, the autochthonous unseen beings continued to be perceived as causes of some misfortune and success and, since the *yohoxma* were considered capable of controlling these beings, as evidenced in their past success, they

continued to fulfil this function. But the *yohoxma* have not been perceived as capable of dealing with the alien *ekyokxa* that have caused the epidemics.

#### 7.4.4. THE MEDIATION OF THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE

A further point of relevance to the process of intercultural communication is that the message of the missionaries was only directly received by a small number of Indians<sup>1</sup>. Of these, a small number of exceptional people, who were referred to earlier, took on the task of mediating the missionaries' message. By re-interpreting it, they gave it relevance and significance and then retransmitted it to the other Enxet in terms that could be understood. Duarte was an example of a successful mediator. Although he was not Enxet, he was from a very similar culture and was therefore much more able than the missionaries to make his message intelligible. Indeed, because his message was not transmitted in Enxet, it was further mediated by some exceptional multilingual Enxet thus making it even more comprehensible.

#### 7.5. The Limitations of the Theoretical Model

Although the explanations of the *egyapam* and *yannenpaewa* conversion movements were consistent with the propositions of the theoretical model, the conversion to Anglicanism, the third movement considered, illustrated its limitations. It showed how culturally specific factors can intercede in a conversion movement to influence its character. In this example, the adoption of Anglicanism by a minority of Enxet was a consequence of their hunter-gatherer identity. They perceived the Anglican church to be a source of subsistence and so decided to enter into a relationship with the owners of that resource, the missionaries. This was achieved within their immediate return conceptual framework. An integral part of this strategy was the adoption of orthodox Anglicanism but, although it influenced the character of the movement, it has never been more than a facade and should

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<sup>1</sup>cf. section 2.2.3.2..

be viewed merely as a foraging technique. Their Anglican identity was divorced from their true religious identity which, as with the non-Mission Enxet, continued and was transformed within the framework of the traditional religious structure. This was clearly illustrated in the introductory chapter where it was shown that, for the Mission Enxet, church services and *yohoxma* could co-exist without any apparent contradiction. Indeed, within the context of apparent christian orthodoxy they have managed to create a harmonious and jealously independent synthesis of two potentially quite distinct religious traditions which, although not dealt with in detail, has been preoccupied, in the same way as the movements amongst the non-Mission Enxet, with recovering prestige and control over the universe.

This suggests the need for a reconsideration of the phenomenon of conversion of members of small-scale subsistence societies to orthodox christian denominations. Existing literature on religious change shows a marked tendency to concentrate on new religious movements and gives the impression that those peoples who convert to an orthodox denomination have completely given up their traditions. This is clearly not always the case and the experience of the Enxet suggests that it may be more accurate to view conversion to missionary denominations not as the final surrender of a defeated people (cf. Aaby and Hvalkof 1981; and Stoll 1982) but rather as the creative response of a people who, within the parameters of a colonial situation, aim to reconstruct their cultures in a more satisfying way.

## 7.6. Summary

In conclusion, therefore, the theoretical model of chapter two would seem to provide a reasonable general framework within which religious change in small-scale subsistence societies can be understood and explained. Nevertheless, in considering specific cases it is always necessary to take into account local factors which can influence the character of specific conversion movements. However, one feature remains constant and that is that any explanation must depart from a conception of the participants in a conversion movement as innovators, that is as social actors committed to the meaningful transformation of their universe.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Epidemics mentioned in the literature between 1884 and 1933**

- 1884 SMALLPOX** - Killed one-third of the total population and up to two-thirds in some communities (Grubb 1913, 212).
- 1889 HEADCOLDS** - Three Indians on the River Paraguay had headcolds (Henriksen, SAMS mag., 1889).
- 1890 SMALLPOX** - Reported on the River Paraguay. The Indians fled inland for safety although this could have led them to spread the disease (Grubb, SAMS mag., 1891; Hunt 1933, 72). In 1901, Dr. Lindsay (SAMS rep., 1901) mentioned that a few years earlier there had been a smallpox epidemic with a very heavy mortality. He could have been referring to this outbreak or the possible outbreak of 1896.
- 1893 INFLUENZA** - The epidemic was severe and spread through the whole Chaco with some mortalities (Hay, SAMS mag., 1893; Hunt 1933,104)
- 1895 MALARIA** - A large number of cases reported (Hunt 1933, 121).
- 1895 MEASLES** - Many died but very few on the mission stations (Grubb 1913, 201f).
- 1896 SMALLPOX** - A scare was reported in Concepcion and so all the Indians went quickly inland (Hay, SAMS mag., 1896).
- 1896 INFLUENZA** - Nearly every Indian was ill in the central mission station of Waekxategmagyalwa (Graham, SAMS mag., 1897).
- 1899 INFLUENZA** - In Waekxategmagyalwa (Diary)
- 1900 UNSPECIFIED ILLNESS** - Sickness, probably colds, was recorded in the mission stations of Maroma and Riacho Negro (Mrs. Hay, SAMS rep., 1901).

- 1900 DYSENTERY** - One case reported (Lindsay, SAMS rep., 1901).
- 1901 MEASLES** - Hundreds died although there were only seven fatalities on the mission stations. Whilst it was still raging Westgate visited four villages where around 90% were ill and where the mortality rate was nearly 10% - this would almost certainly have increased by the end of the epidemic. On the Cooper ranch all the Indians were ill and over 20 died (i.e. over 15% of the population) (SAMS rep., 1901). Many of the sick suffered complications of pneumonia and bronchitis and many that recovered suffered permanently defective eyesight (Lindsay and Westgate, SAMS rep., 1901; Grubb 1913, 140; Hunt 1933, 212ff). The Indians were like skeletons (Diary)
- 1902 UNSPECIFIED ILLNESS** - An epidemic killed some children in the mission station of Payseyamyalwa (Bernau, SAMS rep., 1902).
- 1903 SMALLPOX** - A severe epidemic swept through the whole Chaco and in some places devastated whole villages. Only two casualties were recorded on the missions (Thompson, SAMS rep., 1903; Grubb 1913, 142 and 203; Hunt 1933, 227).
- 1903 WHOOPING COUGH** - No loss of life on the missions (Hunt 1933, 228).
- 1905 INFLUENZA AND PNEUMONIA** - It broke out in the mission of Nakte Tegma (Hunt, SAMS rep., 1905/6).
- 1905 INFLUENZA** - Six months after the last outbreak. Three killed on the mission stations including Wyper, the *wese* of the Payseyapto (Ed, SAMS mag., 1905/6; Hunt 1933, 237f).
- 1906 INFLUENZA** - Eight died in Waekxategmagyalwa (Grubb, SAMS rep., 1906/7).
- 1907 INFLUENZA** - 40 ill at Maroma and 70 at Nakte Tegma - there was one known fatality (Hunt 1933, 242).

- 1907 MALARIA** - There were many cases and people were unable to get their food (Bernau, SAMS rep., 1906/7).
- 1908 MEASLES** - There was a severe outbreak in the mission of Makthlawaiya with someone ill in nearly every house, although it was restricted to those who had not been ill in the last epidemic. There were chest and bronchial complications and six deaths. There were also cases outside Makthlawaiya although only two ill in Maroma (Turner and Byatt, SAMS rep., 1908/9; Hunt 1933, 253f).
- 1910 WHOOPING COUGH** - A number of children were killed in Makthlawaiya (Every, SAMS rep., 1910/11).
- 1911 COLDS** - Three infants died in Makthlawaiya (Pride, SAMS rep., 1911/12).
- 1912 DYSENTERY** - 19 died in Makthlawaiya in November and December, approximately 10% of the population. There were many non fatal cases (Diary).
- 1913 DYSENTERY** - (Pride, SAMS mag., 1914).
- 1915 COLDS** - There were many heavy colds in the villages outside the mission (Mag., 1916).
- 1917 DYSENTERY** - Three cases amongst the Sanapana of the mission of Yowe Sagye (Deacon, SAMS mag., 1918). This could have been associated with an outbreak in the west in which whole communities were wiped out (Hunt 1933, 302).
- 1917 WHOOPING COUGH** - Two cases amongst the Sanapana of Yowe Sagye (Deacon, SAMS mag., 1918).
- 1917 MALERIAL INFLUENZA** - It was well dealt with (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1918).
- 1918 PNEUMONIA** - Three deaths in Makthlawaiya (Mag., 1918).

- 1919 INFLUENZA** - It occurred in the villages near to Makthlawaiya but not in the mission itself (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1919). At around this time an epidemic wrought havoc amongst the Nivakle (Hunt 1933, 302).
- 1919 ANTHRAX** - An infected cow was eaten in Makthlawaiya and seven people were killed (Mag., 1920). There also seems to have been many fatalities in the west (Hunt 1933). 302).
- 1920 MALARIA** - Was rampant (Hunt 1933, 307).
- 1920 COLDS** - There were severe colds amongst the children. 20 were ill in Makthlawaiya but there were no fatalities. However, many died in other villages including five in one (Mag., 1920).
- 1921 WHOOPING COUGH AND CHICKEN POX** - All the casualties were children, three dying in Makthlawaiya, 9 in Yowe Sagye, and 18 in the other mission of Nanawa.
- 1921 DYSENTERY** - 13 children and 4 adults were killed in Nanawa, nearly 20% of the population. Whole villages of Maka were wiped out (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1921).
- 1923 CHICKEN POX AND RHEUMATISM** - In Makthlawaiya (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1923).
- 1923 INFLUENZA** - There were thirty ill in Makthlawaiya with four deaths (Bevis, SAMS mag., 1924).
- 1924 ENTERITIS AND MUMPS** - Babies were afflicted and although there were no fatalities in Makthlawaiya there were in the surrounding villages (Farrow, SAMS mag., 1924).
- 1924 INFLUENZA** - One death in Makthlawaiya (SAMS Mag., 1924).
- 1925 MEASLES** - It hit both Makthlawaiya and the surrounding villages, causing seven fatalities in the former (SAMS Mag., 1925).

- 1925 UNSPECIFIED ILLNESS** - Two people were killed in Makthlawaiya (Farrow, SAMS mag., 1926).
- 1927 INFLUENZA** - Nearly everybody was ill in Makthlawaiya and three children died. Many adults died in the villages outside Makthlawaiya (SAMS mag., 1928).
- 1930 WHOOPING COUGH** - Twenty-two children died in Makthlawaiya (SAMS mag., 1930) and thirty-two were ill in the mission of Nakte Amyep, two having already died, when a report was written (Allen, SAMS mag., 1930) - undoubtedly many more died in Nakte Amyep.
- 1931 SCARLET FEVER** - In the district near Makthlawaiya (Ruddle, SAMS mag., 1932).
- 1933 SMALLPOX** - In the mission of Campo Flores (SAMS mag., 1934).
- 1933 MEASLES** - A number of children died in Campo Flores (SAMS mag., 1934).



## APPENDIX 2

### **A sermon given by an Indian to support the missionaries' campaign against infanticide (Grubb 1911, 236f)**

Keamapsithyo, our leading Indian, was addressing the people, in our presence, about the final judgement, and in referring to ..... infanticide, he pictured in his simple Indian fashion the confusion to which such sinners would be brought when they faced the great Judge. He imagined Christ upon the Throne, and the Indians standing before Him. Presently a man was called up, whom he mentioned by name, and the first question asked was, "How many children have you?" The answer was, "Two." "Have you had any more?" asked Christ. "Yes, three more," he replied. "What happened to them?" said Christ. "They died," was the reply. "Have you killed any?" "No," the man replied. Then there was a pause, and presently an angel came forward, leading three children with their necks broken and their heads hanging. Immediately the children ran to the man, and, clasping him round the knees, they cried out, "Tata! Tata!" (Father! Father!). The judge looked sternly at the man who stood thus convicted, and the latter, full of confusion, hung his head before the Throne, condemned.

## APPENDIX 3

### **An English ranch-worker's impression of how the Enxet viewed the SAMS' mission stations (Craig 1935, 170-172)**

There are Christian Missions in the Chaco, and I am not trying to make out that they are useless. Far from useless. They have the biggest trading stations in all the Chaco, and that is good for the Indians, as the missionaries are honest folk who do not sting their customers for more than their due. Also they have medical knowledge, which they give away, and they teach the Indians carpentry, how to build weatherproof houses and the like, all of which the Indians appreciate and utilise.

When a bunch of Indians is plumb out of everything, the chief says, "Well boys, let's go hit the Mission for a job of work and some eats and some powder and shot and some stuff for the squaws, etcetera," and away they go, the whole lot, men, women, children and dogs. They arrive at the Mission and whistfully render hankerings after Christianity, asking in a hesitant manner if a little work can be found for them to put the necessary bread in their mouths whilst absorbing Christianity.

Of course it can.

Some of them are set to work tending the Mission cattle. This they do so well that there is calf meat nearly every night, to be eaten late when there is no danger of anyone finding out. Others are set to fencing, ploughing, repairing dams and roads, or any other of the numerous jobs there always are on a ranch.

All this is very useful, constructive work, which teaches them to use tools and for which they get adequately paid. Everbody is the gainer, except that very often cattle that are marked down in the Mission count-book as "Eaten by tiger" have gone to make clandestine feasts for poor Lo.

At morning service and evensong the Indians are present in chapel, look quite intelligent and sing quite nicely the simple hymns. The squaws learn to hide their shame, for they think it would be tempting the poor missionaries too much to go around half-naked; no dances are held while on the Mission premises; and everyone is so good that it hurts.

One day, however, the reward comes.

"Well, boys," says the old chief, somewhat fatter than the day he first suggested going to the Mission, "we've got all the powder and shot and caps and

new knives that we'll want for a long time; those that need them have got new guns; our dogs are all as fat as pigs; are squaws are so dazzling with their new calico camisoles and new iron cooking-pots that it hurts our eyes to look at them. Also, my children, we have been absent from our home for so long that there is sure to be a lot of game there. So let's tell these good people we have a date and hit the sticks tomorrow morning."

No easier said than done. They bid fond farewells and march, their return being celebrated by a sumptuous feast and dance lasting many days. The missionaries frown on these dances and do not allow them within the Mission radius. They say, "At Indian dances, under cover of the night, Satan comes into his own and Vice reigns supreme."

So it does, but there is no real harm in it.

## GLOSSARY

*akkyasenaekha*: someone who has been told what to do.

*akkemhappomye*: a leader, in the sense of going before.

*aksok*: "thing", or a type of spirit with non-human characteristics.

*amomye*: "before".

*apteme yannenpaewa*: a healer who uses techniques derived from the *yannenpaewa* cult.

*asamche*: "it is bad".

*asamche kelyekhama*: a term formed by the missionaries for Satan or a demon.

*ayasaxma*: "ignorant", or "insane". The missionaries took it to mean "sin" or "sinner".

*chaperones*: isolated rain showers (Spanish).

*chonaegmen*: a type of spirit that lives in the swamp and which is described as like a human.

*chonasagye*: another word for *chonaegmen*.

*demonio*: "demon" (Spanish).

*Dios akkyasenaekha*: "angel".

*dios egagkok*: literally: "our gods": a type of spirit that is very similar to an angel but which can be used by the *yohoxma* as auxiliary spirits.

*eghag'ak*: "ghost".

*egyapam*: "our father" or "the father".

*ekyokxa*: a spiritual owner of the fauna, flora or most other objects.

*enxet*: "man" or "human".

*hastawa*: a gambling game played by throwing three sticks.

*hoyakkakkolpok*: "rice".

*kelyekhama*: a class of evil spirit. Understood by missionaries as the generic name for spirit.

*kelyekhama axagkok*: used by missionaries for "hell". It is located above the earth.

*kyaye*: a gourd. It is the name of the men's initiation ceremony.

*lolak*: "mud-fish".

*magyaseyam*: literally, "we do not doubt" - it is used by missionaries to refer to faith.

*maxa Dios akkyasenaekha*: "similar to an angel".

*metaemog*: "stone". It is the name given to revenge magic practised on the dead with the aim of killing the guilty *yohoxma*.

*mose*: an animal that brings bad news.

*negko'o*: "we".

*negmase*: generic term for infectious diseases.

*nenmagkaxo*: the action of asking other people for food.

*nenmelae*: literally, "to be fat". It is the term used to epitomize "well-being".

*nentamhaekha*: "work".

*netsapma*: "to die" or "to faint".

*nexpogwayam*: the training technique of a *yohoxma*.

*pense apawa*: a type of *chonaegmen* with a short dress.

*pextetke*: "to bind".

*proyecto*: "project" (Spanish).

*puntero*: Spanish translation of *akkemhappomoye*.

*segwapagkeso*: the act of *mose* bringing bad news.

*selpextetamo*: "soldier".

*sowalak*: a type of evil spirit which the young men imitate in the women's initiation ceremony.

*takmela*: "good".

*tasek*: "it is good".

*tasek kelyekhama*: the missionary word for angel.

*terere*: a Paraguayan tea, yerba mate, when it is drunk cold. It is normally drunk from a container through a straw and is shared by a number of people.

*wanmagko*: "soul" or "dream".

*wese*: the nearest role the Enxet had to chief.

*yagwaeke*: literally, "similar to a cow". It is a type of spirit that lives in the water and is associated nowadays with the hippopotamus

*yagyatayem*: literally, "similar to an alligator". It is a type of spirit with the form of a large alligator.

*yanmana*: the women's initiation ceremony.

*yannenpaewa*: a religious movement of the 1950s. *Nenpaewa* is the word used for evangelical christianity and means literally "the word". Therefore, *yannenpaewa* means "similar to evangelical christianity".

*yatnaxeg*: "horse".

*Ya'ye*: a mythical hero, creator of many objects.

*yerba mate*: a Paraguayan tea.

*yohoxma*: "shaman".

*yoksak*: a ceremony undertaken to mark the end of the mourning period.

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### MISSIONARY DOCUMENTS:

**DIARY:** These are the diaries of the different Anglican mission stations. Not all still exist but those that do can be found in the office of the Iglesia Anglicana Paraguaya, Asuncion.

**LETTERS:** These are letters between the superintendent of the Mission, the headquarters of SAMS in England, and the anglican bishops of South America. The author of the letter is named in the reference. An almost complete selection from 1925 to 1953 is found in the office of the Iglesia Anglicana Paraguaya, Asuncion.

**SAMS MAG:** These are the magazines of the South American Missionary Society. Letters, articles and news from the missionaries were printed. The writer is named in the reference. A complete collection is found in the headquarters of SAMS in Tunbridge Wells.

**SAMS REP:** These are the annual reports of the South American Missionary Society. Up to 1911/12 it included most of the letters and articles that had appeared in the magazine for the corresponding year but subsequently the report became more of a resume of the annual activities. The writer is named in the reference. A complete collection is found in the headquarters of SAMS in Tunbridge Wells.

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