



Traditional social structure and culture change among the Ye'kuana Indians of the Upper Erebató, Venezuela

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Introduction

This paper analyses the changes in social organization of the Ye'kuana Indians¹ of Western Bolívar State, Venezuela, that occurred after the establishment of an Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria cooperative toward the end of 1975. A description of the traditional social structure as it is found among the Ye'kuana of the Erebató (Dedewatö) basin is followed by a brief historical outline. The various factors underlying social and cultural change are compared; specifically, the organization of the new production unit, the Empresa Indígena, on the one hand, and the Westernizing education which young Ye'kuana of both sexes receive in criollo² towns such as Maripa (Madijaña) and Ciudad Bolívar (Akotudaña) on the Orinoco River (Difiaku).

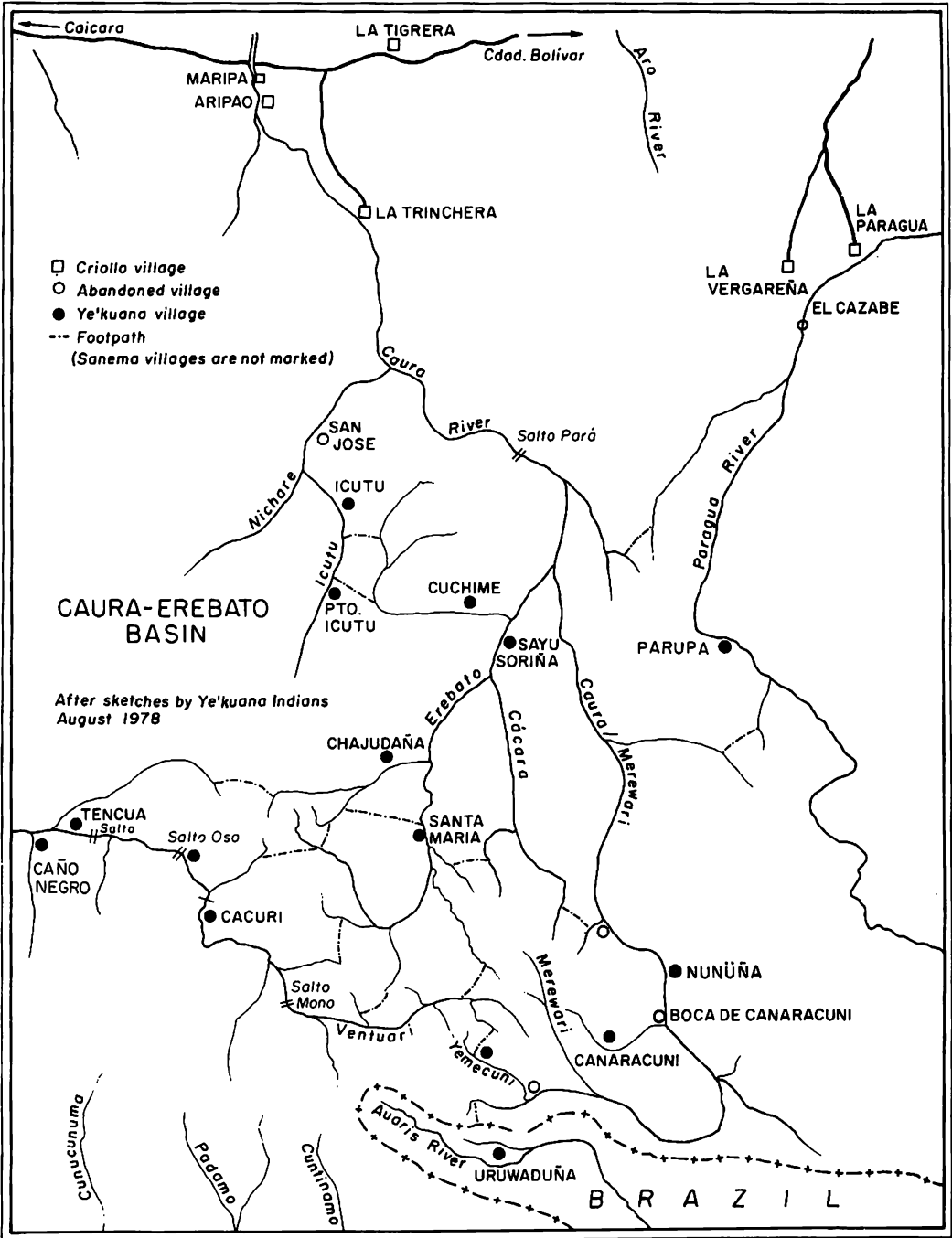
The analysis shows that up to now the traditional social structure has been able to assimilate without major problems the new forms of economic organization.

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Many members of the Ye'kuana communities involved worked with the author to produce this study. Outstanding among them were the treasurer of the Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria Tujumoto, Ramón Emilio Rodríguez, and the consultant of the Tujumoto, René Bros of the Foucauld Fraternity. Juan "Wasañano" Velázquez and Ramón Tomedes from the Jyüwütüña settlement acted as research assistants. Agustín Caidas from Kushime and Wannima Joaquín Rodríguez from Wana Ekkuduña furnished the census data of the Sanema settlements. Without all these contributions the present paper would not have been completed.

¹ The 1982 Indigenous Census produced a figure of 3,000 for the Ye'kuana population (OCEI, preliminary figures). For more information on the population of the Erebató basin, see Heinen, Velázquez y Tomedes (1981).

² Criollo is used here in the sense of designating any member of the general Venezuelan population and not in its original colonial meaning. It is also different from the English term "creole."



MAP 1

The radical changes that are occurring, which, through the relationship between fathers-in-law and their sons-in-law, attack the heart of the social structure, have their roots in the acceptance of criollo patterns of marriage alliances by young Indians and the replacement of traditional Ye'kuana norms which until recently determined the organization of households and their domestic units.

A note on spelling

The spelling of Ye'kuana terms used in this paper is based on the norms established by the Venezuelan Department of Education³ in cooperation with Ye'kuana schoolteachers. Features that deserve mention are the sounds expressed by *#* and *ö*, sometimes written *ř* and *ě*, which correspond to *ř* and *ě*⁴ of the phonetic alphabet. The letter *j* is usually pronounced like an English *b*. The combination of the letters *jj* represent a palatal fricative as in the place name Jyüwütüña.⁵ The letter *f* represents a bilabial fricative. The letter *d* represents the *d/r* sound common in many American Indian languages.

Participants in the Manchester symposium will notice some differences in interpretation between this paper and the Spanish version presented there. These changes represent an attempt to come to grips with the way the Ye'kuana conceive of their social groups. "What goes on in the minds of the natives" is often thought of as contrasting with their actual behavior: the spurious dichotomy between "emic" and "etic." "The actual behavior of the natives" generally turns out to mean what goes on in the mind of the anthropologist.

The traditional Ye'kuana economy

Characteristic of the Ye'kuana economic system is the variation in the composition of production units and work teams. Production units represent a range of possibilities; from a single couple to the whole community. Below we will see that this characteristic holds for the political system as well. Not to be forgotten in this context is intra- and intertribal trade,⁶ now in decline.

Whereas each adult Ye'kuana woman has her individual "conuco" field, men of the settlement often cooperate on a work project such as building a house or clearing fields. This work team is conceptualized by the Ye'kuana as *tjuumoto*, "working all together." Such an informal work team exists in each traditional Ye'kuana community and is incorporated into the name of a modern cooperative enterprise, Tujumoto. Until recently this economic organization consisted of the male members in the common roundhouse or "churuata" (*öttö*), which to this day exists in nearly all Ye'kuana villages and serves as a place for social gatherings and

³ See Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas (1981).

⁴ A spelling like "atta" for *öttö* or "wüwa" for *wüwö* as used by Guss and other authors would simply not be understood in the Erebató.

⁵ The spelling of proper names in the Ye'kuana language (Jyüwütüña instead of Jyüwütüña; Tujumoto, not Tjuumoto) is simplified.

⁶ See Coppens (1971), Thomas (1972) and Butt Colson (1973).

deliberations as well as for communal meals. However, most families now have individual sleeping quarters and work places.

Among the Ye'kuana, the basic domestic unit of production and consumption is the extended household whose configuration varies considerably from one stage to the next, from the time a son-in-law first establishes a separate hearth in the common household and later forms his own household as he acquires more and more sons-in-law himself, until they in turn become independent and establish new residential units. The points of transition are somewhat arbitrary, as the older father-in-law remains in his residence instead of moving into the house of one of his daughters as is the case in other Lowland Indian societies.

It is thus possible to develop a model of the Ye'kuana economy with the extended household, consisting of several hearths, as the most important production and consumption unit. It is formed by a parent-in-law couple, together with their daughters, granddaughters, and their husbands, as well as the unmarried sons and grandsons. Extended households are also visible in the layout of the settlements where they form clusters of houses around that occupied by the old father-in-law (*tüsoichato*, "he who has people, sons-in-law") or headman (*sotto tüdüünei*, *sotto eyaajö*, "he who is responsible for people, he who directs people"). The extended household formerly occupied one of the sections of the *ösa*, or outer ring of the roundhouse (*öttö*), rather than the inner circle, or *annaka*, which is used for communal meals and other social events and as a sleeping area for unmarried young men (*müdeshi*) or visiting families (see Barandiarán 1966: 66-74 for a layout of the construction details). Today's extended households in most settlements are somewhat larger than they were formerly in the subsections of the *ösa*.

At the time of the 1978 census of the Erebató area (see Heinen, Velázquez y Tomedes 1981: 30-37),⁷ extended households in the Jyüwütuna and Sadduña sectors of Santa María de Erebató averaged fifteen persons dwelling in from one to five houses. It is the traditional layout of the communal roundhouse, however, which reflects clearly the internal social organization of the Ye'kuana community. We shall return to this point later.

On the level of consumption the extended household is also clearly visible. While conuco fields are the "personal property" of individual women, they are not harvested in that way. Instead, the principal woman of the extended household arranges for the women of the residence unit to collect bitter manioc or fruits from one conuco at a time. Similarly, men do not participate in communal activities as individuals, but generally as members of extended households together with the old father-in-law or as his delegates. Members of one or two extended households travel to remote areas to manufacture dugout canoes or to hunt. Hunting territories and fishing areas are not privately owned but are claimed as "habitually visited" by an extended household unit.

It should be clear that the extended household unit, with its particular life

⁷ In May-June 1982 an indigenous census was carried out in Western Bolívar by the author and a team of Ye'kuana and Sanema Indians, as part of the 1981-1982 Venezuelan National Census. Tabulations are in progress.

cycle, constitutes a useful analytical construct for it allows us to locate the hub of economic activities among the Ye'kuana.

The dynamics of residence units and political leadership among the Ye'kuana

We now return to the communal roundhouse (*öttö*) which traditionally sheltered the whole community (*fata*). The internal circle, or *annaka*, is the domain of the men and represents its unity in the expression *tujumo'komo weichü*, "those who live together." In the economic sphere this corresponds to the work team *tujuumoto*, formed by all adult male members of the community. The outer circle, or *ösa*, which was separated from the *annaka* and subdivided into several sections consisting of clusters of hearths, was the domain of the women. Each cluster of hearths, now outside the *öttö*, corresponds to the expression *tünwannodö*, "all of them together," which includes the sons-in-law. Ideally, married sons do not leave the community but move into another extended household of the communal roundhouse.

Analytically, it is convenient to distinguish the residence group *tünwannodö* from *tüwüüdö*, the kindred-based group, which used to crosscut the subsections of the *ösa*. The latter is a bilaterally extended family group which excludes sons-in-law.

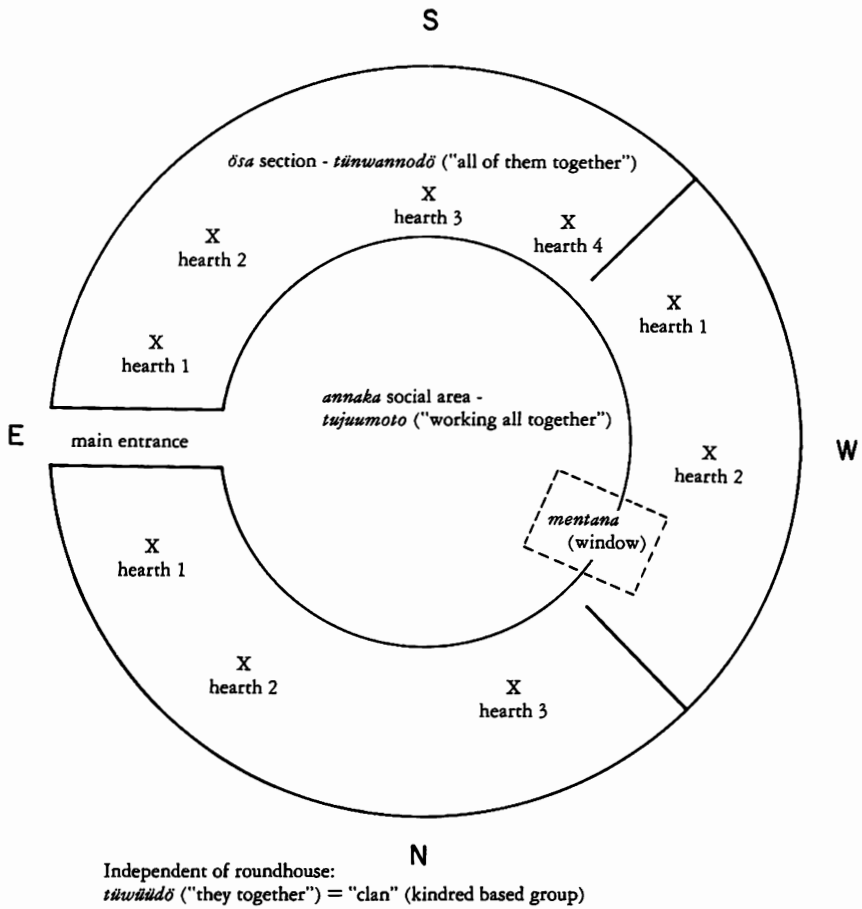
It is important, however, to note that the Ye'kuana do think of *tüwüüdö* as a discrete group of people led by the old father-in-law when they use the expression. In practice, the kin-based groups, which can be seen in action during a *we'juumanö* assembly where social units count, are nearly identical to the residence units. Individual obligations to the two social groups are rarely in conflict since death, emigration, and/or ineffective leadership might have prematurely weakened one or even both of them. Rather than having to choose between groups, the problem for some people is to find a group to be associated with.

The concept of kindred (Freeman 1961) is of some use, as kinship ties with men who have moved to a different community still hold, but it is perhaps too general. We are dealing here with quasi-corporate groups more than with Ego centered kinship categories. Even though persons who have left their native village may come back some day and will be happily received, the group of persons thought of as falling within *tüwüüdö* is rather well defined at any one time. This should be clear considering the fact that most of the sons-in-law included in the expression *tünwannodö*, but who are excluded from the expression *tüwüüdö*, are in one way or another kindred to most of the members of their present extended household.

Ye'kuana concepts, or designations, are processual. There is a great number of expressions to characterize things that are done or are being done. Apart from the expressions given in connection with the communal roundhouse, we saw that *rotto tüdüünei* is a leader "who takes responsibility for people;" i.e. one who is *rotto eyaajö*, "responsible for people." Most of the time whole sentences are used to refer to happenings such as "singing the *woi* vengeance song" or, "dance with the *wasajö* ritual staff." Anthropologists often have no other recourse than to use a single term when they are referring to the whole process. For example, the term *woi*, which simply means "the wild ocumo tuber," is used to refer to the whole *woi* vengeance

FIGURE 1
 THE COMMUNAL ROUNDHOUSE AND SOCIAL GROUPS

öttö (communal roundhouse) = *tujumo'komo weichü* ("those who live together")



ritual. The expression *wasai jādū* ("cucurito palm shoots"), designates a whole ritual complex, which includes a dance, playing the *wana* bamboo clarinet and various types of ritual aggression.

The agglutinating process observed in many Ye'kuana communities does not derive from the Ye'kuana ideal of forming a large village, but rather from the fact that the family ties of children married within the same community do not weaken when they leave their household unit. The establishment of a new Ye'kuana settlement is a traumatic experience for some since, however rarely, an individual may have to choose between his parents and his in-laws. Consequently, the fission of a Ye'kuana community is preceded by an intensive interchange of grandchildren by individuals who are thinking of establishing a new village.

The strength of an extended household or household unit depends on the number of able-bodied people it contains. Somebody who is *tūsotoichato*, "he who has people," has a good chance of playing a major role in the community. The most important variable in this context is the position of the sons-in-law. Thus a *tūjanūkato*, "the one who has (potential) sons-in-law," is apt to head an important residence unit and the *yodūmotonkomo*, "the father-in-law," is most likely to lead the household unit unless he has relinquished his position because of old age. As either present or former household head, the old father-in-law forms part of the Council of Elders (*inchonkomo*). Community discussions (*we'juumanō*) are not limited to elders, although the *inchomo*, who in addition to their own household unit may be backed by a strong bilaterally extended kin group, are the most likely to prevail.

There are two important characteristics common among Amazonian tribal polities in general. The first concerns the basis of leadership. Even though the number of sons-in-law and consanguineal kin that a leader may have is an important factor, his personal authority weighs more. Young men may gravitate to one side or the other; either as sons-in-law toward their fathers-in-law or as sons and brothers toward their own fathers and brothers. On the local community level an important feedback mechanism exists between personal authority and the number of bilateral kin. On the regional level, however, it is exclusively moral authority which determines leadership. The separation of authority and power is alien to our own political system and should therefore be emphasized. The captain of a village (*kajiichaana*) is seen, above all, as a spokesman of the Council of Elders (*inchonkomo*). When an important regional leader died in 1973, the news was announced as *inchomo nōōmai*, "the respectable elder died, the great one among the *kajiichaana*." When an important Ye'kuana shaman appeared in a national interview, people in Caracas asked, "What right does he have to speak for all the Ye'kuana?" The Ye'kuana simply replied, "He has authority."

The second characteristic that the Ye'kuana polity has in common with most of the neighboring indigenous groups is unanimous decision making. This contrasts with our majority voting system and hierarchical political structure. The mechanism of an early morning dialogue between the *kajiichaana*⁸ and his

⁸ The expression *akushana*, to designate a chief, today refers generally to the national political system; e.g., the Governor of the State of Bolívar.

lieutenant who, significantly, is called *ya'deddu ekkunei*, "he who answers the word," was described by Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 198). This pre-dawn dialogue is also known from other indigenous nations of Venezuela such as the Warao. Both the *kajiichaana* and the *ya'deddu ekkunei* are *anontönnamo*, "those who give orders;" however, this refers mostly to "ordering" what has been decided by the Council of Elders.

Nowadays, since adult Ye'kuana men sleep in separate houses (*maa*), discussions take place mainly in the evenings, frequently lasting into the early morning hours until all household heads reach an agreement. A special *we'juumanö* might last for several days, but in all cases the goal is agreement by all.

Besides the captain and his lieutenant, other traditional offices in a Ye'kuana community consist of the *öwanshi eyaajö*, "(communal) meal supervisor," and the *tüdüüjonei*, "work supervisor." A recent addition in more important settlements is a second *öwanshi eyaajö*. To announce the important communal meal three times a day and to see to it that it takes place in an orderly fashion is a position of great responsibility. Activities include the distribution of major game such as a tapir, and the execution of communal work decided by the *inchonkomo*. The "meal supervisor" then acts as *sotto anontönei*, "the one who orders people to work." It is understood, however, that all able-bodied persons participate in the work without distinction of office. The order "go to work" would have no effect on the Ye'kuana; the correct order would be: "Let's all go to work." The Ye'kuana leadership ideal may perhaps be described as "how to give orders without being chief."

The office of *öwanshi eyaajö* is often a preliminary step to becoming a *kajiichaana*. It is a permanent office in contrast to the *tüdüüjonei* who only supervises a particular activity, e.g., a trading or a hunting trip. All offices, however, including temporary ones, fall into the general categories of *kajiichaana* or *eyaajö*.

Leadership strategies and household units

There seem to be considerable difficulties on the part of some scholars in handling social facts and institutions on the one hand and individual strategies on the other. While it is true that institutions are the result of prior acts by individuals or groups of individuals that were, at first, rules of behavior and, later, as the word indicates, institutionalized, they subsequently represent constraints on individual strategies. Just as misleading as the negation of social facts is the spurious distinction between ideal and real behavior. By and large people conform to the behavioral rules of their societies and are not nearly as deviant as they are made out to be. What is underestimated, especially in regard to tribal and band societies, is the amount of freedom left for individual strategies by behavioral constraints and social rules.

We now turn to leadership strategies among the Ye'kuana. One such strategy is based on a strong group of sons-in-law and other followers, while an alternative rests exclusively on the personal authority of a leader. Neither leadership strategy

leads to undisputed control, and turnover in Ye'kuana leadership is frequent. The first strategy, involving blocks of opinion, forces minor factions to go along with the leader when in reality they are little inclined to do so; the second is based on unstable equilibria. Nevertheless, the first type of leader will find it easier to form a new settlement in case of a serious division since only a second household unit is needed with which to interchange grandchildren.

The second type of strategy is more easily followed when the aspiring leader can mediate between two dominant household groups of similar strength in the community. A leader with personal authority may enjoy the trust of both factions and would put even more emphasis than usual on finding common ground. This type of leader remains centered in the community and does not entertain the idea of forming a separate settlement for which he would not have the necessary followers.⁹

An individual aspiring to leadership in a community by means of a strong household unit has two general types of strategies available to him. His first option is to establish alliances by marrying his children with, and by receiving sons-in-law from, a maximum number of households in the community. Coupled with personal authority, this individual has a good chance of occupying a position of leadership.

The second option is to form a strong political block through the exchange of grandchildren with another head of a numerous household, a process which easily leads to a split in the community. One may pursue this strategy with the intention of dividing the village or as a test in order to evaluate the possibilities of leading the community on the basis of the united strength of two household groups.

While it may be true that few individuals feel a burning desire for the office of *kajičhaana*, it is more than certain that few households enthusiastically yield to others. Some individuals find themselves pressed tacitly by their household units to assume political office in spite of their personal inclinations.

In spite of the great desire for ethnic unity firmly rooted in Ye'kuana oral tradition and grounded in their social organization, there are temporal and spatial limits to traditional Ye'kuana settlement growth.¹⁰ Other than the impending exhaustion of resources, a traditional reason for moving a settlement would be the death of a *kajičhaana* or *fūwai*. The exhaustion of game and fish resources as well as of suitable land for new conuco fields (*adajö*) is these days delayed by the use of outboard motors which serve to increase the area of resource exploitation. Furthermore, the new means of transportation allows the Ye'kuana access to schools and dispensaries found only in the bigger settlements. Nevertheless, the large size of some villages is viewed as a growing problem.

⁹ A new settlement consisting of a minimum of two extended households would traditionally count on an expert in rituals (*aichudi eyaajö*), especially for marriage exchange. Typically, this individual would also be knowledgeable in Ye'kuana mythology. Ideally, a new village should also have a shaman, (*fūwai*).

¹⁰ The Ye'kuana habitat of dense tropical forest allows the establishment of rather compact and stable settlements. This contrasts with the Pemon (Ötti) settlement pattern of widely dispersed homesteads in the Gran Sabana to the East. Ye'kuana settlements might be located in a savanna at the edge of a forest, but the Ye'kuana are not savanna dwellers.

Regional formations

Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 273 ff.) postulates the existence of regional formations among the Ye'kuana in the past (probably about the time of first contact with European expeditions in the 18th century). It can also be hypothesized that the linguistic differentiation —Ye'kuana/De'kuana— has its origin in spatially separate groupings. To the present day a curious ambivalence persists in the mind of the people about all the Ye'kuana being one great unit. There is a sense of racial purity among the Ye'kuana. Indeed, any non-Ye'kuana influence, be it from other Indian ethnic groups or by criollos, is frowned upon quite explicitly. Every known non-Ye'kuana ancestor is a cause of embarrassment and is kept a "deep secret" even though such information is well known in the community and often beyond. Despite the fact that all Ye'kuana regional groups have absorbed minor contingents of other Indian tribal groups, each Ye'kuana group tends to think of itself as the true Ye'kuana and "the others" as precisely that, *añejakomo*; and the place they live as *aneña*; literally, "somewhere else."

The village exogamy observed by Fuchs (1962) in the Amazon Territory was found to be absent among the Ye'kuana of the Upper Erebató, where village endogamy is prevalent. Nevertheless, the demographic flow between villages, especially of males, was greater than Ye'kuana self-interpretation would lead one to assume. Recently completed tabulations of 1978 data show the percentage of immigrant males to be nearly 10 %. The data collected by Arvelo-Jiménez (1974) in the late 1960s in the headwater region of the Ventuari River seem to confirm this estimate. Even though this means that the Ye'kuana of the Erebató are essentially village endogamous, it must be emphasized that some kinship tie, however weak, can be established between all Ye'kuana.

The Ye'kuana of the Caura/Erebató basin absorbed in historical times a non-Carib-speaking group, the Tumoomüyömö. Some older individuals in Jyüwütüfiá confided as a "deep secret" that their grandmother had been a Tumoomüyömö, and a couple of rare cases of women who had migrated into a different village were attributed to their being of Tumoomüyömö stock.

Whenever Ye'kuana, on their long expeditions, visit villages not belonging to their own regional formation, one of the techniques in vying for political position is to make the others feel they are somehow less Ye'kuana. If at such a meeting open hostility should arise, the situation might lead to one of the famous verbal duels described by Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 269 ff.), literally called "to speak about one's own head," which consists of recounting the history of one's family and community as far back as possible to prove one's pure Ye'kuana ancestry, and if possible manoeuvring the opponent into admitting that his village is somewhat less Ye'kuana.

Intrusion of criollo "balateros," rubber gatherers, and Sanema/Yancónami Indians in the early decades of this century nearly obliterated the regional formations with the result that at present they are barely discernible. About two decades ago a tendency toward a division into four regional groups could be perceived. These were: 1) the basins of the Caura and the Paragua rivers,¹¹ 2) the

Erebato basin and the Upper Ventuari River, 3) the Kunukunuma River, and 4) the headwaters of the Padamo and Cuntinamo rivers; i.e. "the headwaters," Ijuduña, in the strict sense.

These formations do not quite correspond with geographical features. The picture is further complicated by the fact that contingents from the Upper Kuru River have crossed into the Paru and other tributaries of the Ventuari River and from there even into the Chajuda, a tributary of the Erebató.

Nowadays, with the ever-increasing communication across geographical boundaries, all regional formations are disappearing. The one large schism evident today among the Ye'kuana is that between the more traditional villages and those Ye'kuana who profess a fundamentalist evangelical religion.

Historical outline of the Erebató basin

Around the beginning of the 1940s the Ye'kuana headman Carlos Núñez, also known as Kalomera, was able to weld together a strong group of several extended households under his leadership in the settlement of Kuyujiña (see Barandiarán 1961), on a tributary of the Upper Erebató River. Kalomera had moved his village site several times between right bank tributaries of the Upper Ventuari (Antawadi) and right bank tributaries of the Upper Erebató (Dedewatö) until the settlement finally became established at Kuajuduña. Every two years Carlos Núñez and his men descended from the headwater region to the criollo hamlet of Las Trincheras on the Lower Caura to trade for metal tools, salt, and other manufactured items in return for the excellent dugout canoes (*kuriera*) of the Ye'kuana.

Carlos Núñez had worked in his youth for several years in the regional capital of Ciudad Bolívar (Akotudaña) and had become fluent in Spanish. Being bilingual, he had developed into a quite well-known *kajičhaana*, a tribal captain. Toward the end of 1958 Carlos Núñez died. After his death, the village split and approximately fifty people moved some distance down the Erebató and established themselves at a place called Jyüwütüña, while a group of about seventy individuals remained in Kuajuduña.

In 1959 Daniel de Barandiarán, then a member of the Foucauld Fraternity, met in Las Trincheras with the people of the late *kajičhaana*, Kalomera, who were now headed by Pedro León. On 18 June 1959, he established himself with forty-two Ye'kuana Indians in Jyüwütüña (Barandiarán 1961) which later became known as Santa María de Erebató. The village is located on the left bank of the Erebató (Dedewatö), at latitude 5°9' North and longitude 64°53' West (Barandiarán 1961: 14). For some time, the activities of the Fraternity had a somewhat paternalistic tinge, but later its member came to emphasize indigenous self-determination and

¹¹ A contingent of Ye'kuana from the Paragua River founded the present settlement of Sayu Shodüña or Kushime Kanö in the Erebató River. The one Ye'kuana settlement remaining in Brazil today is oriented partially toward the Upper Cuntinamo and in part toward the Upper Ventuari. This kinship orientation towards rather distant places contrasts with the trade route through the geographically close Yemekuni, an affluent of the Upper Caura.

served primarily as consultants.

The large agglomeration of people in the original settlement of Kuajuduña, beyond the norm for Ye'kuana settlements, had attracted the attention of Barandiarán. In December of 1960 the remaining inhabitants of Kuajuduña under their *kajüichaana* Pedro Antonio Espinosa, joined the village of Jyüwütüña which now had 124 members according to Barandiarán (1961: 15). Informants stress that Pedro Antonio and his people didn't establish themselves permanently in Jyüwütüña until 1962. The new village of Santa María de Erebató had apparently developed a new type of sociopolitical organization, comprised of a council of two headmen (*kajüichaana*) and four additional elders (*inchonkomo*). This suggests that six extended households were present in the settlement.

From Barandiarán's report it is clear that a number of Sanema families had settled in the vicinity of Santa María. These Indians, called "Shirishana" by the Ye'kuana, had entered into a type of symbiosis with the latter. They performed some menial tasks for the Ye'kuana in return for secondhand tools and clothes. Pushed by their more expansionary Yanomami cousins, the Sanema showed all the signs of a displaced people and at first looted the conuco fields of the Ye'kuana for food. In the late 1950s the latter started fighting back and in a well-coordinated campaign routed the Sanema decisively. Driven often by sheer hunger, the Sanema started begging for some of the harvest from the well-tended Ye'kuana fields. They also rapidly adopted most of the Ye'kuana technology.¹² Barandiarán's report implies that the Sanema performed burial services for the Ye'kuana which the latter abhorred because of the post-burial taboos they would have had to observe.

The beginnings of Jyüwütüña were difficult, as is the establishment of any new Ye'kuana settlement, because of the absence of fields in the three stages—one in full production, one having been harvested and being used as a hunting ground, and one in preparatory stage. These difficulties were overcome and in 1963 Barandiarán proceeded to establish a paramedical dispensary in Kanarakuni where a rudimentary airstrip had been cleared in the nearby Kirisu Woichi, a savanna beside the Kirisu River coming down from the Sarisariñama Massive. Tuberculosis was already rampant around Kanarakuni at that time. A year later, in 1964, a French agronomist, Hugo de Chalup, arrived at Santa María de Erebató and together with the Indians proceeded to plant new cultigens: coffee, cacao, fruit trees, and African palms. The most successful plantations were those devoted to fruit trees (citrus fruit, coconut, guava fruit) for subsistence and coffee as a cash crop. The present consultant of the Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria Tujumoto, René Bros, arrived in Jyüwütüña in 1965.

In 1969 the inhabitants of the Wasaiña settlement in the Erebató headwaters established themselves in a place called Sadduña, less than a kilometer from Jyüwütüña, thus forming the twin settlement of Santa María de Erebató. Santa María has a fair-sized landing strip, a medical dispensary, a school, and an electric

¹² This interethnic relationship deserves further study. Refer to the interesting work by Alcida Ramos (1980) for an analysis of the situation on the Brazilian side, which seems to be different from the interethnic dynamics in the Erebató.

power plant running on diesel fuel, located between the two sectors of the village. Each sector has its own communal roundhouse (*ōttō*), in which the daily communal meals and village assemblies take place.

Toward the end of the 1960s some government agencies moved into the area. Of note were the former Public Works Department (MOP) which constructed a hydrological station and CODESUR (Comisión para el Desarrollo del Sur de Venezuela) which later was absorbed into the new Department of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (MARNR). The area under the CODESUR development agency consisted of the Cedefio District of the State of Bolívar and the Amazon Federal Territory. After 1979 the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana (CVG) took charge of ongoing development programs, first taking over the Cedefio District and later the Amazon Territory.

One of the other settlements that today is part of the Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria Tujumoto is the village of Chajudaña which has a long history on the Chajuda River. The best information available indicates that it was established in 1954. It is one of the few truly multi-ethnic settlements left in Ye'kuana territory with a sizable sector of Sanema Indians. Its Ye'kuana founders came originally from the Kunu River, having ventured first into the Middle Ventuari basin and from there into the Erebató basin. Owing to this connection with the Kunukunuma area, center of activity of the New Tribes Mission, evangelical missionaries have been present sporadically in Chajudaña.

The settlement of Boca de Cuchime (Kushime Kanö or Sayu Shodüña) was formed gradually by Ye'kuana Indians from El Casabe and Parupa on the Paragua River. The first movement from the Paragua took place in 1974 into the Kakada River and the following year the first homesteads in Kushime Kanö were established. There are some kinship ties with the Jyüwütüña sector of Santa María.

The settlement of Kushimeña in the Cuchime Savanna does not have a permanent population.¹³ The cattle operation located there is attended to by Ye'kuana and Sanema residence units on a rotation basis. The settlement has been inhabited since 1962 by various extended households, first from Jyüwütüña and later from Kushime Kanö and Chajudaña as well.

In 1978 the Sanema Indians received their own cattle and established themselves on the Kushime River in a place called Monte Cuchime where they had previously prepared pasture land. The Ye'kuana cooperated with the Sanema by taking charge of cattle transportation through the dangerous rapids from Maripa (Madijaña) on the lower Caura through the Nichare and Icutú rivers to Puerto Icutú. From there a trail of some twenty kilometers leads to Puerto Cuchime. Even though it is much longer than the trail bypassing the difficult Para Falls,¹⁴ it is preferred by the Indians because it is less steep. Since 1978 efforts have been under way to widen the trail so that a cart with animal traction can pass through, thus

¹³ This has changed since early 1982; the establishment of two new settlements at "Puerto Chicharra" on drier land up the Kushime River by the Ye'kuana and the Sanema, respectively, will be discussed in a revision of Heinen, Velázquez y Tomedes (1981).

¹⁴ The Para Falls, which bifurcate at La Pava (Kuyuji Shodü), are seen by the Ye'kuana as the continuation of two separate rivers, the Caura (Medewadi) and the Erebató (Dedewatö).

simplifying the transportation of gasoline up-river and of coffee down-river.

Establishment of the settlements on the Nichare River (now abandoned) and the Icutú began in 1969. The village on the Icutú (Tsukutuña) is called Kadimaniña and has a Ye'kuana sector and a Sanema sector, separated by a certain distance.

As a comment on the neighboring Kakudi area in the Upper Ventuari, it should be pointed out that in 1972 the Unión Makiritare¹⁵ del Alto Ventuari (UMAV) was founded and proceeded to establish a cattle operation in the Cacuri Savanna. Kakudi is located only some 70 kilometers from Jyüwütüña. However, this distance requires a minimum of three days' walk by very steep trails over the Sierra del Danto (Washadi Jüdü). In spite of these difficulties the people on both sides of the mountain ridge visit each other periodically because of their extensive kinship ties. Lately, they have been able to converse daily via a new radio connection.

The traditional Ye'kuana kinship system

Barandiarán (1966: 54-55) paraphrases Wilbert (1963: 175) as saying that Ye'kuana kinship relations are "of a bewildering complexity." In fact, the effect of personal pronouns upon kinship terminology gives the appearance of great diversity, which in turn is still further accentuated by dialect differences. Nevertheless, beneath this linguistic diversity we find a system surprisingly consistent and impressive in its logical beauty.

The existence of two complete sets of kinship terms, one reference, the other address, immediately attracted the attention of researchers. However, owing to the many forms, it is difficult to present the Ye'kuana kinship system concisely. In schemata which take Ego as a reference point, for example, we find that the person Ego addresses as *mama* (mother) is referred to as *yenü* (as in *Adamu yenü*, "Ramón's mother"), but if the first person of the possessive form is employed (as the schema does with all kinship terms), the term *mama* (for example, *mama ewü*, "my mother") has to be used again. Likewise we see that "grandfather" is *tamuudu* but in reference to Ego it is *taamuudu* while the address form is *kooko*.

One should not dismiss out of hand the hypothesis that the Ye'kuana kinship system might have incorporated certain patterns of non-Ye'kuana marriage behavior (Barandiarán 1966: 54; 1979: 53-55). There are a few kinship terms in use which apply to marriage alliances between FZ and BS¹⁶ that do not conform to traditional Ye'kuana norms discouraging marriage between adjacent generations. Non-conforming marriage alliances, such as those between parallel cousins, are designated *kaiña*. One of the terms in question is *kömuudu* (H = BS; HB = DH; for female Ego). The term *kömuusa* (BS) is an alternative address form of *nmedü* in the case of a parallel nephew for male Ego. See also Table 1; I have always been tempted to regard these terms as intrusive to the Ye'kuana kinship system, but have been repeatedly warned to abstain from any speculation).

¹⁵ Makiritare is the Venezuelan name for the Ye'kuana and apparently originates from the neighboring Arawak speakers. The Brazilians call the Ye'kuana by their Pemon name, "Mayongong."

¹⁶ The author has so far used lower case/two-letter designations for tracing kin relationships, but is adopting the more prevalent upper case/one-letter system.

The kinship system of the Ye'kuana of the Upper Erebatö (Dedewatö) is summarized in Table 1 and Figures 2-13, based in part on the pioneering work of Wilbert (1958: 51-57; 1963: 161-176) and Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 129-137), and supplemented by some terms and dialectical differences as found in the Erebatö.

The Ye'kuana social system is clearly bilateral. Each individual calculates his respective agnatic and uterine kinship links with the same weight, choosing the term that defines the closest kin relative, if no other considerations prevail (such as the desire to put a person into a kinship category acceptable for marriage). Internal logic is also in favor of bilaterality; if all members of the $N + 3$ level are potential parents-in-law for a male as well as for a female Ego, there is no room for a lineage system. Nevertheless, the uxori-matrilocal rule for post-matrimonial residence tilts the balance toward the mother's side in Ye'kuana society.

We found it convenient to present the kinship terms according to three criteria: 1) parallel relatives, 2) cross relatives, and 3) affines. Each section is divided again for male and female Ego, and according to reference and address terms, giving a total of twelve figures (Figures 2-13). The terms of reference and address are two sides of the same coin; reference terms represent the public face exhibiting the conformity which society demands. The other face reflects interpersonal relationships in private life.

With these terms we have defined the constraints each head of an extended household confronts in his policies of marriage alliances. At the same time the range of possibilities is shown for each new generation of nephews and possible sons-in-law.

Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 136) rightfully points out that all terms for affines are reference terms. In private life affines are addressed (generally) by the same term as before the marriage took place. Society does not easily tolerate irregularities, such as *kaiña* alliances. The shame which was felt until recently to have to call one's father-in-law *waiñüjü* (cross cousin, between male speakers)¹⁷ or one's husband *fonü* (BS, female speaker) was reserved for the intimacy of the home. In the latter case the woman might have used an alternate term and called her husband *kömuudu*.

There are two terms, one optional and the other used ambiguously, that deserve mention. The first is *yeeta'ñadü*, cross cousin of the opposite sex, which Arvelo-Jiménez refers to outside the formal discussion of kinship terms (1974: 24-29). One in fact might argue that, since it is purely descriptive, it is not a kinship term at all. Being the most propitious category for a marriage alliance everyone knows perfectly well who his or her *tööta'nadüüje* (plural form of *eta'nadü*) are. The term is often used in a joking manner, as if to explore the possibilities of marriage. In contrast, it is a mark of respect to refer to a *yeeta'nadü* with a sibling term, so emphasizing the distance between the persons involved and sometimes giving a clear sign that that person has been eliminated as a possible spouse.

The second term is *faimüdüüdü*, "sister-in-law" for a female Ego. It is used

¹⁷ Marriage is prohibited between the (classificatory) level of Ego and the members of levels $N + 1$ and $N - 1$; it is permitted, however, with the (classificatory) levels $N + 2$ and $N - 2$.

TABLE 1
YE'KUANA KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Address	Reference	Criollo	Approximate English equivalent
kooko	tamuudu	abuelo	grandfather
aicha	nootü	abuela	grandmother
faaja (in Kunuña: jaako)	umü	papá	father
mama (in Kunuña: eeme)	yenü	mamá	mother
ünnedü	nnedü	(E.m./E.f.) hijo(a); sobrino(a) paralelo(a)	son, daughter; same sex sibling's children for both male and female speakers
sichu	sichu	(E.m./E.f.) hijo(a)	son, daughter, affectionate term for male and female speakers
yanwa'kö		(E.m./E.f.) muchacho	boy, for both male and female speakers
wüdi'chö		(E.m./E.f.) niña	girl, for both male and female speakers
faadü	fadü	(E.m./E.f.) nieto(a)	grandchild, for both male and female speakers
faamo	famo	(E.m./E.f.) nietos(as)	grandchildren, for both male and female speakers
yawo ^a	wodü	(E.m.) tío cruzado	uncle (MB) for male speaker
yawo, yawoodü ^a	wodü	(E.m.) tío cruzado (menor que Ego)	uncle (MB) younger than Ego, for male speaker
yawo, yawo'kö (familiar) ^a	wodüümö	(E.m.) suegro	father-in-law, who is also MB, for male speaker
(same term as before marriage) ^a	wodüümö	(E.m.) suegro (que no es el propio tío cruzado)	father-in-law, who is not MB, for male speaker
owo'kö ^a	wodü	(E.f.) tío cruzado	uncle (MB) for male speaker
owo'kö ^a	wodü, wodüümö	(E.f.) suegro	father-in-law, who is also MB, for female speaker
(same term as before marriage) ^a	wodüümö	(E.f.) suegro (que no es el propio tío cruzado)	father-in-law, who is not MB, for female speaker
waiñö'nöi ^a	waiñö'nöi	(E.m./E.f.) tía cruzada	aunt (FZ), for both male and female speakers
waiñö'nöi ^a	wo'jüdü	(E.m./E.f.) suegra	mother-in-law, who is also FZ, for both male and female speakers
(same term as before marriage) ^a	wo'jüdü	(E.m./E.f.) suegra	mother-in-law, who is not FZ, for both male and female speakers
uddui	dui	(E.m.) hermano mayor	elder brother, male speaker
yaaya'kö	fijyü ^b	(E.f.) hermano mayor	elder brother, female speaker
yaakono	akoono	(E.m.) hermano menor	younger brother, male speaker
yaakono'kö	akoono, akoono'kö	(E.f.) hermano menor	younger brother, female speaker
yaaya	faduichü	(E.m.) hermana mayor	elder sister, male speaker
yaaya	faichü ^b	(E.f.) hermana mayor	elder sister, female speaker
ödüümö	faduichü	(E.m.) hermana menor	younger sister, male speaker
yaakono	akoono (in Kunuña: jishü)	(E.f.) hermana menor	younger sister, female speaker
waiñüjü	waiñüjüdü	(E.m.) primo cruzado	male cross cousin, male speaker

TABLE 1 (CONT.)
YE'KUANA KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Address	Reference	Criollo	Approximate English equivalent
waifüjü	eiyedü	(E.m.) primo cruzado, cuñado	male cross cousin, brother-in-law, male speaker
(same term as before marriage)	eiyedü	(E.m.) cuñado (que no es primo cruzado)	brother-in-law, who is not a cross cousin, male speaker
yaako	yaako, faimüdüüdü	(E.f.) prima cruzada	female cross cousin, female speaker
yaako, yaako'kö	faimüdüüdü	(E.f.) prima cruzada, cuñada	female cross cousin, sister-in-law, female speaker
yaako	faimüdüüdü	(E.f.) cuñada (que no es prima cruzada)	sister-in-law, who is not a cross cousin, female speaker
yaaya	eta'nadü, faduichü	(E.m.) prima cruzada ^e (posible cónyuge mayor que Ego)	elder female cross cousin (potential spouse), male speaker
ödütümö	eta'nadü, faduichü	(E.m.) prima cruzada (posible cónyuge menor que Ego)	younger female cross cousin (potential spouse), male speaker
yaaya'kö	eta'nadü, yaya'kö	(E.f.) primo cruzado ^e (posible cónyuge mayor que Ego)	elder male cross cousin (potential spouse), female speaker
yaakono'kö	eta'nadü, yakoono'kö	(E.f.) primo cruzado (posible cónyuge menor que Ego)	younger male cross cousin (potential spouse), female speaker
yenü	jifñamo ^d	esposa	wife
yumü	iñño ^d	esposo	husband
yaaya	eta'nadü, faduichü	(E.m.) cuñada (mayor que Ego)	elder sister-in-law, male speaker
adüümö	eta'nadü, faduichü	(E.m.) cuñada (menor que Ego)	younger sister-in-law, male speaker
yaaya'kö	yaya'kö	(E.f.) esposo de la hermana (mayor que Ego)	elder brother-in-law (ZH), female speaker
yaakono'kö	yakoono'kö	(E.f.) esposo de la hermana (menor que Ego)	younger brother-in-law (ZH), female speaker
kömuudu, kömuusa'kö	eta'nadü, yaya'kö	(E.f.) hermano del esposo (mayor que Ego si es primo cruzado)	elder brother-in-law (HB), who is also a cross cousin, female speaker
kömuudu, kömuusa'kö	eta'nadü, yakoono'kö	(E.f.) hermano del esposo (menor que Ego si es primo cruzado)	younger brother-in-law (HB), who is also a cross cousin, female speaker
kömuudu ^e		(E.f.) esposo	husband
kömuudu, ^f kömuusa	nnedü	(E.m.) sobrino (hijo del hermano)	nephew (BS), male speaker
foonü	fonü	(E.m./E.f.) sobrino cruzado	nephew (ZS), male speaker nephew (BS), female speaker
foonü, kömu'kö	fannüdü	(E.m.) yerno (si es sobrino cruzado)	son-in-law, who is also ZS, male speaker
(same term as before marriage)	fannüdü	(E.m.) yerno (si no es su fonü)	son-in-law, who is not ZS, male speaker
foonü,	fannüdü	(E.f.) yerno (si es	son-in-law, who is also BS,

TABLE 1 (CONT.)
YE'KUANA KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Address	Reference	Criollo	Approximate English equivalent
kömusa'kö (same term as before marriage)	fannüdü	sobrino cruzado (E.f.) yerno (si no es su <i>fonü</i>)	female speaker son-in-law, who is not BS, female speaker
fa'se	fa'se	(E.m./E.f.) sobrina cruzada	niece (ZD), male speaker niece (BD), female speaker
fa'se, fa'se'kö (same term as before marriage)	fadaanü	(E.m.) nuera (si es propia sobrina cruzada)	daughter-in-law, who is also ZD, male speaker
ödüüya'kö, fa'se	fadaanü	(E.f.) nuera (si es propia sobrina cruzada)	daughter-in-law, who is also BD, female speaker
faadanü, or same term as before marriage	fadaanü	(E.f.) nuera (si no es <i>fa'se</i>)	daughter-in-law, who is not BD, female speaker

^a All terms also include individuals on the N + 3 level who are of the same age as people on the N + 1 level.

^b Possibly the same terms; the difference in pronunciation is minimal.

^c Includes relatives *fadü* (grandchild) of approximately the same age as Ego.

^d Teknonymy is often used to substitute for these terms.

^e If the marriage is *kaiña* and the husband *fonü* to his wife, she might call him *kömuudu*. (Regular terms for "husband" and "wife" are given in Table 4).

^f *Kömuudu* is a reciprocal term of *faja* for male speaker (all persons you might call *faja* may call you *kömuudu*). Regular terms for parallel sibling's children are given at the beginning of this table.

ambiguously in so far as male informants maintain that it is also used as a reference term between female cross cousins because *yaako* supposedly "does not sound right." Women, on the other hand, use *yaako* quite naturally as a reference term and insist that *faimüdüüdü* is the sister-in-law proper (BW; HZ). The corresponding male term, *yeiyedü*, on the other hand, is not ambiguous at all but designates clearly WB or ZH, the actual brother-in-law. It would seem that the difference in use of the term *yeiyedü* and *faimüdüüdü* is due to the low probability that a person referred to as *faimüdüüdü* would not also be a *yaako*.

Changes in the subtle game between the demands of society and individual strategies within the constraints of permitted marriage alliances, are not visible at first, and neither is the full impact they could have on leadership and decision making. An analysis shows that significant changes have occurred. There is a marked tendency among young people who return home from schools in Ciudad Bolívar to choose their own spouses. The process of formal education in a criollo milieu makes the Ye'kuana youngster more independent of the traditional leadership of the village elders, and, at the same time, it familiarizes him with an Occidental system which allows marriage with genealogically removed cousins and nieces.

FIGURE 2
 LINEAL AND PARALLEL RELATIVES OF MALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

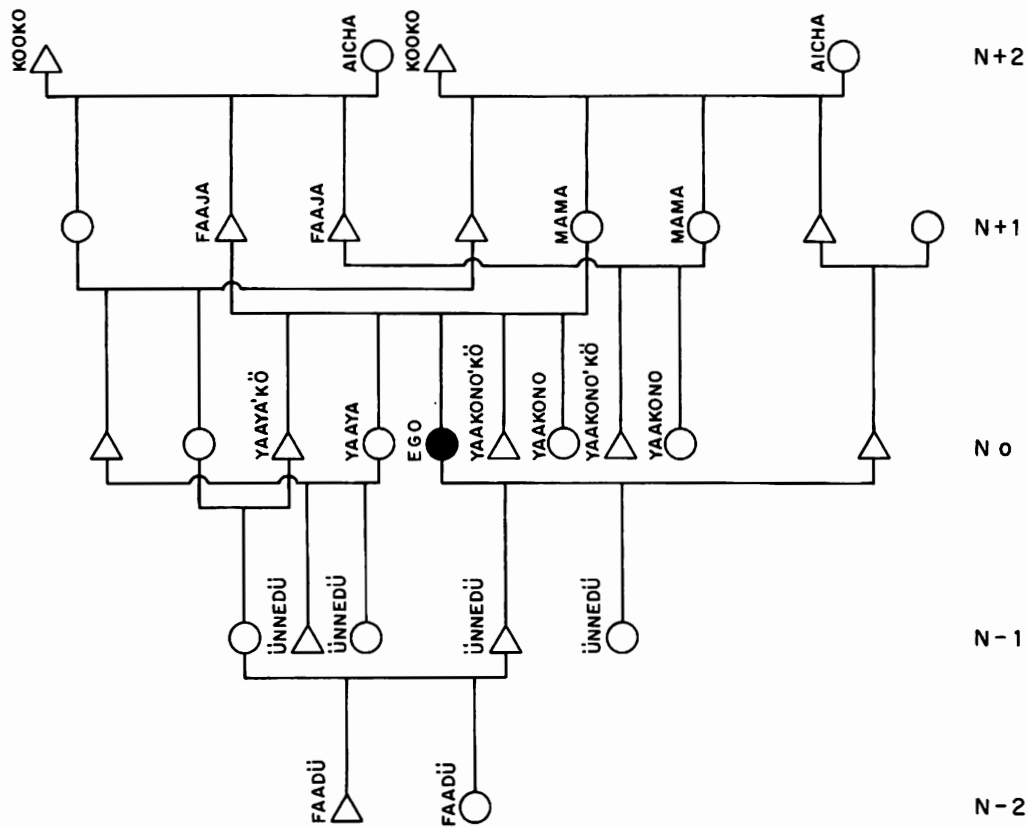


FIGURE 3
 LINEAL AND PARALLEL RELATIVES OF MALE EGO (ADDRESS TERMS)

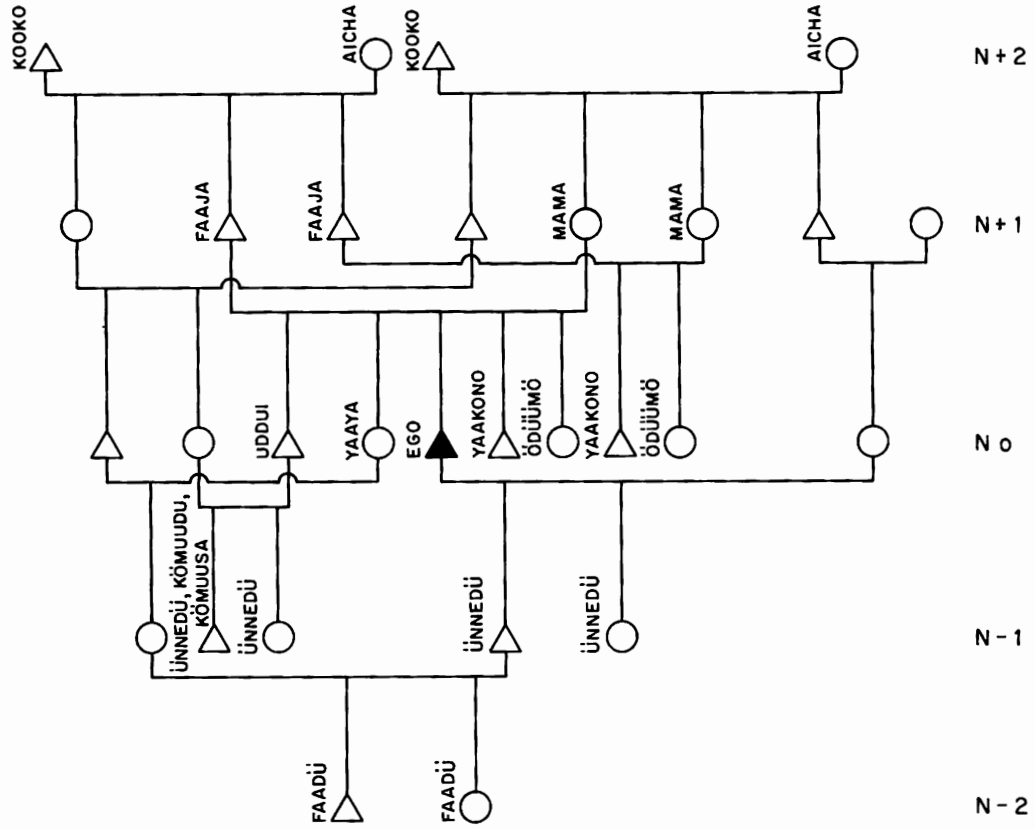


FIGURE 4
 LINEAL AND PARALLEL RELATIVES OF FEMALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

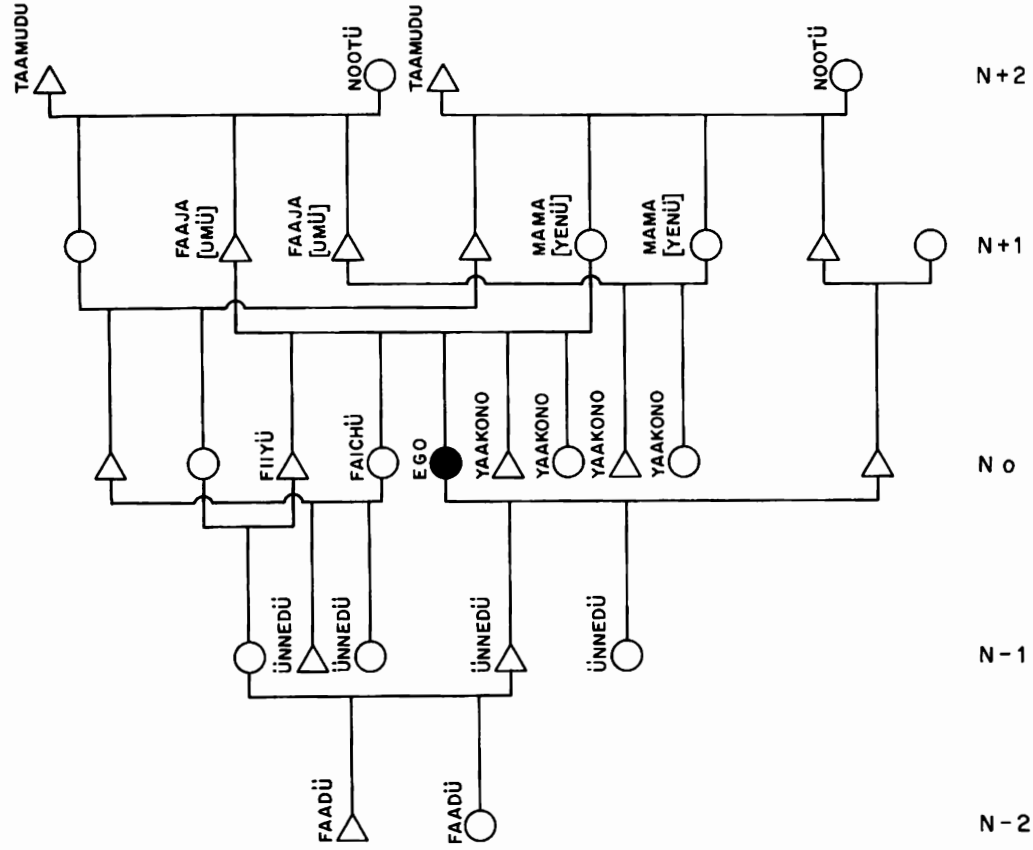


FIGURE 5
 LINEAL AND PARALLEL RELATIVES OF FEMALE EGO (ADDRESS TERMS)

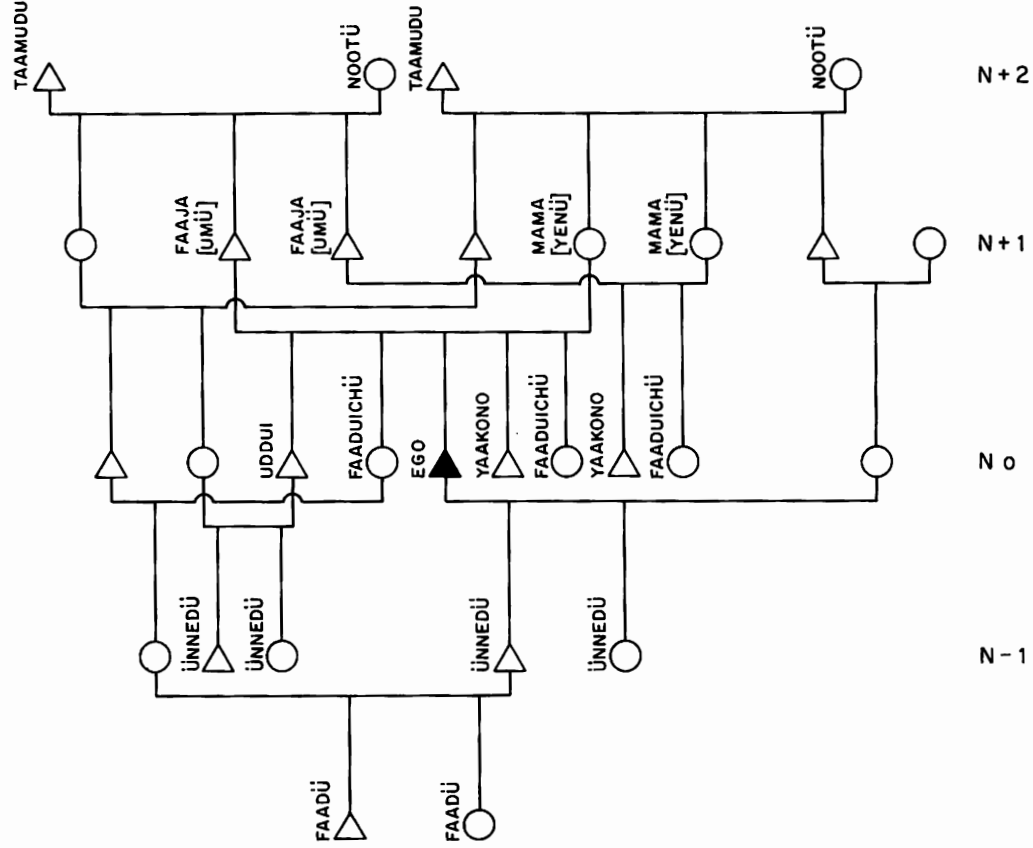


FIGURE 6
CROSS RELATIVES OF MALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

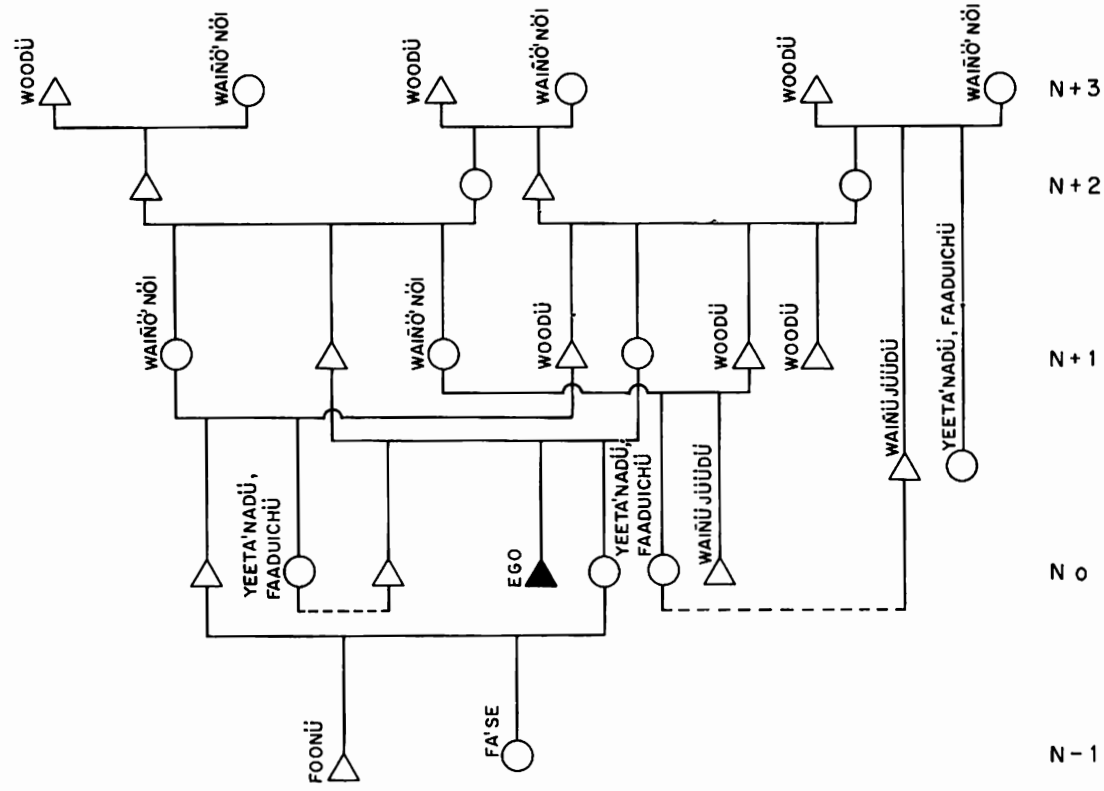


FIGURE 8
CROSS RELATIVES OF FEMALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

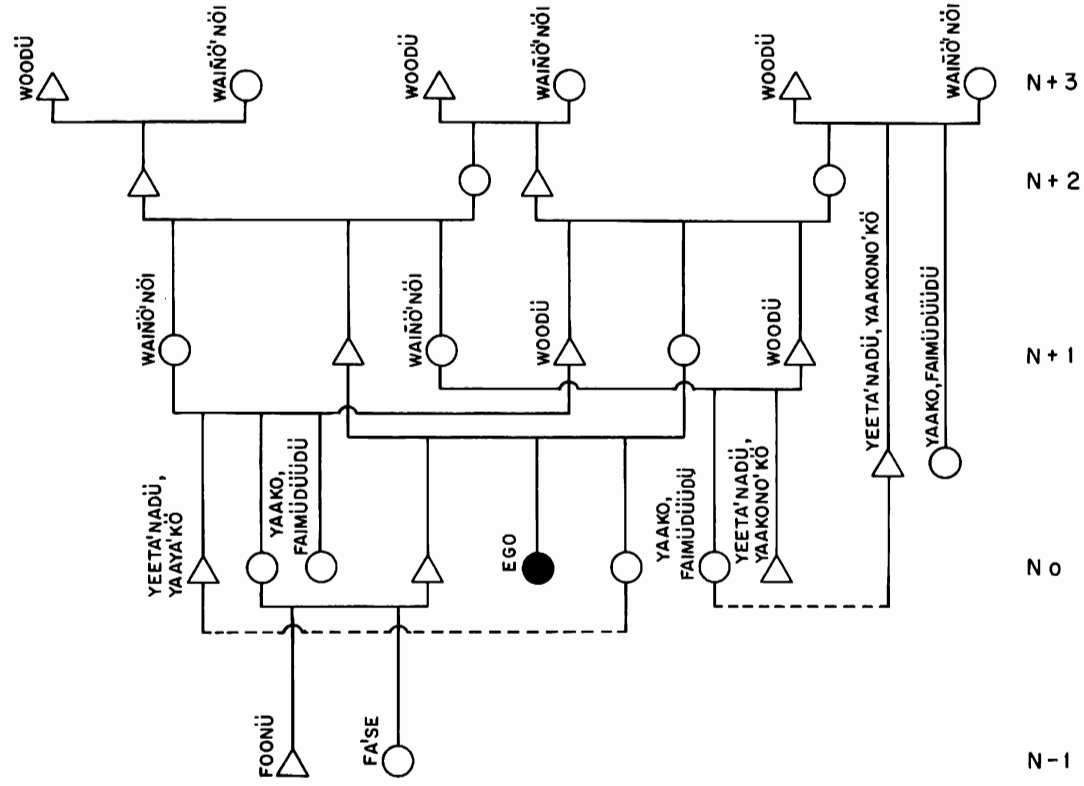


FIGURE 9
CROSS RELATIVES OF FEMALE EGO (ADDRESS TERMS)

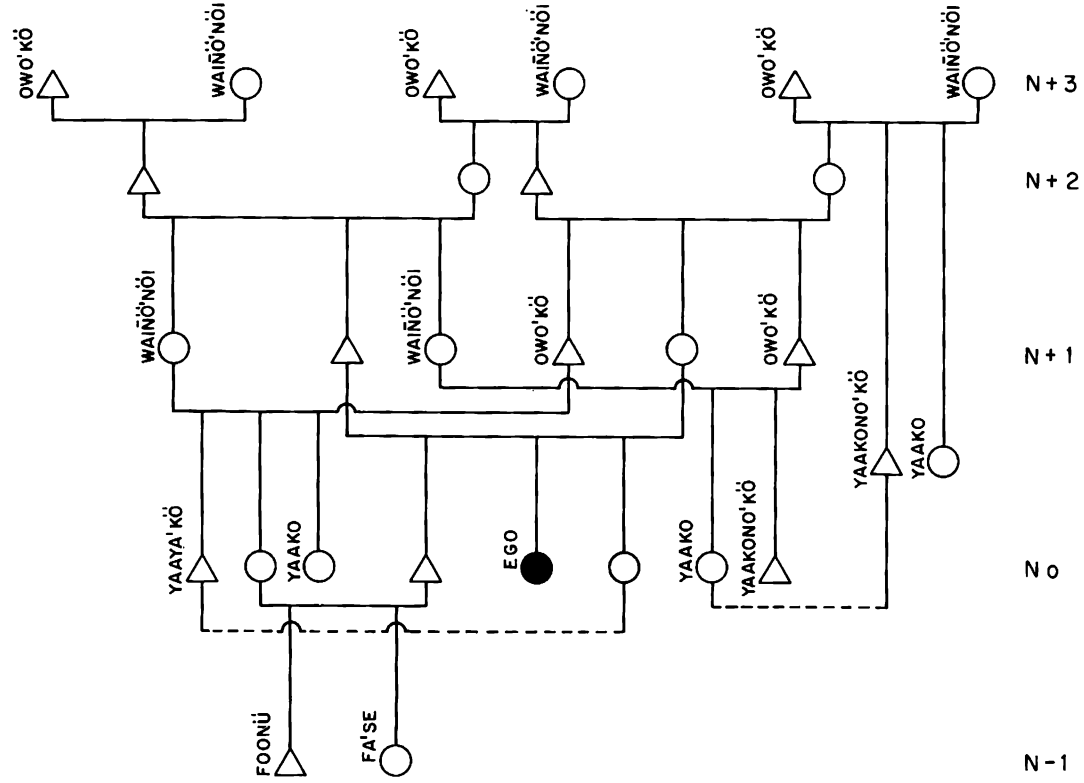


FIGURE 10
AFFINES OF MALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

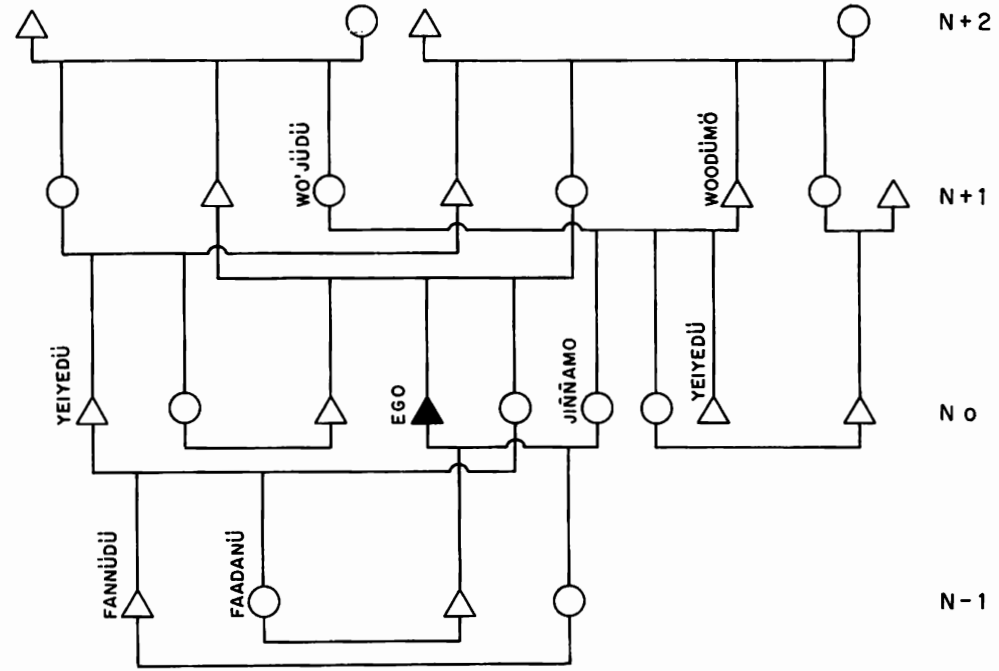


FIGURE 11
AFFINES OF MALE EGO (ADDRESS TERMS)

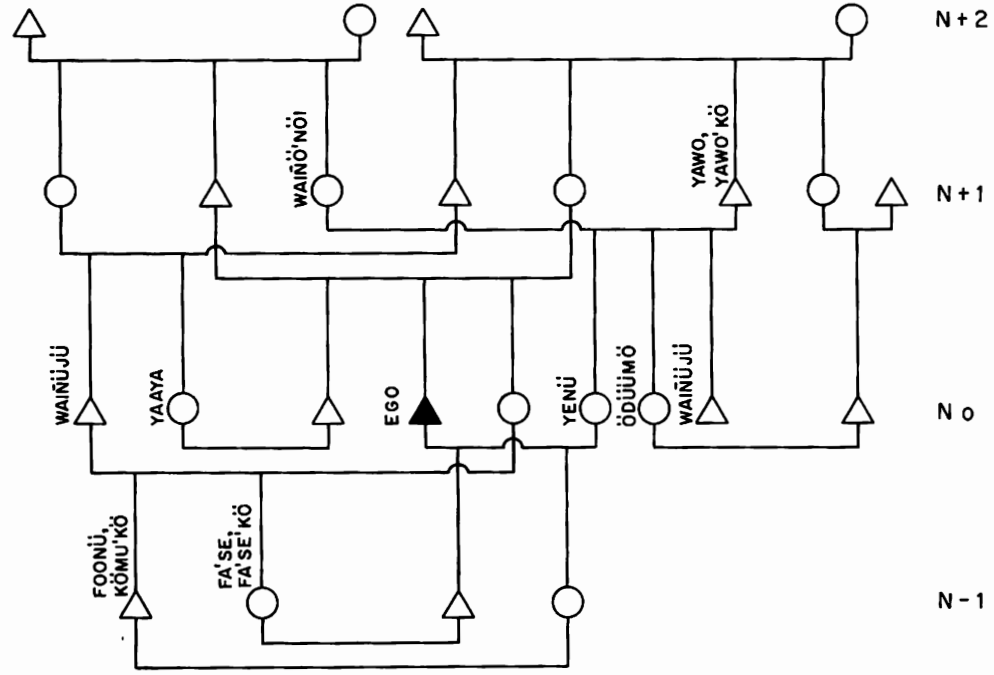


FIGURE 12
AFFINES OF FEMALE EGO (REFERENCE TERMS)

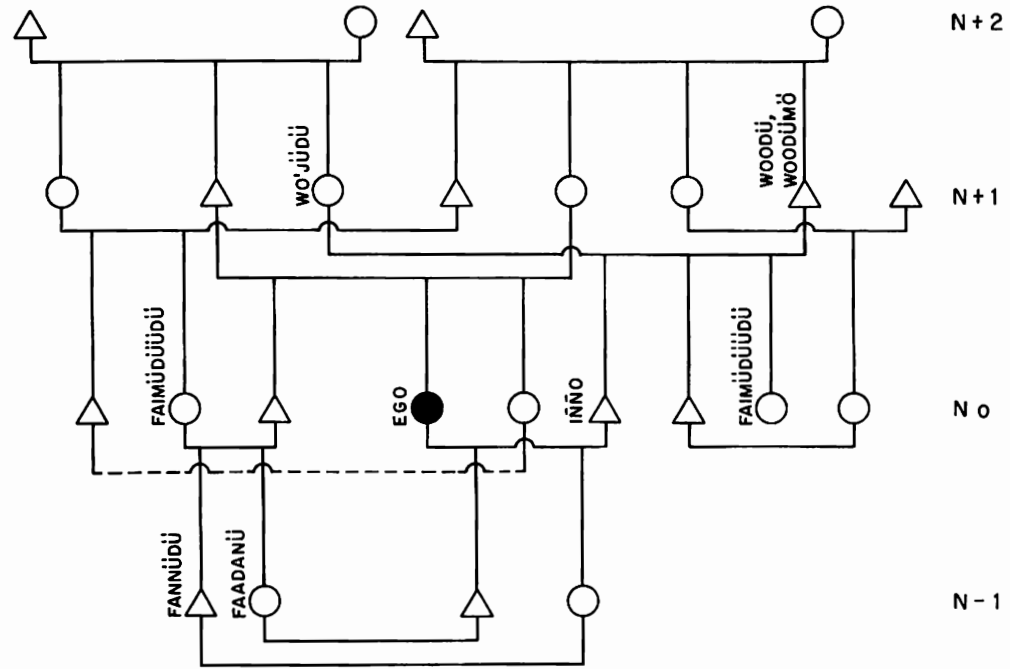
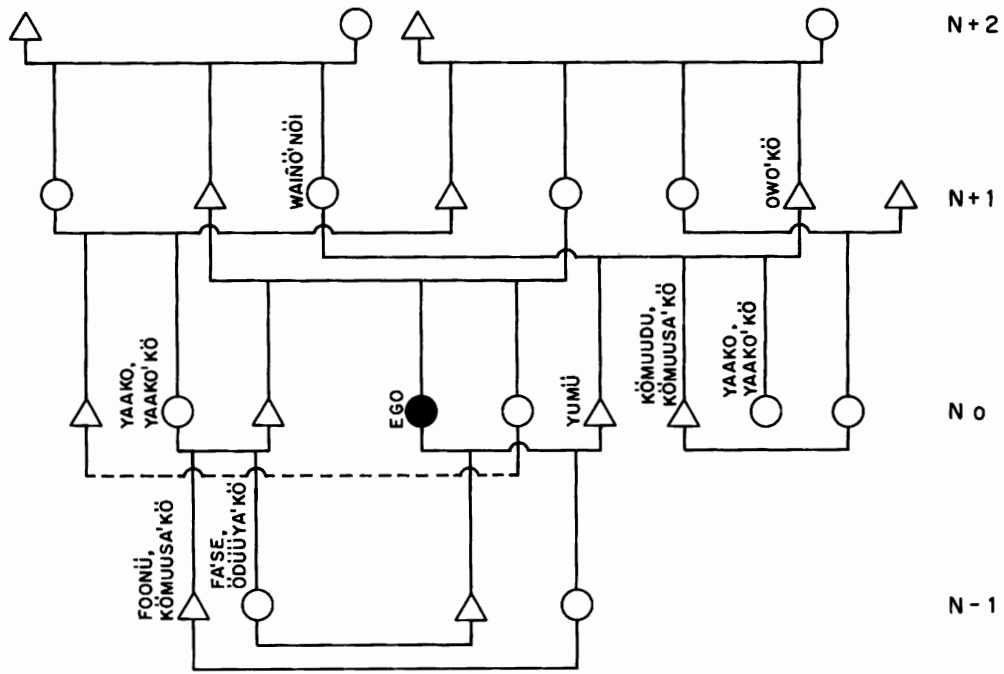


FIGURE 13
AFFINE OF FEMALE EGO (ADDRESS TERMS)



These changes in marriage alliances have taken place to a large extent independently of the Empresa Indígena. The change agents, for one, are not to be found on the village level but are located in criollo towns, away from the activities of the cooperative. Furthermore, the young couples involved in the new type of marriage alliances are rarely active in the affairs of the cooperative enterprise. There might be a subtle feedback mechanism, but it is remote at best.

The Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria Erebató-Nichare-Icutú Tujumoto

The cooperative Empresa Indígena Intercomunitaria Erebató-Nichare-Icutú Tujumoto¹⁸ was founded with the help of personnel from the National Agrarian Institute (IAN) on 9 October 1975, by seventy-seven family heads;¹⁹ seventy-one from six Ye'kuana settlements and six from one Sanema settlement. The juridical entity was registered with the judge of Cedeño District in Caicara del Orinoco on 16 October of the same year under Articles 105 and 107 of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1960.

According to the document, the cooperative was established:

...for the purpose of mutual assistance, administrative representation, and other efforts that would be useful and necessary for the production, procurement, transport, marketing, and complete distribution of the products; the obtainment and use of credit and agricultural machinery; the promotion and appreciation of our sociocultural manifestations; and, finally, the putting into practice of whatever other work or enterprise for the collective benefit (translation supplied).

The official seat of the Empresa Tujumoto is located in the indigenous community of Santa María de Erebató, Ascensión Farreras Township, Cedeño District, State of Bolívar, Venezuela.

As to the internal organization of the Tujumoto cooperative, it consists of the General Assembly (*We'juumanö*), which should convene at least once a year with the possibility of being called together for special purposes. The General Assembly "is the supreme organ of the organization and is composed of each and every one of the active members of the organization." The General Assembly elects the Administrative Committee (or Junta) which consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Spokesman. The Administrative Committee (*Tüdüüjonnamo*) handles the management of intercommunity activities.

The election of the Administrative Committee is nominally by absolute majority (half plus one), but in the Constitution it is established that elections and other decisions made by the General Assembly will follow in any case the procedure of traditional community votes, which implies an intense process of discussion, persuasion, and general agreement among all participants.

According to the legal documents governing its establishment: "Each indigenous community is a production unit with administrative autonomy" and is represented by a captain or *kajičaana* and a treasurer. The *kajičaana* of all the

¹⁸ For more information on the Tujumoto cooperative, see Heinen, Velázquez y Tomedes (1981).

¹⁹ Obviously patterned on procedures among criollo populations.

indigenous communities form part, with full rights, of the Supervisory Council (*Ennenamo*), and can be removed only by their own community. Agricultural activities, including coffee production, are to be carried out on the community level, whereas the Empresa Tujumoto took charge of services such as transportation, machinery [and] commercial distribution. "Cattle raising is an intercommunity activity." However, there is a special clause stipulating that the activity is to be carried out by the Ye'kuana and Sanema ethnic groups independently. Future plans for cacao and coconut plantations are explicitly defined as intercommunity activities.

From the product which would result from community activities, the Administrative Committee will deduct the cost of services such as transport and commercial distribution, plus a percentage equivalent to ten per cent of the net profit which will be deposited in the funds destined for reserve and reinvestment...The product of the intercommunity activity of cattle raising will go entirely into reinvestment, except for the milk, until the General Assembly should determine otherwise (translation supplied).

It remains at the discretion of the Assemblies and individual indigenous communities "to decide the percentage that should be dedicated to the social security and education funds."

It is clear that the organizational framework of the cooperative, as defined legally by outside consultants, was used by the Indians only in transactions with Venezuelan government agencies. In their day-to-day activities, they very much proceeded as they wished.

Discussion

The centralizing forces of the Tujumoto do not represent a serious challenge for the organization of extended households as long as the latter are not decisively weakened from within. As long as the internal social relationships between affines last, the Indians participating in the cooperative do so as members of a household unit, not as individuals. However, the disintegration of the father-in-law/son-in-law relationship and the subsequent individualization of community members could create centralizing forces on the level of the Tujumoto cooperative.

One of the immediate effects of the new non-traditional marriage patterns has been a change in the strategies of forming strong household units, which will consequently have an impact on the patterns of leadership. The tendency is toward an increase in individualization combined with a possible centralization of leadership functions.

Even though the heads of extended households still maintain a strong influence over marriage alliances, it is significant that the address form for a father-in-law is no longer necessarily *yawo*. Depending on the case, he might quite naturally be called *faaja* or *waiññijü*. The word *kaiña* has definitely lost its deterrent effect.

More than purely economic factors, which seem to have strengthened the traditional leadership, the subtle changes in the relations between affines are going

to determine whether long-term social contracts are maintained (for example, between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law) or if they will be replaced by the customary short-range, purely economic contracts of a Western social and economic system.

Recognizing that the *fūdaata eyaamo*, "those who dispose of money" (for example, government employees), will play a major role in the community and in the intercommunal organization on the basis of their monetary contribution, it is to be expected that the increasing economic individualism which comes in the wake of an "individual salary" will further undermine the authority of fathers-in-law over their sons-in-law.

The Tujumoto cooperative seems to have had no effect on the size of present day Ye'kuana communities. While it is true that the organizational framework of the Tujumoto cooperative might encourage a centralizing tendency, it is also probable that the same framework could facilitate a fission of a community in a less traumatic way than usual since a settlement would maintain closer contacts with the matrix village through cooperative ties.

On the other hand, the large-scale construction of dugout canoes by the extended household for commercial sale has created a centrifugal influence. Although this activity would appear to be an ideal development, the first impression is misleading. The large-scale construction of dugouts has had a rather destructive influence on the traditional economic structure. Far from being traditional, the construction of rivercraft beyond the need of the community accompanied by extensive commercial selling, involving an intense interaction with criollo traders, is no more than sixty years old. It has led to the migration of whole communities to the Lower Paragua River.

We must consider here some characteristics of traditional exchange. In a traditional context the visitor very often had to put pressure on his hosts in order to obtain a desired object since in an economy where goods were produced according to need, nobody had items ready for sale but had to part with goods he himself needed. A visitor derived a certain prestige from successfully obtaining the desired goods.

Few Ye'kuana, or indigenous peoples in Venezuela for that matter, are aware of the extent to which the Western economic system operates differently. Goods and services are used to make a profit; they are not items which have to be extracted from the owners. Payment might be in cash or in essential goods, both of which involve the appropriation of Indian labor. The individual who has acquired the "possession" of an outboard motor, for example, returns home with a sense of pride and satisfaction. He is generally not aware of the triple gain the merchant has made by selling him the motor, buying his dugout canoes, and charging a high rate of interest on the delayed transaction.

It is not advocated here that the Ye'kuana bring the production and sale of dugout canoes under the control of the Tujumoto cooperative, but the Council of Elders should participate in the corresponding activities, if only to protect inexperienced individuals from the traders who are only too willing to sell all sorts of goods which are quite useless for the indigenous individual, such as a

multipurpose sound system which self-destructs after about three months of use. It is precisely one of the functions of the Tujumoto cooperative to help control the import mix in order to avoid an ever greater dependency on imported trade goods.

As can be seen, recent intense contact with the regional economy has brought in its wake a number of disintegrating tendencies in relation to the traditional leadership among the Ye'kuana. These tendencies sometimes have crystallized around the juridical framework of the Tujumoto cooperative, but they are really independent of it.

Two new roles have been created in response to the wider national scene. One of these roles goes back a generation or so and is, to a certain degree, institutionalized. It is the *yadaanawi adeddu adeukano*, "the one who speaks Spanish." Many of the people who are now respectable elders, *inchonkomo*, had spent in their youth a number of years in criollo river towns and learned the national language. The second relatively new role refers to government employees such as schoolteachers, paramedics, and other civil servants. They are the *fúdaata eyaamo* (sing., *fúdaata eyaajö*), "the ones who have money, and an independent income."

There could be a temptation for a Ye'kuana individual to try to base political leadership on his relations with the criollo world, and in fact many individuals have attempted just that. Nevertheless, this strategy requires a type of monopoly such as that enjoyed by the late *kajiichaana* Carlos Núñez (who was one of the few bilingual Ye'kuana in his time). Today the situation has changed owing to the large numbers of high school graduates who return from the criollo river towns. The pendulum has swung back again and political authority is vested now in traditionally-minded individuals, who can easily find an interpreter among their younger kinsmen. Hence the traditional leader does not have to share his authority with one of the *yadaanawi adeddu adeukankomo*, "the ones who speak Spanish."

Changes in the traditional Ye'kuana social structure from within have a much greater weight than that exercised through a possible centralization of functions by "those who speak Spanish." This is especially true of changes in the basic relationship between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law. Political leadership is based on personal authority and the strength of the extended household, which in turn hinges on the social relationship between affines.

Abstract

In 1975 a Western type of cooperative was established among the Ye'kuana and Sanema Indians of the Upper Erebató, Bolívar State, Venezuela. It was hypothesized that this kind of organization would cause major socio-cultural and economic changes among the indigenous populations involved.

After a survey of the traditional indigenous economy and the dynamics of political leadership, this paper examines the functioning of the Ye'kuana kinship system.

The analysis shows that the changes observed among the Ye'kuana originate not so much with the Tujumoto cooperative but mainly with the Western schooling

of younger people in Orinoco river towns and the adoption of criollo marriage patterns. Kinship charts, slightly different from other Ye'kuana areas, are included.

Resumen

En 1975 se formó una cooperativa entre los indígenas Ye'kuana y Sanema del Alto Erebató en el Estado Bolívar. Se supuso que la organización de tipo occidental provocaría significativos cambios socioculturales y económicos entre la población indígena involucrada.

Después de presentar una sinopsis de la economía indígena tradicional y de la dinámica del liderazgo político, el presente trabajo examina cómo en la actualidad funciona el sistema de parentesco Ye'kuana.

El análisis demuestra que los cambios observados en el sistema social Ye'kuana son, más bien, producto de la educación occidentalizante que reciben los jóvenes Ye'kuana en centros criollos, tales como Maripa y Ciudad Bolívar, sobre todo, a través del sistema de parentesco español. Se incluye tablas de parentesco levemente diferentes a las de otras áreas Ye'kuana.