



Network organization in E'ñapa society: a first approximation

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Introduction

Most recent studies of Guianese Carib groups have focused on the atomism, minimality and discrete character of the formal structural aspects of these societies. Repeatedly, the Carib family, household and village have been described as units operating with a high degree of independence, a feature matched at the territorial level to a pattern of dispersed settlements and low inter-village interaction. Kloos (1971: 154), for example, described Maroni Carib society as one in which the nuclear family, constituting the fundamental building block, was embedded in larger and independent associations called "local kinship groups" which, in turn, constituted almost "complete Carib societies in themselves." In this context "the village," made up of spatially separated local kinship groups, was seen as a highly amorphous quasi-entity, slowly gaining in importance and recognition as Carib society adjusted to the demands of the larger and more complex Surinam society (Kloos 1971: 122, 188). In a recent monograph Thomas (1982: 15) asserts that of all the people of the Central Guiana Highlands "the Pemon seem to have gone furthest...in the direction of the autonomy of the minimal units (the individual, nuclear family, and sibling set)." Pemon society, he argues, "can be classed as egalitarian, anarchic (without government, political functions being diffused throughout the society), and to a certain extent amorphous (lacking corporate groups beyond the household)" (Thomas 1982: 7).

Arvelo-Jiménez (1974: 5, 247) writing about Ye'kwana society found "a manifest lack of articulation among villages, and an expressed and felt independence

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among the members of each one in relation to the others..." (my translation). "Irrespective of the motives calling forth inter-village contacts" she adds, "these are always irregular, occasional and above all brief" (my translation).

Inspection of the recent literature analyzing Guianese Carib Groups thus reveals important similarities among authors in the interpretations offered and the choice of axial attributes employed to characterize these societies. Among the latter the most commonly emphasized are "informality," "boundedness," "dispersion" and "autonomy of the local units." The types of maximal organizational units recognized so far in Carib society range from the small localized kinship set, variously defined (Kloos 1971; Thomas 1982), to the village or settlement (Arvelo-Jiménez 1974, 1977; Basso 1977; Gillin 1936; Fock 1963; Dumont 1978; Rivière 1969a; Henley 1982).

Most studies of folk societies have reflected in one way or another the influence of the structural-functionalist school of thought. This anthropological tradition conceptualized societies as self-contained systems striving to maximize static equilibria. It eventually gave rise to a stereotypic vision of small-scale or tribal societies so that these became defined almost exclusively in terms of the isolation, simplicity and homogeneity they supposedly exhibited. Critics of this approach have pointed out that these characteristics were more often assumed than demonstrated, and were commonly and incorrectly generalized to cover all small-scale societies (Jackson n.d.: 4). Olsen (1976: 23), for example, has made reference to an unacknowledged metaphor implicit in traditional studies aptly paraphrased in the formula "the small community is a microcosm." As a result, he adds, emphasis was placed on the self-contained nature of the community studied and its relationships with the outside world were ignored or minimized. Jackson (n.d.) has called attention to additional factors accounting for the observed tendency to oversimplify small-scale societies and accentuate their homogeneity and boundedness. They can be summarized as follows: 1) making comparisons between small-scale societies and more complex ones; 2) efforts to make ethnic units serve the purpose of cross-cultural comparisons; 3) the nature of anthropological field work which tends towards the exhaustive analysis of one community; and 4) lack of an established theory and technique to carry on research on interaction systems beyond a community's boundaries.

Although the field of Carib studies has not been immune to the above mentioned tendencies, researchers have found it necessary to allude to operating regional organizations in order to give a full account of their observations. Indeed this is not surprising if, following Smith (1976: 17), we recall that all societies exist in territorial systems with links outside the face-to-face community. While most students of Carib social life have regarded these links as unessential and inconsequential, both at the etic and emic levels, the fact that they have inferred and noted them is significant in itself, and amounts to a tacit recognition that Carib social organization can not be comprehensively understood in terms of face-to-face, inter-family or intra-household interactions alone.¹ The need to recur to what

¹ Only two types of systematized inter-community interactions in Carib society have been

might be labelled "regional fields of interaction" is thus the clearest indication that traditional analyses of Carib societies have neglected a higher level of social integration, and that the featured boundedness and involution of these societies have been considerably overestimated in the past.

Rivière (1969a: 37) for example, divided Trio population into three "main groups" each of which was further subdivided into "agglomerations" consisting of "clusters of villages." However, after admitting that the agglomerations constituted both the basic economic and social unit within which the individual satisfied his subsistence requirements, located the majority of his kin and affines, and cultivated his social contacts (Rivière 1969a: 128), he summed up Trio life as follows:

The picture of Trio society as consisting of a series of introverted and isolated village communities becomes overwhelming. In general terms, this is the correct one, and although it has been shown that, for a number of reasons, the single village is not a social and economic independent unit, this does not contradict the basic truth of this premise. The counterbalance to isolation and hostility is the tradition of hospitality, trade, and the more periodic admission of interdependence that is revealed in the dance festival (Rivière 1969a: 271).

The Ye'kwana people also engage in inter-village interaction. Like all social behavior, we must assume it to be patterned and rule-governed. Yet most authors have been unwilling to acknowledge the existence of supra-community regularized interaction in Ye'kwana society. Two types of explanations have been advanced. The first regards interactions between villages as unorganized:

Since economic specialization among villages is insignificant the inter-settlement trade is not organized, and notwithstanding the commercial exchanges that do take place, their political implications are scanty. Much more relevant are the exchanges of services, and among these, those that carry real political significance are the ones involving ritual services. However, these exchanges are not organized so as to lead to the formation of interdependent village agglomerates. Yet they foster bonds among villages with transcendental political implications (Arvelo-Jiménez 1974: 249, my translation).

The second type of explanation resorts to the notion of historical relics:

The scant evidence furnished by the thwarted verbal duel allows us only to hypothesize that Ye'cuana society may have been divided at one time into larger and more cohesive segments than the autonomous village of today...But if they shared belief in a common history and also showed a much greater frequency of interaction due to spatial proximity, then one could talk about the past existence of social groups which exceeded the provincialism characteristic of Ye'cuana villages at present. Currently we find still, vestiges of regional solidarity and exclusiveness (Arvelo-Jiménez 1974: 275, my translation).

As for Pemon society, Thomas (1982: 51) seemed to have encountered some difficulties in explaining the coexistence of highly autonomous units and "diffusely" bounded regional systems. He stressed the extreme autonomy of the minimal social units in a society where the "normal state is one of apartness with individuals and

recognized and analyzed: trade networks (Thomas 1972, 1982; Coppens 1971; Butt Colson 1977) and, to a lesser extent, hostile or aggressive manifestations (Arvelo-Jiménez 1974; Thomas 1982; Kloos 1971; Fock 1963).

small groups carrying out the basic tasks of Pemon life," but recognized that

the Pemon have not been an involuted, isolated social system but rather a social system which has established important connecting links...with surrounding indigenous peoples and which has looked outward from its geographical redoubt (Thomas 1982: 15). If we think of a series of overlapping [kinship and marriage] networks spread out in time as well as space, connecting the various households and settlements over the Pemon landscape, we have an accurate metaphor for much of Pemon social life (Thomas 1982: 52).

Taken together, the previous quotations show that the traditional micro-approach to the study of social relations is not well suited for the discovery and analysis of macro-phenomena. Even though all authors cited recognized the existence of an organizational dimension of Carib social systems transcending the local settlement, we saw that few or none went beyond the simple admission of the fact. The lack of a heuristic model to deal with intermediate and higher levels of organization thus resulted in blurred levels of analysis and reduced descriptive precision. For example, how can Ye'kwana inter-village exchanges be unorganized and yet foster bonds which have transcendental political implications? Also, to what extent are Trio villages really isolated and introverted if they are economically and socially interdependent? In sum, the approaches traditionally employed in the study of small-scale societies have not succeeded in accounting satisfactorily for the Carib data now at our disposal. The striking ambivalence in explanation and analysis encountered in the literature indicates that a reassessment of the facts is in order.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that the concepts developed in the field of regional analysis may provide the missing analytical tools and may be productively adapted to the study of structurally simple societies such as the Carib. Already this and closely related viewpoints have been successfully combined in a research strategy tried in the Central North-west Amazon (Jackson 1976). In the following pages I intend to consider a number of propositions which are to be regarded as working hypotheses. Taken together they represent a reinterpretation and reorientation of my own field work among Carib groups of Venezuela (particularly the E'ñapa), and establish a framework in which past interpretations of Carib social organization can be evaluated and through which a higher order of factual integration can be reached. As the bare outlines of a research program yet to be undertaken systematically, I hope they will contribute to the development of an alternative and more powerful model in this area of investigation.

The E'ñapa

The E'ñapa people are a Carib-speaking ethnic group inhabiting the savannas and forests located South of the Middle Orinoco River. About 2,300 individuals scattered in local groups of varying size occupy a non-contiguous territory which includes the Cuchivero, Guaniamo, Maniapure, Colorado and Suapure watersheds. Hunting, fishing and gathering activities supplement the products derived from swidden agriculture, altogether providing the E'ñapa with a well-balanced and varied diet. Not all of the eight specific Carib "traits" proposed by Basso (1977: 17)

are found among the E'ñapa people. They cultivate disproportionately more sweet manioc than the bitter variety employed in the manufacture of cassava bread. Their communal ceremonies, rather than "pan-village" are better characterized as "inter-village." A variety of drugs besides tobacco are used by the initiated to induce perception of an extra-ordinary reality. And finally, the male initiation festival constitutes an extremely elaborate and important communal affair. In contrast, the female ritual, where practiced, is a private affair attended by women only. On the other hand, the basic parameters of E'ñapa social organization fit quite closely to the Carib pattern: a kin-based organization, bilateral reckoning of kinship, preferential bilateral cross cousin marriage, preferential uxorilocal post-marital residence, bride service and lack of corporate descent units (Villalón 1978: 12-13).

The *patan*

The maximal social unit labelled by the E'ñapa is the *patan*. It is the scenario of the group's collective existence. The term denotes "place of residence" and can mean either "home" or "village" (settlement or residential cluster).² The term is evidently cognate with *pata* (Pemon), *juata/ɸata/* (Ye'kwana) and *pata* (Trio), all sharing identical meaning (Thomas 1982: 52; Arvelo-Jiménez 1974: 47; Rivière 1969a: 232). A traditional E'ñapa *patan* is composed of a single communal long- or roundhouse while a cluster of smaller dwellings housing one or more nuclear families constitutes the more recent settlement pattern. However, even in this nucleated modern *patan*, the communal house has not been abandoned entirely due undoubtedly to the major role it plays in the celebration of certain rituals. Membership in a *patan* is determined primarily by kinship reckoned consanguineously or affinally. The principal means of recruitment is through marriage. Partially on account of the uxorilocal residence rule, males tend to move through *patan* more frequently than females, who overwhelmingly prefer to stay close to their mothers or sisters. The life span of a *patan* (as a recognized social unit and irrespective of its shifting membership) depends upon numerous factors. Among these the most important are the quality of its leadership, the nature of the kinship links binding its residents, the richness of the surrounding environment and the ease of accessibility to natural resources tapped by native technology.

At the present time a marked variation in population size is observed among *patan*. While the traditional village congregated around 50 or 70 persons, nowadays, pressured spatially, economically and socially by an ever expanding national frontier, some Western E'ñapa groups have tended to concentrate in larger communities, two of them reaching 300 members. One example is the village of Colorado which has attracted through the years several closely related local groups. The influence exerted by the establishment of a New Tribes Mission post in

² Dumont (1978) incorrectly employed the term *pereka* which means "house," i.e., the physical structure. The word means also "protective covering" (such as a lampshade, for example). The term *tapatakyen* is similarly misused denoting, properly speaking, a *patan* member. Lastly, the correct rendering of the phrase *icpa patan* should be "forest settlement" or "forest place of residence" rather than "the floor of the forest" (see Dumont 1976: 67).

the valley is not to be discounted as an important variable in this process. The other notable example is Perro de Agua which agglomerated a host of local groups originating mainly from the watersheds of Caño Caimán, Temblador and Guarataro. In addition to the disturbing extrinsic pressures noted above, the latter groups suffered the unsettling effects brought about by a Catholic bishop's protracted and unsuccessful attempt to establish a mission in the area. Several local groups inhabiting the Suapure River basin have also undergone fusion. A few of them lost population to Colorado and only two communities remain in the region at present —Quebrada Seca and La Batea, both products of multiple fusions. Coincidentally, the period of fusion was preceded by the settlement of a Spanish missionary in Quebrada Seca. Three other mutually reinforcing factors, contributing to shaping the process of village formation and fragmentation in Western E'ñapa territory, deserve mention: 1) The geographically restricted distribution of desirable services such as schools and medical care; 2) the availability of, or access to, motorized means of transportation which makes possible the exploitation of distant subsistence resources; and 3) the attraction exercised by the proximity of major roads which facilitate access to markets for produce, labor and handicrafts. The immediate effect of the last two points is to retard the onset of a state of resource deprivation in a given area, allowing longer occupancy and higher than usual population densities. Thus, contrary to what traditional opinion on the subject would lead us to believe, population expansion among some E'ñapa groups has not led to village fission and increased dispersion, but rather has ushered in an increment in community size and rate of local group agglomeration. This phenomenon, therefore, casts doubt upon recent interpretations, whereby village fusion is surmised to occur under conditions of population contraction and fluctuations in village size are construed as a function of the productivity of big game hunting (Dumont 1978: 73, 75-76).

Utmost care should be exercised, however, in the use of the word "fusion" to characterize the dynamics of village formation in Western E'ñapa territory. Although the growth of Colorado and Perro de Agua into "mega-villages" entailed the disappearance of numerous local groups, it is not at all clear to what extent the latter "combined" rather than "fused" to bring about the new order of things. The spatial distribution of households in these mega-villages, for example, reflects in many instances prior local group membership, enabling the observer to discern their composite nature and major social divisions. In this context, the reluctance to settle interspersedly can be interpreted as a desire to manifest social distance and reaffirm local identities in a situation characterized by increased population density. Similarly, the cleavages which have occurred and which are about to occur (according to local sources) in Perro de Agua, have followed clearly defined lines of local group membership. Thus, the peculiarities which surrounded the emergence of this novel pattern in *patan* composition induce us to think that the fate of the respective local bonds and identities brought together during the process of agglomeration remains to be determined. We should not be deceived into thinking that these have necessarily merged or been neutralized in so short a time. The analysis of social relations in these unprecedented situations can be hazardous; as

we will see shortly, varying definitions of “community” have led to different interpretations of E’ñapa macro-relationships.

E’ñapa macro-relations: a reinterpretation

Although it is commonly held that the most encompassing autonomous social unit in Carib societies is the village, I would like to propose that in spite of the strong independence it manifests (especially in the political arena), the E’ñapa *patan* (irrespective of its size) is not an entirely self-sufficient unit. That is, a *patan* must count on the cooperation of neighboring (or even distant) settlements in order to realize appropriately crucial areas of life such as ritual and marriage. The appearance of webs of mutual dependence lead us to postulate the existence of *regional social fields* in E’ñapa society, integrating *patan* at higher levels than previously recognized.

For our purposes, a *region* can be defined as a partition of social space where decentralized, non-hierarchical and non-corporate clusters of *patan* interact and cooperate at determined rates. The E’ñapa do not recognize formally or label linguistically the unit we are denominating a *region* but they are, nonetheless, aware of differential rates of interaction among *patan*. There are those with whose members one interacts quite frequently (where *pyaka* and *tapatakayen* live); those with whose members one interacts occasionally (where *panakong* relationships are maintained); and those with whose members one does not interact at all (*tonkanan*).

Because interactions throughout a region are structured, i.e., show an orderly arrangement among transferable and substitutable parts (Nadel 1971: 300), one can speak of *regional systems*. A *regional field* is, therefore, articulated through interlocking relationships or *networks*, conceived as ramifying chains of dyadic relationships involving specific fields of activity (Blok 1973: 152) and maintained, in our case, by a principle of generalized reciprocity. At least four types of articulated *social fields* (or partial networks) can be found in an E’ñapa regional system. These can be provisionally identified as: 1) marriage networks; 2) trade networks; 3) networks of ceremonial cooperation; and 4) networks of shamanic services exchange.

One example of a trade network, integrating E’ñapa and non-E’ñapa partners, is provided by the groups settled along the tributaries of the Upper Cuchivero River. There, Hoti blowguns flow northward through serial exchanges in return for “criollo” iron tools, which flow back southward also by way of chain-like dyadic exchanges cutting across village boundaries. Networks of ceremonial cooperation are well illustrated in the *panakong* relationship, this being an association established through customary and reciprocated invitations to festivals. The *panakong* are then the visitors specifically invited to participate in a communal ceremony who, by definition, must not be members of the officiating local group. In the formal role of *panakong* visitors become the agents through whom ritual ties are secured among *patan*. The permanence of these exchanges is further ensured by the importance attached to this role, the ritualized performance of which constitutes

a structural component of certain feasts and an indispensable element in their proper execution. The center of shamanic services exchange networks is occupied by master practitioners (as was Uñey?, of whom much more will be said in the following pages). Such masters attract a fairly stable clientele not only among the E'ñapa but among the "criollo" as well. Additionally, an exchange relationship can be established between shamans themselves, who call on each other for aid in difficult cases or to further their knowledge of special areas of their profession. Cooperating shamans and their networks articulate regional systems often clearly discernible from others built around "enemy" or "evil" shamans.

Having described briefly some features of the types of networks likely to integrate a regional system, I would like to turn now to the presentation of the most fundamental one, i.e., the marriage network. One must bear in mind, however, that all types may be found coexisting and intermeshing, although their respective boundaries might not always be in perfect coincidence.

Marriage networks

Chart 1 summarizes genealogical information collected in North-western E'ñapa territory in 1973. The focus of the genealogy is Uñey?, former headman of Warei and noted shaman until his death in 1979. Like many of his contemporaries, Uñey? established an extensive network of relationships throughout his career. He reached adulthood in the Serranía El Loro from where he began a slow approach towards the "criollo" world. Moving first to Cerro Guarray, he later established himself in the Guarray (Warei) savanna where the group lived in permanent contact with its "criollo" neighbors. Uñey?'s first wife came from the Guaniamo River area, but following her premature death he married ?ntyö and later Matö. The latter was from Colorado and ?ntyö, although born in Parupong (Guaratarito, another *patan* in El Loro) was raised in Colorado as well. When Uñey? married ?ntyö he acquired four influential brothers-in-law: Tena, Puka, Uñey?, and Mañang, all of whom were founders and heads of settlements. Their descendants engaged in regularized marital exchanges with Uñey?'s (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 19). To all indications the third generation was solidly on the road towards replicating their forefathers' accomplishments. For example, To?tse, headman of Pavichima and son of Tena, had sired numerous children by his seven wives, three of whom were still alive in 1973. Good prospects existed, therefore, for the perpetuation of the exchange pattern established between Pavichima and Warei through the marriage of their respective sons and daughters (Nos. 4, 6, 12). A similar situation applied to Warei and Matamata. In fact, with the later marriage of Manuel and Matö (son of headman Puka and daughter of Uñey? and ?ntyö respectively) the exchange pattern reached perfection since four sons of one headman married four daughters of the other (Nos. 2, 3, 5).

To the best of my knowledge Chart 1 presents an accurate portrayal of Uñey?'s kin interrelationships, of the conjugal unions they have accomplished and of their respective residences in 1973. In conjunction with Table 1 the chart offers a concise picture of the nature and scope of connubial exchanges among the E'ñapa. As of

TABLE 1
MARRIAGES OF UÑEY'S DESCENDANTS
 1973

Husband's provenance	Union No.	Conjugal family's residential settlement
A. Of Warei women:		
Caño Amarillo	1	Warei
Matamata	2	Warei
Matamata	3	Warei
Pavichima	4	Warei
Matamata	5	Warei
Pavichima	6	El Valle
El Valle/Arepito	7	El Valle
El Valle/Arepito	8	El Valle
El Valle/Arepito	9	El Valle
Warei	23	El Pajal
El Valle	11	El Valle
B. Of El Pajal women:		
Temblador/Wamalito	21	El Pajal
Temblador/Wamalito	22	El Pajal
Warei	14	El Pajal
Pavichima	16	El Pajal
Warei	10	El Pajal
Wamalito	18	El Pajal
Caño Amarillo	19	El Pajal
El Valle	13	El Pajal
C. Of El Valle women:		
El Pajal	15	El Valle
Pavichima	12	El Valle
Wife's provenance	Union No.	Conjugal family's residential settlement
D. Of Warei men:		
Pavichima	17	Arepito
Undetermined ^a	24	El Pajal
E. Of El Pajal men:		
Wamalito	20	Wamalito

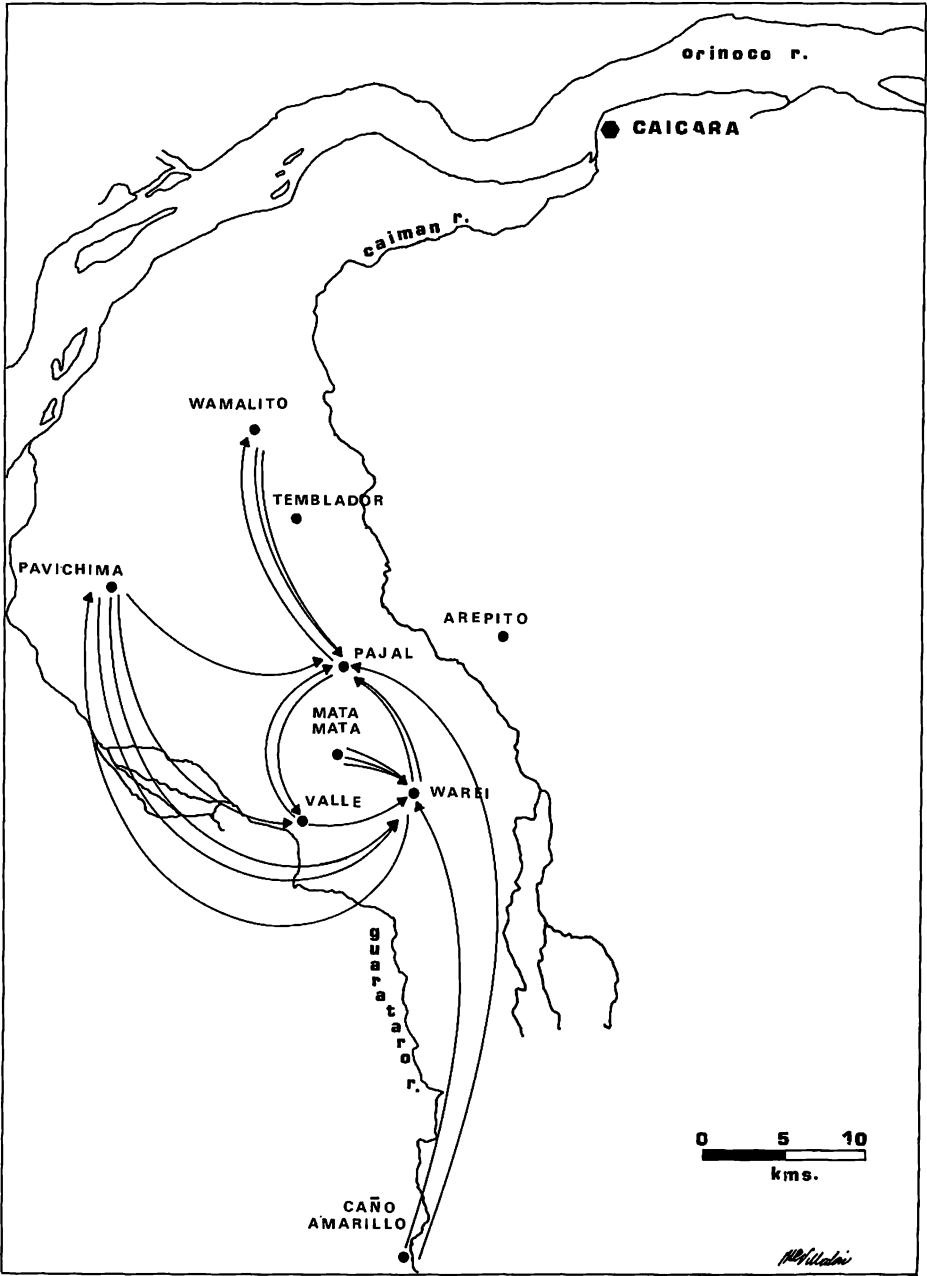
^a From one of the former communities located between the eastern flank of the Chaviripa Range and the Serranía de los Panare.

1973 Uñey's sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters and great granddaughters, were participants in 23 extant marriages, all of which were exogamous except one (No. 23). These marriages had redistributed his descendants among five different *patan* (Arepito, Wamalito, El Valle, Warei and El Pajal) and established links with at least four others (Caño Amarillo, Pavichima, Matamata, and Temblador). Excepting Nos. 7, 11 and 24, all marriages initially involved movement of males between *patan*. Union No. 7 came into being when Acim, a widow (No. 6), left Warei with her children and attached herself to the household of To'tse and his two co-wives in El Valle. All three women were sisters.³ While living in El Valle, Acim's daughter, Atung, married her MZS (No. 11), a union which on account of its incestuous character was very strongly criticized, but which eventually stabilized after overcoming the adverse social pressures. On the other hand, unions Nos. 8, 9, 17, 23, and 24 involved relocation of the conjugal family after the newly-wed husband fulfilled his bride service requirements in his father-in-law's household. To'tse (Nos. 8 and 9) returned to El Valle with his two wives (both sisters), while Nahtö (Nos. 23 and 24), oldest son of Uñey, married 'ntyö in Warei but moved on to settle independently in El Pajal. Some time after, asked to be *panakong* at a feast, he fell in love with a girl from the host village and married her. After a brief stay there he returned to El Pajal with his new wife. Finally, Nahtö's brother, To'tse (No. 17), married a girl from Pavichima and took up residence at his wife's *patan*. However, when he decided to undergo shamanic training under the supervision of an Arepito master, he moved there with her.

Map 1 furnishes a schematic spatial representation of the patterns of marital exchanges shown in Chart 1. The interacting *patan* covered an area of approximately 700 square kilometers and were separated from each other by an average linear distance of 15 kilometers. These figures are in close agreement (although they are not strictly comparable) with those obtained in the Vaupés where, in contrast to the E'ñapa, settlements are located alongside navigable rivers and little overland travel is carried out (Jackson 1976: 85-86). The spatial configuration suggests a slight tendency for the frequency of exchanges to vary inversely with the linear distances separating *patan*, but the data at hand are not sufficient to warrant further discussion. Certainly, given the number of intervening variables likely to affect the outcome—ease of travel, amount of social distance, pre-existing patterns of exchange, and the quality of inter-settlement relations—no direct correlation is to be expected between the two variables.

In sum, the evidence just presented suggests that, in the region considered, E'ñapa marriages can be characterized as a series of dyadic exchanges between *patan*, structuring a network of alliance relationships which in conjunction articulate a regional system. We have seen that at least six marriage networks were operative in the area studied in 1973: 1) Matamata-Warei; 2) Warei-El Pajal; 3) El Valle-El Pajal; 4) Pavichima-Warei; 5) Wamalito-El Pajal; and 6) Caño Amarillo-Warei-El Pajal. These networks, along with the more indirect links tying in

³To'tse initially refused to take her as wife. Yet Acim remained undaunted and patiently overcame his reluctance.



MAP 1
 SETTLEMENTS INVOLVED IN THE MARITAL EXCHANGES
 COMPLETED BY UÑEY'S DESCENDANTS

Temblador and Arepito, constituted the core of a regional marriage system. Within it, El Pajal and Warei became net recipients of new *patan* members, while Pavichima and Matamata were net exporters.

Other views

Accounts by other authors lend support to the findings presented above. Dumont (1978), for example, reported that the Túriba E'ñapa engaged in matrimonial exchanges with at least ten other local groups.⁴ Considering that connubial choice entailed the activation of two conflicting principles — preference for cross cousin marriage (which together with the practice of uxorilocal residence favored exogamy) and preference for local endogamy— he advanced a functionalist explanation to account for the prevalence of exogamous decisions. That is, these were to be regarded as a mechanism for controlling group size through the redistribution of their population. In Dumont's words, exogamy allowed a group to "diversify its social holdings" and to take out a "demographic insurance" (Dumont 1978: 83).

Not all authors, however, agree. In recent work Henley (1982) has emphatically characterized the E'ñapa as endogamous. After conducting a census of the Colorado Valley population, he concluded that out of 26 extant unions involving men under 30 years of age, 23 were endogamous. In very rough terms, this high rate of endogamy would place the E'ñapa among the "80% groups" (see Adams and Kasakoff 1976). These results stem partially from Henley's definition of community, which he took to mean "all Panare social conglomerations that remain isolated by a distance of approximately half a day's walk from another, regardless of the number of discrete settlement groups this conglomeration embraces" (Henley 1982: 17).

Although this interpretation may have simplified matters considerably in the Colorado Valley region, the fact is that the remaining E'ñapa distribution is such that there is hardly any difference to be made between community or village in the traditional sense and settlement or local group. Yet Henley believed that his findings could be generalized, arguing that high endogamy characterizes E'ñapa communities in general (Henley 1982: 121). Bearing in mind our earlier discussion of the E'ñapa *patan*, it seems that Henley did not give proper attention to the fact that Colorado represents a fairly new and rather atypical situation in E'ñapa society, constituting a very recent assemblage of 10 formerly independent groups (Henley 1982: 17). Such an across-the-board generalization, therefore, appears to be untenable. Due attention must be given to regional and local differences if one wishes to avoid the dangers of over-simplification. In effect, it is not possible to define E'ñapa marriages exclusively as a series of endogamous exchanges taking place between conjugal families (Henley 1982: 122) ignoring, in the process,

⁴ Dumont (1978: 82) refers quite explicitly to the "exchange of women that takes place between local groups." This expression is not entirely accurate and confuses two points of view. While men may think that they are swapping females, their marriages require, in a good number of cases, their displacement from the natal community.

existing higher order social units. To assume that the former are the relevant social units for the analysis of E'ñiapa marriage obscures a fundamental aspect of this process, namely, that connubial exchanges entail, in many cases, circulation of people through *families* as well as through *local settlement groups*. This fact stands out clearly in the chart, table, and map presented earlier. Together they illustrate the usefulness of conceptualizing E'ñiapa marriage in terms of a network organization operating throughout a regional system.

Conclusions

E'ñiapa marital exchanges are neither discrete nor entirely familial affairs. They are transactions which affect the composition of social units at different levels of integration and which generate movement of people across the boundaries of recognized social units. To the extent that marriages create or perpetuate alliances this movement becomes a permanent process (Jackson 1976: 88). It is to be expected that in a kin-based, simple society such as that of the E'ñiapa, comprised of dispersed, mobile and interdependent local groups, marriage exchanges will constitute the institution most responsible for the organization of the regional system (Jackson n.d.: 15).

Recent studies have shed considerable light on endogamy as a *regional process*. Conducting statistical research on a large sample of ethnic groups, Adams and Kasakoff (1976: 168, 175), have been able to show that every society exhibits at least two types of marital unions: marriages within and marriages outside the group. Hence, it can be argued that most groups —whether exogamous or endogamous— will apply a variety of rules to marriage making, and will maintain a web of systematized supra-community ties contributing to the perpetuation of the interacting units and their populations. Additionally, their findings have suggested that the rate of endogamy exhibited by a given society seems to be largely independent of its kinship structure. Indeed, no correlation was found between type of kin preference and degree of endogamy (Adams and Kasakoff 1976: 169).

Finally, given that no group constitutes a closed marriage universe, it makes little sense to characterize societies in terms of a single marriage pattern. Instead, attention should be drawn to determining the size of the endogamous unit, i.e., the marriage universe. A full understanding of the patterning of marriage preferences demands empirical determination of the marriage pool, for a choice is only intelligible with reference to the available selection. In order to infer patterns, the choice made or actualized must be compared against the background of all possible ones. Adoption of a regional perspective, it has been argued, facilitates this process enormously, and also opens up new possibilities for a reinterpretation of the nature and functioning of Carib societies in general and of Carib marriage in particular.

Abstract

This paper suggests that past studies have stressed unduly the boundedness and homogeneity of Carib societies ignoring, as a consequence, a higher level of

societal integration of regional scope. Four types of regional networks are provisionally identified in E'ñapa (Panare) society: marriage, trade, ceremonial cooperation and shamanic services exchanges. Previous characterizations of E'ñapa marriage are compared and data on E'ñapa marital exchanges are analyzed adopting the concepts developed in the field of regional analysis. It is suggested that in societies similar to the E'ñapa, marriage constitutes the key institution structuring the regional system. Without losing sight of the local or regional differences that may exist, E'ñapa marriages are interpreted as transactions which affect the composition of social units at different levels of integration and which generate movement of people across the boundaries of recognized social units.

Resumen

El presente estudio sugiere que en el pasado se ha sobrestimado el grado de aislamiento y homogeneidad que exhiben las sociedades Caribes, ignorándose, en consecuencia, un nivel más alto de integración comunitaria con alcance regional. Se identifican tentativamente cuatro tipos de redes regionales operativas en la sociedad E'ñapa o Panare: redes de intercambios matrimoniales, de intercambios comerciales, de colaboración ceremonial y finalmente, redes de intercambios de servicios shamánicos. Se efectúa una comparación entre las diferentes interpretaciones del sistema matrimonial E'ñapa y se analizan datos sobre los intercambios conyugales con la ayuda de los conceptos desarrollados en el campo del análisis regional. El análisis destaca que en sociedades estructuralmente similares a la E'ñapa es probable que el matrimonio constituya la institución fundamental en la organización del sistema regional. Sin perder de vista las diferencias regionales o locales que pudiesen existir, el presente trabajo caracteriza el matrimonio E'ñapa como transacciones que afectan la composición de unidades sociales en diferentes niveles de integración y que generan, al mismo tiempo, el desplazamiento de personas a través y entre unidades sociales reconocidas.