THE CREATION OF REAL FOOD AND REAL PEOPLE:
GENDER COMPLEMENTARITY AMONG THE MENKU OF CENTRAL BRAZIL

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

2000

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The creation of real food and real people:
Gender-complementarity among the Menkù of Central Brazil

Gisela Pauli

PhD in Social Anthropology

June 1999
University of St. Andrews
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Amazonian issues</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Aspects of Amazonian social organisation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Amazonian concepts of the person</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Geographical location of the Menkū and their relationship with neighbouring indigenous groups</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Fieldwork aims</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Outline of the thesis</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 The Menkū in ethnographic and ethnological literature</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I</strong> Approaching the Menkū</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Historical context</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The penetration of Mato Grosso - Rondón, rubber tappers, and missionaries</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Missionary presence in Mato Grosso</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Utīaritī</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 The Second Vatican Council and its repercussions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.3 The Developments in Mato Grosso
2.2.4 'Operação Anchieta' - OPAN
2.2.5 Indigenous Missionary Council - CIMI
2.2.5.1 The emergence of the national Indigenous Missionary Council
2.2.5.2 CIMI Mato Grosso

2.3 Governmental Institutions
2.3.1 National Foundation for the Indian - FUNAI
2.3.2 Insitute for the Colonisation and Agrarian Reform - INCRA
2.3.3 National Foundation for Health - FNS

2.4 Menkū ethnohistory
2.4.1 Some historical data
2.4.1.0 Collecting Menkū history: Personal histories versus a collectively authorised 'text'
2.4.1.1 The Menkū at the river Tapuru ( - 1905)
2.4.1.2 The period of separation and further decimation (1905 -1971)
2.4.1.2.1 Menkū
2.4.1.2.2 Iranxe
2.4.1.3 Contact, reunion and growth (1971 - )

3 At the settlement

3.1 The beginning of the journey
3.1.1 My encounter with the Menkū
3.1.2 Collecting data
3.1.3 Arriving at the settlement

3.2 Outline of the settlement in 1996

3.3 Social spaces
3.3.1 The individual house
3.3.1.1 Building a house
3.3.1.2 Making a hammock
3.3.1.3 Whose house is it?
3.3.2 The settlement plaza
3.3.2.1 The central plaza as a space for the reception
of the outside 111
3.3.2.1.1 Ritual Weeping 112
3.3.2.1.2 The ceremony of ritual greeting 114
3.3.2.1.3 The head ball game 115
3.3.2.1.4 The dance of the katêtiri 117

Part II The generation of ‘real food’ through gendered complementarity 120

4 Menkû food production 120

4.1 Providing the ingredients: hunting and gathering in the forest 123
4.1.1 Game 127
4.1.2 Fish 130
4.1.3 Insects 131
4.1.3.1 Ants 131
4.1.3.2 Maggots 132
4.1.3.3 Bees, honey and wax 134
4.1.4 Birds 135
4.1.5 Fruits 138

4.2 Gathering materials in the forest: utensils for the production of ‘real food’ 138
4.2.1 Utensils produced by men 140
4.2.1.1 Bow and arrow 140
4.2.1.2 The grater 141
4.2.1.3 The basket 142
4.2.2 Utensils produced by women 143
4.2.2.1. The sieve 143
4.2.2.2 Pots 143
4.2.2.3 Mats 144
4.2.2.4 Wooden hoe 145

4.3 Cultivating crops in the garden 145

4.4 Processing gathered foodstuffs into ‘real food’ at the settlement 149
4.4.1 Meat 150
4.4.2 Cassava bread 151
4.4.3 The Drink 153
4.4.4 Seasonal supplements 154

5. **Productive interaction with the world of non-human beings** 156

5.1 Non-humans dwelling outside the settlement 157
5.1.1 Māmju’u and Xinkaruli: mistress-of-the-savannah and master-of-the-natural-life-forces (father of the forest) 157
5.1.2 Non-humans dwelling in the forest: animals, and masters of forest and rivers 160
5.1.2.1 Fathers of the forest 161
5.1.2.2 Mothers of the water element 163
5.1.2.3 Animals 164

5.2 The interaction with the dead in the garden and at the settlement 164
5.2.0 Describing the ritual complex of the Yetá 166
5.2.1 Yurupari 168
5.2.2 The acquisition of the Yetá and its companions 168
5.2.3 The Yetá - a female taboo 171
5.2.4 The ritual of the Yetá 173
5.2.5 Challenging the divide: The ritual of the Yetá as a means of bridging existential differences 179
5.2.5.1 Uniting the dead and living 181
5.2.5.2 Overcoming the gender divide 185
5.2.5.3 The Yetá as a means of initiation 187
5.2.5.4 Differentiation as a precondition for cohesion 190
5.2.6 The use of the Yetá in agriculture 191
5.2.7 Traditional crops and their human origin 194

5.3 Concluding remarks 198

**Part III The creation of real people** 202

6. **Acquiring gendered productivity** 202

6.0 Menků life cycle 202
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Theories of Procreation</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Preparing for adulthood - the initiation of boys and girls</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.1</td>
<td>The initiation of boys</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.2</td>
<td>The initiation of girls</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Attaining adulthood - marriage and the management of production and reproduction</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.1</td>
<td>Seeing the souls of the dead</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.2</td>
<td>Nahi, the host of the realm of the dead</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3</td>
<td>Ajnan, consumer of dead bodies</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.4</td>
<td>Burial</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Establishing links between people: Menkū kinship and naming</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Notions of endogamy</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Affinity</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Menkū kinship</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1</td>
<td>The Menkū classificatory kinship system</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1.1</td>
<td>Grandparents and grandchildren</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1.2</td>
<td>Parents and parents-in-law</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1.3</td>
<td>Siblings and cousins</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1.4</td>
<td>Children and children-in-law</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2</td>
<td>Dealing with change: Alterations to the system</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2.1</td>
<td>Extension of marriageability to other generations</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2.2</td>
<td>The marriage of formerly unrelated persons</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2.3</td>
<td>Altering indirect to direct exchange</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables

Maps
1. Location of Menkū and other groups in Mato Grosso 22
2. Prelacy of Diamantino 43
3. Menkū territory pre 1905 70
4. Attack of rubbertappers and consecutive movement of Menkū and Iranxe 76
5. Situation in 1950s 84
6. Situation in 1970s 88
7. Menkū settlement location at time of contact and today 90
8. Menkū village plan 109

Tables
1. Historical overview of main events for Menkū and Iranxe 61
2. Kinship table 342
3. Menkū families 345
Abstract

The thesis aims to provide a first ethnographic description of the Menkū of Central Brazil by focussing on their non-hierarchical gender-complementarity as it realises itself in relationships of production and reproduction. The first part of the thesis comprises of an introduction to the group from a historical point of view by providing a description of the Menkū's historical experiences during this century. This is followed by a description of the settlement, and the social spaces it encompasses. The second part focusses on the creation of real food by firstly elaborating social and physical aspects of material production. Secondly, it explores the metaphorical aspects of production and reproduction by uncovering the relationships human beings engage in with the world of masters of the elements, animals and ancestors. The third part of the thesis investigates processes underlying the creation of real people by focussing on Menkū life cycle, kinship and social organisation. A person's life is depicted in the way it is geared towards the acquisition of gendered skills of production and reproduction, which are fully manifested by the married couple. An outline of the Menkū system of classificatory marriage reveals the stress on the married couple from another point of view. It will be shown that the ideal marriage partners are identified by a conflation of gender and affinity. The last chapter explores the generation of sociality as it reveals itself in happiness, abundance and togetherness. It shows the extent to which a high communal morale is preconditioned upon non-hierarchical gender-relationships.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is based on fieldwork conducted among the Menkū of Central Brazil in 1993/1994 and 1996. It was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain (Award No. R00429234250), a scholarship of the University of St. Andrews, and the Russell Trust Award of the London School of Economics. I wish to express my thanks to the postgraduate training division of the ESRC, for their flexibility in administrating my grant.

While in the field, I received much help from various sides. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Menkū for welcoming me and my family to be with them, for their warm hospitality and joyful way of being. While with them I also had the chance to befriend Elisabeth Amarante Rondón, missionary among the Menkū. I wish to express my gratitude for her valued support, her availability for my questions, and the insights she gave me into Menkū life on the basis of her long relationship with the group. At this point I also wish to mention Thomas de Aquino Lisbōa and Suzanna Wills. The personnel at CIMI Mato Grosso has provided logistic support while in Cuiabá, and helped me in the acquisition of literature. The same applies to Ivar Busatto of OPAN, Mato Grosso, and the Jesuit missionary José de Moura, both of whom I also thank for their helpful thoughts to better understand the history and workings of the Catholic missionary agency in Mato Grosso.

While there were many people who supported and helped me while I was writing up, I wish to mention three that were of specific importance. I wish to thank Renato Athias for his encouragement and constructive observations, Marco Antonio Goncalvez for his useful ideas when it came to describing Menkū
kinship, and Richard Hundleby for his many helpful comments.

During all the time the most crucial support, however, came from my supervisor Prof. Joanna Overing. I would like to express my special gratitude for her inspiring thoughts, her caring friendship, concern, and understanding. Discussions with her as well as with my colleagues at the University of St. Andrews and the London School of Economics have helped me to clarify my own arguments. In particular I would like to mention Alan Passes, Stephen Kidd, Rebecca Ellis, Elsje Lagrou and Goncalo Arraoz.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband and good friend, Tadeu Caldas, for his longstanding inspiration and continuous support, as well as our three children for their patient endurance.
Introduction

This thesis aims to provide an account of the Menkū, a small group of people living in Central Brazil, by exploring their explicit non-hierarchical gender complementarity as it realises itself in their daily and ritualised social relations. Focussing on gender is rewarding for a comprehensive depiction of Amazonian social organisation and culture in general, since - in line with Overing (1986:141) - the symbolism of gender 'may provide a root paradigm of forces operating in the universe responsible for order, the eternal, the ephemeral, for creation, periodicity, and destruction'.

This first ethnography of the Menkū will commence with a brief overview of the key anthropological themes of egalitarianism, gender and theories of dominance - three interrelated topics elaborated and partly challenged in regard to Lowland Amazonia. I shall then turn to the Menkū themselves, and define their geographical location and relationship to other indigenous groups in their neighbourhood. This will lead me to a brief portrayal of my fieldwork aims, which is followed by an outline of the argument as it unfolds in the course of the chapters. The summary of the thesis will not only reveal the novelty of my work compared to already existing literature about the Menkū, but also allow me to indicate the limitations my work entails.

1.1 Amazonian issues

1.1.1 Aspects of Amazonian social organisation

Many Amazonian societies can be characterised by their inherent refusal of coercion and of stable relationships of subordination (see especially Clastres, 1977; Thomas, 1982). Instead of favouring

See also C. Hugh-Jones, 1979; S. Hugh-Jones; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1971; Crocker, 1985.
‘social rule’ and a collective decision process, a person’s autonomy in work and their personal ownership of the products thereof are stressed by these peoples. On this basis, Overing (1989:160) has argued for conceiving Amazonian societies as highly egalitarian. An important aspect of such egalitarianism is the separation of realms of expertise (and hence leadership) into only partially overlapping domains. This separation tends to prevent the rise of a single leader who is simultaneously dominant in politics, religion and economics (Thomas 1982:4). Some groups exteriorise such separation in forms of specialisation, such as the Barasana (S.Hugh-Jones, 1977; 1979) during the secret men’s cult as it realises itself during the ritual of He house. Here men belonging to the same sib are related to each other by birth order, which at the same time confers certain specialised roles to them. Other groups express this separation in daily productive activities, such as in the women’s competitive comparison of who makes the most beautiful cassava bread among the Cashinahua (McCallum, 1989). Again others, including the Menkù, manifest a manifold downplay of various kinds of differentiation generated by either gendered specialisation or skill. Differentiation is here not exploited for hierarchisation but evaluated on its potential for generating cohesion based on complementarity. Such complementarity expresses itself most vividly in the interaction between Menkù women and men which - from what I have seen - cannot be understood using parameters of hierarchy or dominance.

Thus, the Menkù show strong similarity with such groups as the Pemon, Piaroa, and Cubeo, where hierarchy is only subtly manifested, if at all, in certain patterns of deference and restraint (Thomas 1982:55). They contrast with other Amazonian groups which act out hierarchical relations explicitly and sometimes violently. For instance, this is expressed in violent forms of
masculine domination of women among the Achuar (Descola 1986),
or in gang-rape as described for example for the Akwe-Shavante
(Maybury-Lewis, 1974). In many cases one finds that these features
of acted-out violence against some members of the group,
especially women, are associated with a high valuation of hunting
and warfare. Taking such differentiation into account it seems
necessary to distinguish between more aggressive and the more
peaceful groups in Lowland Amazonia (see Overing, 1988a).
Concurrently, the Menkũ reveal a low valuation of male hunting
skills. A man has to hunt, though if he fails to bring back meat this
is not used to 'downgrade' his or his household's social status.

Such differences explain why gender and gender relations
have been a key issue for describing Amerindian societies. Overing
(1992), and Seymour-Smith (1992) have provided useful data to
define its centrality in acquiring an insight into the culture and
social organisation of Amazonian societies. Until then, the study of
gender in Lowland Amazonia concentrated mainly on the issue of
the politics of the gender relation which was mostly based on
Western images and evaluations thereof. Authors such as Holmberg
([1950] 1969) and Murphy and Murphy (1974) provided psychological
explanations, implying hunger or male envy of female reproductive
powers to be the primary drive and focus of psychological
attention. They were criticised for imposing Western
psychoanalytic stereotypes to fit apparent characteristics of
Amazonian cultures (see Seymour-Smith, 1992:634). Following the
psychologically oriented approach, Siskind (1973) and Gregor
(1977; 1985) attempted to understand these cultures more fully in
terms of indigenous logic and inner dynamics. However, neither
author explored the further implications of their interpretations,
and did not elaborate upon what appears to them to be a non-
valorisation of women's labour implicit in the societies studied (see Seymour-Smith 1992:635). Additionally, these authors considered the relationship between men and women as guided by a logic of exchange. Sexual favours are 'given' by women to men in general (Gregor 1977), or even just in return for meat (Siskind 1973) for example. McCallum (1989) and Belaunde (1992) criticise this approach for importing a 'commodity-based-property-logic' (Strathern 1984). According to McCallum and Belaunde this is not applicable to Amazonian groups because people do not calculate their activities according to 'rates of exchange' between different 'commodities' such as game and sex, nor do they conceive of respective property rights over their own bodies or products.

Turner (1979) and Rivière (1984) interpreted gender relations in terms of mechanisms of control and domination. Writing about the Kayapó of Central Brazil, Turner argues that men try to assert control over other men, especially their sons-in-law, through their daughters. The father-in-law is able to acquire more esteem among other men of the settlement because he is in the position to 'control' the production and reproduction of his extended family. He argues that this subordination is a continuation of the combination already existing within the nuclear family. Here it is the domination of women by men that results according to Turner in the division of labour prevailing in these societies. He sees it as a disadvantage for women that their productive tasks have to be associated with child-care and early socialisation, binding them more to the house rather than to men's tasks which leave the latter freer to interact with members of other households.

As Forrest, whose work was based in the Guianas, points out, Turner's argument is based on types of control - control over people, their labour and the products of their labour - which does
not fit with the Amazonian reality on the level of either concept or action (1987:328). Instead of control and domination, she argues that for the Kalynia relationships are characterised by mutual respect. This applies to people of different sex and ages. Kalynia women studied by her are largely economically independent and autonomous when it comes to the organisation of their work (op.cit.:321). Furthermore, sharing among various households as described by her, as well as for the Cashinahua (McCallum 1989) and the AiroPai (Belaunde 1992), expresses a woman's engagement in the inter-household sphere, associated by the above mentioned (male) authors with men alone.

Mechanisms of control have, however, also been associated with uxorilocal residence. Rivière (1984) argued that where it is difficult for men to control women - which he supposed necessary as women and their capacities are scarce resources - men keep women occupied by imposing elaborate techniques of cassava processing upon them. The strengthening of solidarity among women is supposed to be undermined by keeping them busy and thus unable to oppose men. Forrest (1987) and Caiuby-Novaes (1986) contradict this argument since they see matrilocality as providing social and economic features which are advantageous for both sexes. The strong continuous bond between mother and (uxorilocally resident) daughter, and the relations of cooperation established between women on the basis of their shared daily tasks contrasts with an extremely fluid and dynamic social life which is characterised by constant transformations of social relations.²

Analysing Cashinahua notions of gender, personhood and social organisation, McCallum (1989:352) comes to the conclusion that a focus on gender can reveal important features and organising principles of the social organisation of Lowland Amazonia. Similar

² See also Crocker 1979, and Lea 1992 on the Mebengokre (Kayapó).
to her use of data, my analysis of Menkū social organisation is elucidated by a focus on gender relations. Menkū egalitarian and non-hierarchical structure only reveals itself fully in the light of the complementarily characterising the ideal form of existence, that is, the married couple.

By initiating the ethnographic description of the Menkū with an account of their food-production, I thus follow S. Hugh-Jones’ observation that it was through the sharing of food, caring, and time, that friendship with the group he studied evolved. The preparation of food often appears to be the most strenuous, monotonous and trivial of indigenous chores (C. Hugh-Jones 1979). Yet it is through food that not only first links with the group are made, but important insights into a group’s relations of production, its social relations, and its notions about the creation of the body can be gained. Indeed, most theories about hierarchy or the domination of women revolve around food production in one way or the other. Lastly, the production of food is also intimately linked to the creation and socialisation of the person, and this takes us to notions of the person prevalent in Amazonia.

1.1.2 Amazonian concepts of the person
Several authors have distinguished two types of concepts defining the construction of a person’s identity (see Linnekin and Poyer [eds.] 1990). The first is ascribed to Mendel and implies that ancestry and blood form the basis of a person’s identity and his or her belonging to a specific cultural and social entity. A person’s identity is determined by birth, only to be strengthened or weakened by education and other means of formation. In contrast, other cultures perceive the creation of a person’s notion of identity in a more ‘Lamarckian’ framework’ where a person is born as a rather neutral being which has to be shaped through education and
socialisation in order to become an individual with a distinct cultural identity. As a consequence, identities can be dropped, and through interaction, learning and adaptation new identities be developed. Gow's study of notions of kinship among natives of the Bajo Urubamba of Peru seems to indicate an affinity with the latter type. Parental links with their children are conceived in terms of care and love. The man who provides the food and the woman who then prepares and gives it to the child, are considered to be the child's 'real' parents (Gow 1991:150). The identity of parents and children is created on the basis of enacted care and the memory of it. As McCallum (1989) has shown, the relationship is established through action and performance rather than being created at birth. In another instance, and on a more collective level, affinities with the Lamarckian notion of identity can be found among the AiroPai of Peru. For them, one of the main idioms related to communal life is the rearing of children and the providing of their education and socialisation in order to create full human beings (Belaunde 1992:123). The identity of the community is based on the care given to children.

Another notion of Amazonian identity of a more Mendelian variety supposes that each person is a representation of a particular 'species of being' (S.Hugh-Jones 1977). The particular identity of a person is derived from his/her participation in certain transcendental domains and not based on either shared genetic substance or processes of socialisation. For example, among the Pira-Piranã of the northwest Amazon, each person belongs to one of the three intermarrying exogamous groups which are associated respectively with the domains of sky, earth and water (ibid.). A person's participation in such transcendental (but still social) domains can be expressed in the names given to people as for instance among the Mebengokre (Kayapó). For them, a person's
essence resides not in his/her organic substance but in his/her names and prerogatives (Lea 1992:147). These link the living to their mythological ancestors (ibid.:192), and thus have a 'mystical potency' for the person carrying them (Bamberger 1974:365).

For the Menkū, several aspects are of relevance. While I try to show that Menkū naming practices can in a certain way be linked to a house, and imbue the person with a particular relationship to another with whom he or she shares the same name, an important factor is the creation of a 'real person' through the socialising aspect with which productive and reproductive activities are imbued. Considering these characteristics, it will become clear that the Menkū notion of personhood is yet another example for the deconstruction of the Cartesian fallacy. In the same way as body, mind, and spirit are socially created, they are all expressive of a person's well-being.

1.2 Geographical location of the Menkū and their relationship with neighbouring indigenous groups

The Menkū live in an area comprising of approximately 450 square kilometres, one border of which is constituted by the river Papagaio, an affluent of the Juruena river. The Papagaio separates Menkū land to the west from that of the neighbouring Enauwene-Nawe whose territory, in turn, borders with that of the Nambikwara to the north and west. The area of the Rikbaktsa commences eighty km down Papagaio river. At the same distance upriver one encounters another indigenous area of the Nambikwara, while the headwaters of the river Papagaio and the river Verde encompass the demarcated land of the Paresi. Approximately ninety km to the southeast of Menkū land there is the indigenous area of

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3 The area was demarcated by presidential decree in 1978. See also subsequent chapter and map no. page.
the Iranxe, relatives of the Menkū. Iranxe land is located along a main road (E 170) connecting the southern part of the state of northern Mato Grosso with the frontier in the north. When travelling to the Menkū from Cuiabá on that road one passes their area, before getting off the bus after a fourteen hours' journey (which can be up to forty hours during the rainy season) at Brasnorte, the closest town to Menkū land. Brasnorte is a town which was founded some twenty years ago as a basis for further penetration into the state of Mato Grosso. By 1996 it had grown to a size of approximately 4000 inhabitants, most of whom are of German, Italian and Polish descent. Brasnorte hosts an infrastructure comprising small hotels and restaurants, supermarkets, a school, bakeries, a discotheque, a hospital, several churches of different denominations, and an airstrip. The majority of the population is of a rather conservative, hard working nature, which, in spite of their awareness of the indigenous presence, has not established any particular interest in it. An exception to this are the people befriended by the missionaries and volunteers working among the indigenous groups. Interaction between the inhabitants of Brasnorte and the indigenous peoples - in particular Menkū and Iranxe - has furthermore increased since the Menkū built a house in town where they come to stay.

*See below.*
Map of Western Mato Grosso do Norte following CEDI 1991: 450

Map of the location of the Menkū and neighbouring groups in Mato Grosso
Of the neighbouring indigenous groups, the Menkū maintain closest relations with the Iranxe. In fact, contact with the Menkū in 1971 confirmed that these two groups originated from the same descendants. As I will elaborate below, a massacre conducted by rubber tappers led to their split at the beginning of the century. While the Menkū fled into the forest to the north, the Iranxe remained in an area that is close - though not identical - to the Iranxe’s territory which was demarcated in 1969 and comprises an area of approximately 400 square kilometres of rather infertile savannah land. Contact with the Iranxe was mediated by members of the Paresi, and finalised in the early 1940s. Exposure to traditional Jesuit mission practices, which were intensified when due to an outbreak of measles the whole remaining community was transferred to the mission post of Utiariti, has led to a valuation of Western commodities and practices on the side of the Iranxe. Residence at the post together with members of other indigenous groups of the area, impeded a continuation of the traditional life-style. Meanwhile, the submission to Catholicism evoked an alienation from their own understanding of cosmogenesis, cosmology, and of human agency and relations within the universe of intentionality in general. In this context, the contact of the Menkū in 1971 was of special significance. Like Wagley’s (1977) description of the re-encounter between different members of the Tapirapé, this meeting generated much emotional upheaval, excitement and relief on both sides. When finally locating and entering the Menkū settlement, the Iranxe were in many ways reminded of their traditional life-style. For the Menkū, this contact represented an end to a time of ongoing fear of inter-tribal hostility, which had in the 1950s led to the reduction of the group to nine people. Having increased in number by 150% by the time of contact, the twenty-three people comprising the group reacted
with amazement to the fact that their own language was spoken by the then unknown visitors. Meanwhile, integration of those Iranxe wishing to take up their traditional life-style again was enabled by the Menkū, who at the same time were happy to augment their own group through intermarriage with Iranxe. Members of both groups met together on many visits to stage key rituals. An exchange of traditional knowledge between the members of the two groups took place. While, for example, the Iranxe - for a long time after separation larger in number - held knowledge of rituals involving many participants, such as the dance of the five-pan flute (katêtiri), the Menkū still living in the traditional forest habitat were extremely knowledgeable of the agricultural practices and their connection to the ritual complex these are embedded in. Meanwhile, the Jesuit missionaries, working out of a new approach to mission, were very content to have achieved a 'peaceful' contact with the group which expressed itself most vividly in the fact that the number of people dying as a direct effect of inflicted Western illnesses through contact could be kept to a 'minimum' of three people.5 The insurance of the group's physical survival was ever since the primary goal of the missionaries who are up till today the primary intermediary agents between the group and the national society. Physical survival was seen to be interdependent with the survival of the Menkū 'culture' in general, the maintenance of which was one of the main interests characterising the innovatory aspect of the approach of the missionaries working with the Menkū. Within the wider context of (Catholic) missionary work among indigenous groups in Brazil, the contact with the Menkū was thus taken as an exemplification of the principles underlying the unspoken mission ('missão calada'). In the following years lessons from its

5 Such evaluation of the 'successfulness' of the contact is understandable when, for instance considering the contact established approximately two years earlier by the National Foundation for the Indian (FUNAI) with a part of the Tapayuna of Mato Grosso, in which during the first months of contact the group was decimated from 600 to 40 people. See CEDI 1991.
experiences were used for the contact and work with other indigenous groups. A unification of like-minded missionaries was effected in the foundation of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) which is nowadays a big organisation within the Brazilian Catholic church, administering and advocating the indigenous cause in the country as well as to the international public. Extensive theological debates, which are closely linked to the ‘phenomenon’ of Liberation Theology, have by now elaborated the ideological context of such an approach to mission which stresses the need for dialogue with the ‘other’ rather than an imposition of eurocentric Christian values and practices.

1.3 Fieldwork aims
When I first heard of the Menkú, I was struck by the uniqueness their situation represented. The image I held of them became even more interesting through accounts of their exceptionally high communal morale and welcoming receptiveness which was indeed experienced by my husband, an agronomist, during his first visit to the group. The missionaries' continuous allusion to the group's 'resistance to change' finalised my wish to learn more about them. I intended to investigate the 'continuity and change among the Menkú of Central Brazil'. Once in the field, I had to realise that such a question is so complex that it exceeds by far the frame of a Ph.D. thesis. I decided to focus on the exposure that I could expect as a woman, and evaluate the social organisational principles reportedly underlying the Menkú's 'resistance to change' which was noted repeatedly by the missionaries. Apart from representing yet another example of a 'primitive' Amazonian society 'without government', the particular historical experience of this group has, I suggest and outline throughout the thesis, contributed to the fact that the Menkú show a creative adaptability and pragmatism when reacting to new situations. Non-hierarchical gender-
complementarity is, I argue, thus not only a trait inherent in their ‘culture’ in general, but had to be ‘exploited’ in order to ensure the survival of the group.

1.4 Outline of the thesis
Taking into consideration the relevance of the historical context for understanding Menkū gender-complementarity, I begin by describing the different factors constituting Menkū history. Data previously scattered in different accounts about the penetration of Mato Grosso will be presented in chapter two. Various sources such as the documents of the missionaries, research carried out in the context of an Iranxe land claim, and the reports of the Rondón commission which was the first to venture into Mato Grosso with the aim to interconnect southern Brazil with the interior Amazon region by land (and a telegraphic line) will be used. This will be supplemented by the ethnohistorical perspective from the point of view of a Menkū. Given the fact that the knowledge of their experiences since separation was uncertain, I opted to present the most important part of an interview with Tsuno, the eldest Menkū who witnessed the flight into the forest as a small child in the arms of his mother. His elaborations form the basis for a questioning of Western historicity, as well as giving an insight into the key periods of the Menkū past. For clarity, I will describe the experiences of the Iranxe parallel to that, and show how their life since separation from the Menkū in 1905 developed until the time of contact with the Menkū, which coincided with the Iranxe moving away from the mission post.

The third chapter will form the beginning of a more ethnographic description. Unfolding my encounter with the group at their settlement will allow me to give an insight into the outline of the settlement and the different social spaces it encompasses.
Furthermore, it will enable me to show how far the settlement is the primary location for the reception of 'others', and their subsequent incorporation as beings with whom social life can be shared, or on the basis of whose presence sociality is generated. High communal morale among visitors and those dwelling at the settlement is explicitly generated by staging certain ceremonies. The food necessary for staging such ceremonies will be at the centre of the next two chapters.

Using Gow's (1991) notion of 'real food', the second part of the thesis will reveal the factors necessary for producing real food, in contrast to mere material nourishment. Having to consist of meat (of game or fish), cassava bread, and a particular drink, i.e. 'chicha', real food is revelatory of the gender-complementarity that went into its production. Only the combination of parts so produced is appropriate to be offered to others as much as to each member of the group. It satisfies not only the living, but also the dead, to whom it is offered at times in response for their protective agency towards the living. Chapter four will consist of a description of material food production.

Furthermore, as shall be the focus of chapter five, the constituents of real food pertain to different realms of social and productive life. The forest is thus related to meat and raw materials used for the production of utensils necessary for food production; the garden provides the community with cassava and seasonal complements, while the settlement allows for the domestication and transformation of acquired produce into items capable of generating sociality. Each of these three realms is to be predominantly associated with particular human and non-human intentionalities, the interaction with whom preconditions any productive activities. Using Viveiros de Castro's (1998)
perspectival approach, the intentionality ascribed to each of these categories of beings (masters and mistresses of elements and animals, animals themselves, ancestors, and the living human being) is analysed in regard to its gendered connotation. It will become clear that not only are the masters and mistresses of elements and animals defined by gender, but so too is interaction with them. While in mythical times women render the masters' potential useful for social life by attracting their attention, and having affairs with them, it is up to men (and to male shamans) to ensure these beings' non-interference with human society when hunting and gathering in their domain of the forest today. Meanwhile, the interaction with the ancestors is explicitly enacted in the ritual of the Yetá which is considered as the locus of their embodiment. This ritual gives evidence of the multi-levelled gender-complementarity that preconditions its realisation. The description of the ritual of the Yetá and its role in agricultural activities provides the basis for discrediting any hierarchical models that have been applied to explain what has been circumscribed as a secret men's cult. Meanwhile, the depiction of relations between living human beings will represent the core of the third part of the thesis, which deals with the creation of 'real people' on the basis of their potential to engage in social relations.

The exploration of the living humans is initiated by a description of a Menkū's life cycle from birth to death in chapter six. In line with McCallum (1989), it will be argued that real personhood is acquired through a person's initiation into productive activities, and his or her ongoing engagement in them. Being uninitiated to the transformative powers underlying production and

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6 These secret men's cults have been commonly referred to as the 'Yurupari' rites of the northwest Amazon. See Koch-Grünberg (1909-10) and Brúzzi da Silva (1955) for first mentioning of such rituals in the context of an anthropological description. S. Hugh-Jones (1979) provides a list of other authors writing about such rituals among the groups they are studying respectively.
reproduction, unmarried or widowed, or lacking children are signs of lost - or not yet acquired - personhood. As such, it is only realised in the mutual development and cooperation of the sexes which comes to full expression in the productive and reproductive activities of the married couple.

Chapter seven will provide an outline of the Menkū kinship system. The gender complementarity, shown to exist as a formative principle in the acquisition of personhood, will become explicit in the denotation of ideal marriage partners. On the basis of such denotation, the Menkū system of classificatory marriage is furthermore revealed as a means by which the group could adapt to the reduction in number, generated by the historical experience of the group similar to what was recounted about the Nambikwara (Lévi-Strauss 1968). Overing's (1975) interpretation of Piaroa manipulation of different concepts of endogamy will prove particularly helpful for understanding Menkū kinship and naming practices.

The last and concluding chapter will reveal the potential of gender-complementarity for the generation of high communal morale which expresses itself in the value of living and working together. Living and working together is only possible through the cooperation of men and women. It comes to a full expression in the cycles of food sharing which manifest the complementary relations between the genders in the realms of production and reproduction that have been explored in the chapters before. A discussion of Menkū ways of dealing with conflict will allow me to show how the group maintains harmonious relations on the inside by exteriorising any responsibilities for disruption committed upon the social order. In the conclusion I suggest that the high value on the maintenance of tranquil social relations - which is based on a
balanced cooperation of all members of society that are differentiated on the basis of their sex and age - can possibly be associated with the maintenance of the group's cultural identity. One could argue that the group's identity is to a great extent constituted by this tranquillity.

1.5 The Menkū in ethnographic and ethnological literature

Up to the date that I started to work with the Menkū, neither they nor the Iranxe had been the object of an in-depth anthropological study. Albeit due to the earlier contact with the Iranxe, more has been written about them. They are first mentioned in the reports of the Rondón Commission (1922 and 1946) which was told about their existence by Paresi. The first anthropologist who saw some Iranxe at Utiariti was Max Schmidt. He came specifically with the intent to study them but, as mentioned above, did not manage to encounter them in their settlements. He published the results of his studies conducted at Utiariti in 1929. Lévi-Strauss, who had travelled the area in order to work with the Nambikwara, did not meet the Iranxe, nor mention them in his *Tristes Tropiques*. Both the anthropologists Alfred Métraux (1942) and Kalervo Oberg (1953) mention the Iranxe in their surveys of indigenous groups of Mato Grosso. They comment about Iranxe language and kinship terminology. Sol Tax, professor of anthropology in Chicago, as well as Oberg and Rondón suggest classifying the Iranxe with Arawak speaking groups. However, no detailed data to support such an argument has been given, and no ethnographic descriptions are provided in their studies. The linguist, and Protestant missionary, Robert Méader (1969) made a compilation about Iranxe language which was published as a part of a series by the Museo Nacional. However, his work has been outdated by that of the linguist Ruth Montserrat. Her long-lasting study of the language, first conducted among the Iranxe, then continued among the Menkū, has led to
valuable results which are about to be published. She criticises Méader’s work for incompleteness and incorrectness, a sign of which can already be identified by his failure to recognise the word ‘Iranxe’ as belonging to the Paresi language and not being the auto-determination of the group whose idiom he studied.” The auto-determination of both Iranxe and Menkû is ‘Menkû’, real people.

The results of most the above, both ethnographers and linguists, do not serve to elucidate very much for other reasons. The data on which the studies of Métraux, Oberg and Méader were based were gathered at Utiariti and not at the settlement. The Iranxe that came to visit Utiariti in the first years, and who were used as the main informants, tended to be men only. This meant that the researchers were missing out on the female and child perspective which has structural differences to the male terminology. Moreover, the anthropologists did not know Iranxe language. Communication could only take place with the mediation by Paresi who might have known the Iranxe language a little, but probably not enough to expose all the linguistic differentiation needed for a convincing statement about either language or kinship system. Lastly, exposure to the Iranxe was usually only of very short duration. While Schmidt - against his hopes - did not manage to stay with them in their settlements, the visits of Oberg and Métraux to Utiariti were not very long and they dedicated themselves to all the indigenous groups that were at Utiariti.

In light of the above mentioned factors, the work conducted by the Jesuit missionaries gains relevance. They not only have been in contact with the Iranxe longest, but, once the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council took effect at the mission, their later studies especially were informed by a more anthropological perspective. Specifically, I am referring here to the work of the
Jesuit missionary Adalberto Hollanda Pereira who had studied anthropology at the University of São Paulo in the 1950s and who compiled a collection of Iranxe myths (1985) - apart from similar compilations by him about Rikbaktsa, Nambikwara, Paresi and Kayabi myths. This study is also interesting for some of its footnotes which give some ethnographic data contextualising the myths. Apart from this, his colleague, José de Moura (1957; 1970), has published two ‘Contributions for the Ethnological Study of the Tribe of the Iranxe’. The first bears some historical data, a few ethnographic comments about their alimentation, settlement, material culture, and the main ritual of the Yetá, as well as some preliminary linguistic elaborations and a vocabulary. Apart from this, the whole group is recorded by a listing of all the Christian names they received upon being baptised. Furthermore, the first study contains a translation of the main Christian prayers, the Iranxe myth of creation in a very rudimentary form, and a map of the location of Iranxe settlements in 1953. Most of the data published in this study were collected by the Jesuit missionary, João Dornstauder, who spent much of his time at the Missão Anchieta in the Iranxe settlements. The second publication is based on a stay of several months among the Iranxe some seven years after the first study, and contains some more ethnographic notes, albeit of little significance. As well as that, more linguistic data and myths are presented in it. A third study, written jointly by Moura and Pereira (1975), bears information regarding the relationship of Iranxe with members of the national society and other indigenous groups which are the Paresi, Nambikwara and Rikbaktsa. A separate, yet very short part of it, is dedicated to the ‘Menkû of the river Escondido’, i.e. the Menkû contacted in 1971. A brief summary is given about the process of their contact. Demographic notes are presented and a map of their various settlements at the time of contact is included. As such, the latter

He was also responsible for the contact of the Tapayuna and Rikbaktsa.
publication is the first study mentioning the Menkū.

Following on from these studies, the Jesuit missionary Thomaz de Aquino Lisbôa published a book entitled ‘Entre os Münkú’ in 1979. Here he gives a more detailed account of the contact which he facilitated. He also refers to the first years since contact leading up to the demarcation of Menkū territory. Basically, this book contains extracts from the personal diary of the author regarding his and his colleagues’ first visits to the group. Since then the missionary, Elisabeth Amarante Rondón, has published three short booklets about the Menkū (1983; 1994; 1999). While providing some interesting ethnographic data, especially about the role and part of women in Menkū culture, her aim is more to correlate these to the Christian gospel. As such, especially her first two books give evidence of the different missionary approaches advocating the salvational value of the indigenous culture in line with the conclusions of Vatican II.9

Two more books of interest have been published, in 1993 and 1995 respectively. The first refers to the study by Pivetta and Bandeira (1993), compiled in support of the Iranxe’s claim to have the present delimitation of their area revised.10 It is especially interesting for the maps, pictures of present-day settlements of the Iranxe, and the interviews that have been conducted with the Iranxe by the author. While the book does not give much information about the Menkū, and the latter were not even consulted in its preparation, the interviews express the way some of the Iranxe think about their relatives to the north.

The second book, published by Holanda Pereira in 1995, gives an account of the life of the Iranxe Tupxi who has been

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9 I shall come back to this in the subsequent chapter.
10 See subsequent chapter.
participating in most of the missionaries’ expeditions to facilitate the contact with indigenous groups in the area of the Jesuit Mission. The book is of interest in that it gives yet another account of the various contacts made with the groups of the area. It also gives some insight into the life of the Iranxe at Utiariti. As well as this, it sheds some light on the personality of the only Iranxe who has had an extended exposure to the national society by spending some time in São Paolo and receiving a medal of merit from the Brazilian government in Brasilia.

Apart from this, three other studies have to be mentioned in a survey of the literature concerning the Menkû. Firstly, the anthropologist Leopoldi had started to work among the Iranxe within a project of the Museo do Indio, investigating the effects of the penetration of the national society into Mato Grosso on the indigenous groups living there. While he gathered a quantity of data during his stay of several weeks among the Iranxe (which he also wanted to process for a Ph.D. at the University of Oxford) he never began writing his thesis. However, his summary of the history of the penetration of the Brazilian frontier proved helpful to me for a better understanding of the historical dynamics of the region.

Secondly, there was a study conducted by Paulo Meneses and Luiz Costa Lima (1974) consisting of a structural analysis of Iranxe mythology in line with the methodology developed by Lévi-Strauss in his ‘Mythologiques’. The work was based on the collection of myths presented by Pereira in 1974. In spite of it being a purely theoretical work without the author having been exposed to the Iranxe or Menkû, and therefore being compiled without any fieldwork, the study nevertheless proves to be highly interesting in the exploration of Menkû/Iranxe cosmology, cosmogony and social values. Furthermore, it is interesting for the
comparisons it bears to the myths of other groups. Noteworthy among these is the correlation the author establishes between Iranxe mythology and that of the Warrau of Venezuela. The similarity between a number of the myths of the two groups inclines the author to argue for the origin of the Iranxe to be the northern region of Amazonia, associating them with the Arawak, thus generating more evidence for the arguments of other researches mentioned above. While his hypothesis could not be confirmed up till now, his comparative analysis surely provides a challenge to the predominant claim that the Iranxe/Menkù form an isolated group.

Lastly, there is the study of my husband, Tadeu Caldas, which focuses on Menkù agricultural practices, correlating them to the wider cultural framework. He also establishes an overview of the different actors of the national society, affecting Menkù life directly or indirectly. This study is not only interesting for its analysis of the indigenous reality within the Brazilian society, but also proved very helpful for a better understanding of Menkù economic activities generally and their agricultural practices specifically.

1.6 Conclusion
While the description of the Menkù provided in this thesis has drawn on the literature written so far about the Menkù and the Iranxe, it contributes to a better understanding of the group and its social dynamics by focussing on the gendered relationships that production and reproduction are imbued with. In the course of this thesis I intend to explore how gender-complementarity reveals itself in the production of real food and people. This focus has not been applied to the Menkù, although it generates very interesting perspectives. In particular, it evidences the important role and
active participation of women in Menkû social organisation and allows a description of the ritual of the Yetá, central to Menkû culture. Through this approach an egalitarian complementarity between the sexes emerges, rather than an hierarchical relationship of knowledgeable men excluding ignorant women which has been the case for some descriptions of the Jurupary rituals of the northwest Amazon.

While a comprehensive description always tries to elucidate a certain coherence, the thesis by no means attempts to ignore the changes that have occurred since contact. If the cleavages generated by the group's exposure to Western society are not clearly discernible, then this is due to my description rather than to reality. The attraction to Western commodities is there, and grows increasingly, especially among the younger generation. Yet what I have described still exists and is not a portrayal of an imagined past, nor of 'a society in aspic' (Geertz, 1998).

What I have not managed to do is to establish an overview of Menkû myths, and their difference from those told by their relatives, the Iranxe. It has been claimed that there are significant differences, though research into them remains for now a task for future enquiries. Thus, my usage of Iranxe myths in order to elaborate Menkû concepts and practices has to remain preliminary until further research is done. I justify my employment of them by the fact that the predecessors of both Menkû and Iranxe were part of the same group at the beginning of this century. The fact that they were collected by an anthropologist (and Jesuit missionary) who had done similar recognised compilations among the Nambikwara, Paresi, Kayabi, and Rikbaktsa supported me in my decision. As well as a comparative approach to their myths, a

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11 Amarante, personal communication.
12 Adalberto Holanda Pereira, see bibliography.
profound analysis of the relationship between the Menkü and their relatives, the Iranxe, is necessary, and from what my thesis allows me to present in this regard, promises to be extremely interesting. Equally, an ethnography of the Iranxe themselves is still outstanding. Moreover, the life and work of the missionaries among the Menkü merits an anthropological study which would in many ways challenge stereotypes held among anthropologists in regard to those 'kinds of people'.

Conscious of the limitations these uncovered areas signify for the contents of this thesis, I nevertheless assume that I have contributed to the group’s study by providing a starting point which can and has to be challenged in subsequent ethnographic accounts of the Menkü, as well as finally by the Menkü themselves. In order to provide such a starting point, I have integrated existing sources which conformed or reaffirmed what I observed during my stay among the group. However, had it not been for innumerable conversations with the missionary Amarante, many of the data presented here could not have emerged in the same way.
Chapter 2

The historical context

2.1 The penetration of Mato Grosso - Rondón, Rubber tappers, and missionaries

The 'Brazilian' history of the state of northern Mato Grosso begins with its penetration by prospectors in search for gold, minerals and rubber in the eighteenth century. Until then only the high plateau northwest of Cuiabá was known to a small extent, while the interior of the state represented an unknown part of Brazil. Trade and communication between the northern and southern regions of Brazil could only be effected by boat, travelling along the coast and up the Amazon river. This situation represented a problem for the administration of the country. In 1907 Colonel Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondón began the exploration of northern Mato Grosso, with the strategic interest of connecting Rio de Janeiro, then the federal capital of Brazil, via Cuiabá, with the frontier posts of the northwest through a telegraphic line. The Paresi, who by then had been exposed to the national society for almost 160 years, were to be affected most by the workings of the line.¹³

Lévi-Strauss, who had travelled the area in the 1930s, describes the project in his 'Tristes Tropiques' as follows:

¹³ See Machado (1994).
'Imagine an area a big as France, three-quarters of it unexplored, frequented only by small groups of native nomads who are among the most primitive to be found anywhere in the world, and traversed, from one end to the other, by a telegraph line. The roughly cleared track which runs alongside - the picada - provides the only landmark over a distance of seven hundred kilometres, since, apart from some reconnoitring to the north and the south carried out by the Rondón commission, the unknown begins on either side of the picada, that is, in those places where the track itself has not become indistinguishable from the bush.' (1973:355).

The workforce of the line consisted of Paresi Indians recruited and trained for the job, as well as non-indigenous Brazilians who had been attracted by the possibility of discovering mineral riches in the process. Telegraphic stations were established at 80-100km intervals along the line. Each of these was surrounded by a few houses of those working on the line. They comprised a total of around a hundred people. From time to time indigenous peoples of the region appeared at these posts. Lévi-Strauss (ibid.: 357) recorded that,

‘the Indians have a kind of morbid fascination for the telegraph workers: they represent a daily hazard, exaggerated by local legend; yet at the same time visits by their small nomadic bands provide the only distraction and, what is more important, the only opportunity for human contact. When these visits occur, once or twice a year, the usual jokes are exchanged between the potential slaughterers and their possible victims, in the incredible jargon used along the line, which comprises in all some forty words, partly Nambikwara and partly Portuguese.’

In fact, several quite malicious attacks were recorded by Rondón, some of which were later verified by Lévi-Strauss and other people then working in the area:
In 1931 the telegraph station at Paresis lying 300 kilometres north of Cuiabá, in a not completely uninhabited region only 80 kilometres from Diamantino, had been attacked and destroyed by unknown Indians who had come from the valley of the Rio de Sangue, hitherto believed to be uninhabited. The savages had been nicknamed beiços-de-Pau, wooden snouts, because of the discs they wore in their lower lips and the lobes of their ear. Since then, they had repeated their attacks at regular intervals with the result that the trade had had to be moved about eighty kilometres to the south. As for the Nambikwara, nomads who had been coming to the posts from time to time since 1909, they had had varying relationships with the whites - good at first, but gradually deteriorating until, in 1925, seven workers were invited by the natives to their villages and were never seen again. From that time onwards, the Nambikwara and the telegraph workers avoided each other. (Lévi-Strauss, ibid: 342.)

Apart from representing the first systematic penetration of the area, the efforts of the Rondón Commission ([1922]1946) were valuable for providing first insights into the constitution of the indigenous population of northern Mato Grosso, which they shared with a wider public in the reports and conferences of the commission.

Rondón was respected for the attitude towards the indigenous peoples which characterised the way he undertook the exploration and penetration of the territories inhabited by them. Rather than aiming at the eradication of the indigenous population, he promoted what was referred to as their 'pacification'. In line with the doctrines of August Comte, which advocated a positivist idea of social evolution, and were very influential in Brazil during the time, the indigenous population represented the starting point of human development. The assumption of a linear progress, from a state of 'barbarism' to one of civilisation, demanded a protective
attitude towards the indigenous peoples which would guarantee the functioning of the evolutionary mechanism. The respect towards the indigenous population, however, often restricted itself merely to the maintenance of their survival so that they would be able to reach the next stage of human evolution.

The experiences gathered by the Rondón Commission during its work in Mato Grosso later informed the principles on the basis of which the Brazilian government related to the indigenous population. In fact, in 1910 Rondón was entrusted with the foundation of the Service for the Protection of Indians (SPI), which represented the governmental organisation responsible for the indigenous peoples of the country. The Comtean perspective informed the workings of the governmental body during the whole period of its existence from 1910 until 1966, the year of its closure and transformation into the ‘Fundação Nacional do índio’, FUNAI, at the end of 1967¹⁴ (see Oliveira, 1990:22).

In spite of the charitable attitudes claimed by the project of the telegraphic line, it was totally useless for the indigenous population of the area. The absurdity of the project within the context of the non-indigenous national society whose interests it was to serve became obvious less than two decades after it had been started:

‘...the invention of radio-telegraphy, which coincided more or less with the completion of the telegraph line around 1922, meant that the latter was completely superseded, and was no sooner finished that it became an archeological relic of a previous technological age. Then the decline set in; the handful of enthusiasts who had sought employment on the line either went back home or were forgotten about. At the time when I went out there, they had received no food supplies for several years.

¹⁴ I shall turn to its presence in Mato Grosso below.
No one dared to close down the line but everyone had lost interest in it. The poles were allowed to collapse and the wires to rust; the last survivors manning the posts lacked the courage to leave and indeed could not afford to do so; they were slowly dying out because of sickness, famine and loneliness.’ (Lévi-Strauss, ibid. 340).

While the line disappeared over the years, the telegraphic posts established in the course of its construction and operation served as a basis for other institutions beginning work in northern Mato Grosso. In particular I am referring here to missionary enterprises to which I shall turn in the following pages.

2.2 Missionary presence in Mato Grosso
While various Catholic and Protestant missions have been set up in the whole of Mato Grosso, its northern area within which the Menkũ are located had for many years been exclusively under Jesuit missionary administration.¹⁵ As a framework for their missionary activity in Mato Grosso the Jesuits founded the ‘Missão Anchieta’ (MIA).¹⁶ The Missão Anchieta was to be an entity with social and philanthropic aims. It was intended to act in support of the indigenous population, as well as with the rubber tappers and newly arriving settlers of the region. The principal activities of the Missão Anchieta were later to manifest themselves in the mission post of Utiariti and in the mobile religious assistance given to the regional population throughout the prelacy and at the indigenous settlements themselves.

The area referred to as the prelacy of Diamantino, and assigned by the pope to the missionary efforts of the Jesuits was to reach from the river Juruena in the west to the river Xingu in the

¹⁵ This exclusivity in regard to all other Catholic congregations was granted to the Jesuits by a papal decree in 1925. See Moura e Silva, 1975:11.
¹⁶ The name was to associate the missionary activity with José de Anchieta, one of the pioneers and founding fathers of Jesuit missionary work.
east, and from the border of the state of Mato Grosso in the north to an irregular line leading from the headwaters of the river Juruena to those of the river Teles Pires in the south (Holanda Pereira and Moura da Silva, 1979:7). A map shall illustrate the spread of the 354,000 square kilometres large area.

Map no. 2

Map of the prelacy of Diamantino

17 In 1940 agreement was reached about the final delimitation of the area (Moura e Silva, 1975:13).
The Jesuits installed their first mission post on the river Juruena close to a post of the telegraphic line, since the Rondón commission assumed settlements of Iranxe and other groups in its vicinity. While the missionaries did not succeed in encountering them, Nambikwara started to appear at the mission post of Juruena instead. A few years went by to build up mutual confidence before the first missionary visited a Nambikwara settlement in 1939, followed by a second visit in 1941. In the interim, Lévi-Strauss, coming from Cuiabá to study the Nambikwara, passed the mission post at the Rio Juruena - which he describes in his account - in autumn 1938. Other than the missionaries who had been several years in the area by then, he was the first outsider to visit and stay in a Nambikwara settlement. By 1942 the infrastructure of the post was well established, only to be vacated three years later due to increasing illness among the missionaries as well as to an outbreak of measles among the Indians. The Nambikwara who attributed a severe outbreak of a measles epidemic to shamanistic activities of the missionaries withdrew from the mission post, and remained with suspicion. It was only when the missionaries moved to Utiariti, a sacred place for the Paresi, where another post of the telegraphic line had been established, that their missionary work began. While benefiting from better conditions for their work, on the one hand, their base was now also close to the posts of the Service for the Protection of Indians (SPI) and the north-American Lutheran mission, both of which too aimed at attracting the

\[\text{Mistrust was generated by the news of massacres committed against the personnel of the telegraphic line and Protestant missionaries. Nambikuara Indians were believed responsible for these massacres. (See also Fernandes Silva, 1999) The relationship was further manipulated by the interference of the personnel of the telegraphic line at the Juruena post who tried to direct the Indians against the missionaries and vice versa.} \]

\[\text{See also Fernandes Silva 1999:403.} \]
indigenous population of the area. While the Protestants withdrew after some years in the area, the SPI did not manage to secure the interest of the indigenous population for too long. This generated a Jesuit monopolisation of missionary activity in the area which was to be of benefit once the Catholic church changed its understanding of mission among non-Christians in the early 1960s.

2.2.1 Utiariti
The Jesuit mission post of Utiariti existed in its traditional form until the late 1960s. It is of interest for the number of different indigenous groups it has related to, and for the time of its activity which corresponded with the expansion of the frontier to the north of Brazil. For more than the first half of the century the more southern area of the large region encompassed by the prelacy of Diamantino had become the platform of fights between indigenous peoples and rubber tappers. There was a lot of pressure on the various indigenous groups populating the whole of the prelacy, which resulted in intertribal and inter ethnic fights, as well as in the outbreak of various decimating epidemics. Utiariti acted in the middle of these tensions, partly justified its agency by them, and responded to them with its overarching strategy of integration.

Apart from the particular historical context, Utiariti was to be differentiated from other missionary enterprises as it directed its activity specifically to children. While in former times the mission post involved the whole of an indigenous settlement, or settlements, the Jesuits perceived in children a privileged clientele for the preaching of the Christian doctrine. While some children were taken from the various indigenous settlements,

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20 The Jesuit missionary Dornstauder comments on the conflict of interests between these three institutions. As well as that, he mentions that the indigenous peoples did not seem to differentiate much between them. (In: Holanda Pereira and Moura de Silva (1975:7). See also Fernandes Silva 1999:403. Similar has been said by Campbell for the Wayampi (unpublished research proposal).
others were brought to the mission post having become orphans in particular due to the epidemics.21

Fernandes Silva (1999:403) compares the Jesuit mission post of Utiariti to a totalitarian institution. She mentions various valid points to support her argument. The historical context was used to justify the missionaries' focus on the younger generation. The missionaries aimed to prepare the children for their integration into what they considered the civilised world, and at the same time lived in a refuge from the wider world. The separation from the rest of society was effected by natural rather than stone obstacles; by distance from the families; as well as by being obliged to abstain from speaking their mother tongue while at Utiariti. Diacritic aspects which characterised each child as part of its indigenous culture were tried to be eliminated by various means, such as the use of uniforms and the strengthening of the knowledge of the Portuguese language. The strive for homogenisation of the members belonging to different indigenous groups was strengthened by enforcing links, or marriage, between children or adults belonging to enemy groups, while suppressing alliances between members of the same indigenous group.22

Fundamental for the Jesuits of Utiariti was the teaching of the indigenous peoples in craftsmanship and basic knowledge. At school the indigenous peoples learnt Portuguese, mathematics, geography, history, religion, and crafts such as knitting, tailoring, cooking for the girls, and timber work, agriculture and mechanics for the boys. Those at the mission post were furthermore obliged to help in the maintenance of the post. The daily activities were under complete control of the missionaries, which was enforced by strict

21 This applied in particular to the Iranxe, who in 1948 transferred all members except for three families to the mission post.
22 Machado (1994) suggests that these activities have lead to an emergence of a ‘transethnic identity’ among those who have been once part of Utiariti.
Based on reports of Utiariti, Costa (1985) suggests that in 1963 there were about 190 children at the mission post, while by 1967 the number increased to about 300 indigenous peoples at the post. Thus quite an impact was effected when in 1969 Utiariti was officially closed - against the opinion of more conservative missionaries - and the indigenous peoples were sent back to their territories. Some of the most important factors for this development are to be associated with the happenings at the centre of the Catholic church.

2.2.2 Second Vatican Council and its repercussions in Latin America

In response to a critical assessment of the social, cultural and economic condition of the Christian world, Pope John XXIII - the first Pope to come from a peasant background - convened in 1959 the Second Vatican Council which was held in Rome from 1962 to 1965. Here the beginnings were made to change past interpretations of Christian concepts; it gave incentive to a critical search for new modes of living this religion in a less exclusive, universalistic, ethnocentric, paternalistic and conservative way. Main aspects concerned the reform of the liturgy or celebration of mass, the position of the laity in the church, the relationship of the church to the present and to the non-Christian world. Dialogue and the acceptance of alterity on which it is based were at the centre of the discussions of Vatican II: the culture of the ‘other’ was to be respected and promoted in its difference (Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes), religious freedom was to be supported (Dignitatis Humanidadae), the salvational value of non-Christian religions was to be discovered, and the dialogue with followers of other religions was to be sought and fostered. Vatican
II instigated a critical self-reflection of the church as a whole, and opened up new pathways of understanding which were then taken up by the different regions and led to new developments of Catholic theology in Asia, Africa and Latin America (as well as in Europe). In the case of Latin America, this expressed itself most vividly in the outcomes of the two conferences of the Latin American episcopate (CELAM), in Medellín (1968) and, later, Puebla (1979).23 Facing the reality of the huge socio-economic split between the different levels of society, the object of evangelical action shifted from the pre-conciliar alignment with the establishment and support of the political status quo, to the post-conciliar identification of the church with the condition of the poor, suppressed, marginalised and exploited and the intention to promote the change of structures that create these undignified, unjust and inhumane conditions of existence experienced by most of the Latin American population. The keyword of Medellín and Puebla was 'liberation'.

As Suess (1996:15) points out, at that time there existed no sensitivity from the side of the church for the specificity of the indigenous cause in contrast to that of the poor and oppressed members of Brazilian society. Missionary practice directed towards the indigenous population needed to be understood in a new way. This was supported by the dissatisfaction with the then applied missionary practice of visiting the indigenous communities (in opposition to settlements such as Utiariti) and giving religious assistance (in opposition to imposed indoctrination) and the involvement of more lay people as Catholic missionary agents.24

23 Episcopal conferences are assemblies of all bishops pertaining to a certain region. They were instituted by Vatican II as a means to allow for more freedom of the different regions to develop theoretical and practical guidelines of religious work on the basis of the local reality. The present Pope, John Paul II, reduced their juridicative and executive influence again since he believed they were getting too influential as a whole, threatening, in the end, his authority.

The missionary endeavour in the light of Vatican II and Medellín became more focussed in Brazil when witnessing the governmental discussions about the Statute of the Indian. In the lengthy process that dealt with the constitutional rights and territorial rights of the Brazilian indigenous population the progressive parts of the Brazilian church became more and more aware of the government's merely economic interests in the lands inhabited by indigenous peoples. In opposition to this tendency the Brazilian church therefore countered any integrationist policies directed towards the indigenous peoples. 'In the new journey together with the Indians, the missionaries realised that the indigenous question touches - because of the land - upon the agrarian structure of the economic system, and questions - on the basis of the respect for alterity and for the protagonism of the Indians - a civilisatory and paternalistic approach' (Suess ibid. :17.) The Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) was founded in the critical assessment of the government's strategies and in the organisation of actions involved in dismantling it (1972).

2.2.3 The developments in Mato Grosso
With the closure of Utiariti the Indians were to resettle on their previous territories. Yet another time the infidel objects of missionary practice were to be severely questioned in their identity and truth values. While they had to give up their indigenous identity entering Utiariti in order to 'gain civilisation' they were to discover it again and defend it when returning to their lands. This was even more so the case as their absence had enabled prospective landowners to invade and take possession of parts of their traditional territories. The reconquest of the land by the various indigenous groups was based on a conscious retrieval and re-enactment of their indigenous identity as their rights over land were to be legitimised by their cultural connection with it (such as
ancestral sites, burial places, spirit dwellings, particular productive practices etc.). Though the conflict of interests between the national society and the indigenous population of the area has not ceased yet. To date the rights over land form the central issue of clashes of the indigenous population with the surrounding society. While the same missionaries that had been working with the Indians at Utiariti now supported those groups that had been at Utiariti in their readjustment to this new and threatening reality, they also directed their attention to those groups that had not yet been contacted. Undergoing a self-critical assessment of their practices, the missionaries could try to realise their new attitudes in their meeting with the then still-uncontacted 'other'. The denial of the other's culture transformed itself into an idealisation of the 'pure' identity of the other, combined with a critical evaluation of the missionaries' background and the culture that pertained to themselves.

Two organisations were founded which were to foster and realise these new demands on missionary practice. They were the 'Operation Anchieta' and the 'Indigenous Missionary Council'. I shall turn my attention to these now as they have come to affect the reality of the Menkù and of the missionary work in Mato Grosso up to today.

2.2.4 'Operação Anchieta' - OPAN
As a result of the demand for more involvement of the laity, as established by Vatican II, the Jesuit Egydio Schwade, relating to the Missão Anchieta, gave incentive to the establishment of a movement of young Catholics with the aim of supporting the missionary work. OPAN was founded in 1969 in southern Brazil. The

25 In 1986 one of the Jesuit missionaries working for the demarcation of the Enauwene-Nawe land, Vicente Canães was assassinated. Every year the fight for indigenous land causes new victims. See weekly newsletter of CIMI.
activities of the first years took place within the framework of the traditional mission. The young people worked mainly in the schools, health care and agriculture of the Jesuit mission of Utiariti and at an agricultural colony at Sagarana. Inspired by the developments in the Catholic church, the young volunteers soon began to question the paternalistic setting they were working in. Analysing the Brazilian reality and the situation of the indigenous population, they stated in a 1987 review, that they wanted to engage themselves in the life of the ‘most marginalised’ (OPAN 1987:85). Soon after its foundation, OPAN dedicated itself solely to working with indigenous peoples. The idea was to participate in the daily life of the revived indigenous settlements. It was aimed, through that, to be able to identify the problems suffered by them, and in partnership with them to develop solutions with them. OPAN tried to rid itself of the paternalistic projects it had become involved in, and start those that would foster the indigenous autonomy from structures of domination. In this regard they started economic projects such as cooperatives in various settlements and the planting of rice with the Paresi (see OPAN, 1987:86). The fight for the land and its exclusive usufruct by the indigenous population, the support of their autonomy, and the work for the establishment of alliances with those sectors of the national society that can give political support to the claims of the indigenous groups are their main concerns today.

Once having started their work in northern Mato Grosso, OPAN ventured out to reach indigenous groups in other regions of Brazil soon after its foundation. Today OPAN represents an important non-governmental actor in the support of the indigenous cause within Mato Grosso and Brazil as a whole. The initial proximity to the Catholic church that allowed more room to act during the military dictatorship has been weakened. Nowadays, OPAN defines itself as
the 'Operation of the Native Peoples of Amazonia', independent of any confessional bond.

2.2.5 Indigenous Missionary Council - CIMI

2.2.5.1 The emergence of a national indigenous missionary council

The proposal to create an Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) that would act as a councillor to the Catholic church in Brazil became more concrete on the third encounter about pastoral care directed towards the indigenous population in April 1972. The non-existence of a pastoral that was specifically directed towards the indigenous population generated a strong dissatisfaction among the Catholic missionaries. The lack of coordination of missionary activity among the indigenous peoples, as well as the great deficiency / inappropriateness regarding the formation of those beginning their missionary work among the indigenous communities and the missionaries already active in the missions, were amongst the factors that fuelled a strong dispiritedness among the missionaries. It was felt that there was a need for an instrument that would allow the agents involved in the indigenous pastoral a training - by means of courses, subsidies, study materials, direct accompaniment etc. - that would provide a solid preparation for the evangelising mission. This would, furthermore, enable a rather specific and instrumental training about topics such as alphabetisation and sanitary health, as well as about basic theoretical formulations and conceptual elaborations of linguistics and anthropology, with particular emphasis on indigenous ethnology (see Rufino 1996:156).

Moreover, Paulo Suess, theologian and missiological advisor to CIMI, identified further obstacles that hindered the realisation

26 I will base my description on the work of the Brazilian anthropologist Rufino (1996), who has condensed the history and main aims of CIMI in a thoroughgoing way.
of missionary work according to the progressive ideas developed at Vatican II. Some of these derived from the dynamic inherent in the traditional ecclesiastical structure. Firstly, the possibility to develop a close connection and more profound understanding of a particular indigenous group was often interrupted due to the missionary being transferred somewhere else by the respective bishop without previous announcement. This made it impossible for the missionary to learn the indigenous language. Secondly, many bishops directed their attention to the non-indigenous population and allocated the few available clerics to the work with them. Furthermore, the missionary work was dependent upon governmental and foreign non-governmental entities. Lastly, isolation and lack of communication among the missionaries which was generated by the dispersion of the indigenous groups in the national territory represented a problem for the coordination of the missionary work.

Apart from the pastoral context, the period that saw the creation of a new entity of the Brazilian Catholic church that would deal differently with the indigenous population was to be characterised by other factors. One of these regarded the denouncement of torture and genocide among indigenous populations which appeared in the international press in 1969 and effected the inspection of these circumstances by the Red Cross a year later. At the same time, the Brazilian military government was working on the Statute of the Indian which was to structure the rights and relations of the indigenous population in Brazilian society. It was to outlaw the work of missionaries and philanthropic entities among the indigenous peoples. As well as this scientific research among the latter was prohibited. The construction of the Transamazonian highway and the implementation of various development projects in the region
promised negative effects that would have a strong impact on many indigenous peoples (see Rufino 1996:158).

Lastly, the criticisms of missionary activity in South America forwarded by anthropologists at a meeting in 1971 represented another important factor characterising the context of the generation of the indigenous missionary council. The anthropologists suggested a halt of all missionary activities in order to guarantee the survival of indigenous cultures. A year later, bishops, missionaries and pastoral agents from nine countries met in Paraguay to evaluate the criticisms and respond to them. Many of the criticisms were taken up and influenced the priorities outlined in the guidelines of CIMI as they were formulated at the first assembly of the counsellors in 1974. CIMI came to represent not only the Catholic missionary presence among the indigenous peoples, but also was to voice the preoccupation of the Catholic church as a whole with the indigenous cause. It was constituted by all the Catholic bishops and prelates in whose dioceses or prelacy were indigenous groups, all the local and regional superiors of those missions which were working among these groups, the bishop responsible for mission of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), and all those that were working in the area of the indigenous pastoral. While it was the main responsibility of the executive secretary to centralise all public manifestations of this institution and to accompany the actions of the federal government in relation to the indigenous population, the regional offices, which were established soon after the foundation of CIMI, were more responsible for coordinating the groundwork in the different parts of the country.

The document resulting from this encounter is referred to as the 'Declaration of Barbados I'; Suess, 1989:13.

It is interesting to note that of the participants of this reunion and of the seven councillors that were chosen to compose CIMI out of these, a quarter were involved in northern Mato Grosso (See the list of participants in Suess 1989:19).
From its beginning, CIMI dedicated itself to the defence of the indigenous peoples threatened by the predatory advances of the evolving society. Four main lines of action were elaborated in the pursuit of this aim. These were, firstly, the fight, with the indigenous peoples, for the demarcation of their lands, with the consequential guarantee to possess the land and the resources of it. Secondly, the support of the indigenous movement, with the promotion of autonomous indigenous organisations, so that the indigenous peoples themselves would be able to express their problems as well as demand their rights and needs. Thirdly, the establishment of political alliances on the national and international level; and, fourthly, the promotion of the culture of the indigenous peoples, with the intention to establish a relationship with the cultural diversity on a basis of respect and non-intervention (Rufino, 1996:162). In the undertaking of these aims CIMI, and, with it the Catholic Church, distanced itself more and more from the official indigenous policy.

2.2.5.2 CIMI Mato Grosso
The regional office of CIMI in Mato Grosso is one of twelve which altogether cover the whole territory of Brazil. Situated in Cuiabá, it is responsible for the coordination of the missionary assistance given to about twenty indigenous groups. Its establishment was supported by OPAN, the aims of which became firmly integrated into CIMI policy.29 Based on a shared political position, the two organisations cooperate in many respects in Mato Grosso. There is, for instance, teamwork in the training of the personnel going out to work with the indigenous groups. As well as this the two institutions back each other when pursuing legal and political campaigns for the indigenous people.

29 OPAN also helped in the establishment of the general secretary of CIMI.
In order to give better assistance to the indigenous groups living within the region of the former Jesuit mission of Utiariti, the two organisations divided their attention between them: OPAN dedicated itself to work with the Iranxe, Paresi, Nambikwará and Enauwene-Nawe, while CIMI concentrates on working with the Menkū, Rikbaktsa, Kayabi, Apiaká, Tapirapé, and Karajá. In contrast to OPAN which initially had consisted of lay Catholics, the personnel working for CIMI constituted solely of members belonging to the Catholic clerical or to Catholic orders. Therefore, those Jesuits who continued to work directly with the various indigenous groups of the former mission of Utiariti did so as members of CIMI which, then, had taken over the responsibilities of the former ‘Missão Anchieta’. It is interesting to note that, nowadays, the work done by OPAN among the indigenous groups has a completely secular character. In contrast, the involvement of CIMI in Mato Grosso is still done within a Christian framework, albeit based on a different understanding of mission which I shall elaborate in regard to the Menkū in the last chapter.

Due to the way CIMI and OPAN divided their responsibilities among the indigenous groups of the area, the missionaries connected to CIMI provide the main contact with the Menkū. However, as OPAN is working with a neighbouring indigenous group, the Enauwene-Nawe, there is occasional interaction. Both the volunteers of OPAN and the missionaries of CIMI working with the Menkū, have established a working base in the town of Brasnorte, where they stay on their way to the indigenous reservation, in order to resolve administrative questions with the authorities of the municipality, or to attend to medical problems. This allows for occasional contact and the exchange of information when in town. A friendly relationship of mutual support is maintained between the two teams. In 1997 two ‘members of OPAN’ changed from working

\footnote{Some exceptions can be found in the administrative personnel.}
with the Enauwene-Nawe to join the missionary team working with the Menkū. However, this change does not represent a future involvement of OPAN among the Menkū since the two are now formally connected to CIMI.

2.3 Governmental Institutions
The most influential governmental institutions that the indigenous population is exposed to today are the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI), the National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), and the National Foundation for Health (FNS).

2.3.1 National Foundation for the Indian - FUNAI
FUNAI is the governmental institution which is responsible for the execution of governmental decisions concerning the indigenous population. It was founded in 1967, replacing the Service for the Protection of the Indians (SPI) that had been established by Rondón in 1910. In line with the strong economic interests of the state promoting conditions for the better exploitation of the Amazon basin, FUNAI is a very ambivalent organisation. In fact, soon after its foundation, FUNAI has assumed the task of making viable the execution of the expansionist economic model which had been elaborated by the military elites in power. According to CIMI, the protection of the indigenous population therefore signified nothing more than the perpetuation of the domination and control over the indigenous communities (see Bol. CIMI, November, 1973). Its involvement in the process of identifying and demarcating indigenous territories is clearly determined by integrationist policies.

FUNAI's presence in Mato Grosso dates back to the foundation of this governmental institution. In 1945, as a result of an expedition aiming at more intensive contact with the Iranxe, a post
of the Service for the protection of the Indian ('Posto Tolosa') was established in the vicinity of what was assumed to be their territory. In establishing a post there which was to 'protect' the indigenous peoples from the increasing number of rubber-tappers, the SPI preceded the Jesuits who moved their base to Utiariti a few years later. There the SPI defended the responsibility for the indigenous peoples it was entrusted with by the government and submitted the missionaries to its policies. It supported the missionaries in the expeditions aimed at the identification and contact with uncontacted groups. However, rather than having members of the newly-contacted groups boarding at the Jesuit mission post, they wanted the indigenous peoples to settle at the post of the SPI. At one point they ordered all the Iranxe at Utiariti to be relocated to the 'Posto Tolosa'. Due to a lack of resources, however, the natives soon went back to their own settlements or to Utiariti. Until the closure of Utiariti, the SPI maintained its post in the vicinity of the Iranxe. With the establishment of FUNAI, a restructuring of the governmental institution followed, which, among other things, resulted in the closure of its post in the vicinity of the Iranxe.

Contact with the Menkû had been established by Jesuit missionaries of Utiariti and Iranxe Indians independently of FUNAI. Up till today the missionaries working with the Menkû have been able to do so without major interference from FUNAI. In case of need, FUNAI acts from its regional office which is located some 400km south of the Menkû in the town of Tangara da Serra. FUNAI does intervene in cases of illegal action, either on the side of the national society, for instance, penetrating into demarcated land, or on the indigenous side, when, for instance, they get involved in timber-logging within their territory.
2.3.2 Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform - INCRA

One of the main responsibilities of the Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) is the resolution of land claims as well as the promotion of colonisation projects by allocation of land to those in need. In Brasnorte, INCRA was, among other things, dealing on a daily basis with an average of 40 persons. The governmental policy supporting these claimants therefore represents the legalised organisation of the penetration of the interior of Mato Grosso - and other states. As the Menkũ have a demarcated territory, they are only indirectly affected by the activities of INCRA. However, the encouragement of settlers in the area not only represents a threat to the resources the Menkũ depend upon, but is also a factor for the growing presence of the customs and values of the national society.

2.3.3 National Foundation for Health - FNS

The Fundação National de Saúde, FNS, is the Brazilian national health service to which the indigenous population has access as Brazilian nationals. The FNS shares the attention to the indigenous population with FUNAI and SUCAM which is responsible for controlling the spread of malaria and for the carrying out of vaccinations. FNS and FUNAI provide medicine for use in the indigenous settlements.\(^{31}\) As well as that, they are responsible to give financial cover in case of the need for hospitalisation. The missionaries have often complained about the lack of interest in the particular indigenous reality and the lengthy procedures involved in obtaining medical treatment.

Among the Menkũ, the use of indigenous medicine has

\(^{31}\) Those medicines that were not provided by them were procured by the missionaries at Western Aid Agencies specialising in the provision of medicines for the work with indigenous peoples.
decreased. This is to be attributed to the lack of shamans as well as to the activities of the missionaries who had Western treatments available in the settlement. As a result, the younger Menkū especially have come to rely more on Western medicine and on the services offered by the national health system in the nearby town of Brasnorte. Lastly, however, the Menkū's openness to seek medical advice has to be related to the threat of extinction they were exposed to some decades ago. Any illness was seen as a reason for concern which had to be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. Only in the last ten years a steady growth of the population can be once again identified. It would be interesting to study any changes that this has brought about in their use of Western medicine.

2.4 Menkū ethnohistory

2.4.1 Some historical data
The history of the Menkū has been characterised by several traumatic experiences. Massacres by whites and other indigenous groups as well as Western illnesses have led the group close to extinction and by the early 1950s they numbered only nine. From then onwards the population of the group has increased continuously. At present the Menkū are comprised of approximately seventy persons. In order to facilitate the description of their past I shall distinguish three periods. The first reaches up to the beginning of this century when the Menkū were separated from their relatives, who have come to be referred to as the Iranxe, through a massacre conducted by rubber-tappers. The second period encompasses the time from the massacre up to their contact with Jesuit missionaries in 1971. Lastly, the third period refers to the time since contact up to the present day. A table shall allow for a better understanding of these rather complex developments which I will elaborate further down.
Historical overview

First period (- 1905)

1900 Group with selfdenomination 'Menkū' live in an area between rivers Sangue, Membeca and Cravari, spread over various settlements. (Map no. 3, p. 70)

Second period (1905 - 1971)

1905 Southernmost settlement on river Tapuru is attacked by rubbertappers. Survivors flee in different directions: (Map no. 4, p. 76)

Towards forest/Northwest, later become known as Menkū
Towards savannah/Northeast, later become known as Iranxe

1920s Significant increase in number
Rejoin+intermarriage with relatives of other settlements

1930s First contact with missionaries at Utiariti
Attacks of Beixo-de-Pau, pushing Iranxe Westwards

1940s Live in a number of settlements in the area of present-day Brasnorte
Repeated visits by Iranxe to missionary post

1950s Epidemic illnesses lead to large scale decimation
Epidemic illnesses lead to large scale decimation

Various attacks by Rikbaktsa leave nine Menkū alive by the end of decade (Map no. 5, p. 84)

beg. 1960s All Iranxe move to Utiariti except for 3 families (Map no. 5, p. 84)

Various unsuccessful attempts to contact isolated group believed relatives (Menkū)

1969 Dissolution of Utiariti

Traditional territory is appropriated by invaders, so group establishes itself on the Westbank
of river Cravari (Map no. 6, p. 88)

1969

Demarcation of new, inappropriate territory

1971

Successful contact established by Iranxe and missionaries

Iranxe live in two settlements, 'Cravari' and 'Paredão'

Third period (1971 - )

Menků stay in the area of contact, only move the location of their settlement after invasions from neighbouring farms.

Iranxe continue to live in two settlements in their demarcated land, and visit their newly discovered relatives frequently.

Some Iranxe come to live with the Menků and intermarry.

Missionaries make visits of short duration every few months.

1978

Demarcation of Menků territory

1979

Missionaries come to live with the Menků

... Both groups continue in the same way, with a steady increase among the population.
Before describing these periods in more detail, I would like to make a few comments about the different historicities that have emerged in the process of compiling Menkū history. These comments have arisen out of a collaboration with Tsuno, one of the eldest Menkū. The interview that I will be referring to is central to this chapter in that it illuminates a Menkū past, while at the same time providing the basis for questioning any claim to constructing a Menkū history which is collectively authorised.

2.4.1.0 Collecting Menkū history: Personal histories versus a collectively authorised 'text'

In the way the Menkū helped in the project of recapitulating important aspects of their history of this century some basic differences with regard to the importance of acquiring a final version of Menkū history as told by Tsuno, the oldest member of the group, were revealed. First of all, rather than them coming to us out of their own initiative and interest in, what seemed to us, a special opportunity, they always had to be invited to help me and the missionary Amarante with the transcription. Their reticent attitude to the process revealed the spontaneity, pragmatism and search for joy that is characteristic to their way of undertaking any kinds of project and daily chore. However, it also was the case that they did not consider the history we were told by Tsuno as unique. Rather, it was one story among many, where the particular historical events accounted for by Tsuno mattered not per se but only in so far as their effects could be encountered in today's living conditions - which are witnessed, known and shared by everyone.

In contrast to the Menkū, the attitudes of the missionary, Amarante, and myself to the contents of the interview were based

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32 Personal names of the Menkū have been changed.
on the assumption that Tsuno's age and experience would guarantee the possibility of acquiring a more or less complete picture of Menkū past. Being the only one who survived the various traumatic experiences of this century, we considered his knowledge and memory to be unique and, as such, irretrievable once he died. Our focus was therefore on the result of the process which consisted in the establishment of a comprehensive understanding of Menkū past. We believed that the achievement of this goal would enable us to place the historical events in a more or less chronological order so as to explain some aspects of their present situation out of their past experiences.

Two contrasting ways of understanding history seemed to emerge. We subscribed to the normal Western notion of history as a linear process, the internal causality of which could be captured by revealing the sequence of this-worldly events. For the Menkū, the present is not only considered a revelation of past events, but is also seen as being embedded in a framework of causalities that surpass this-worldly reality. Supernatural beings, such as ancestral spirits, have an important influence to play in this. By establishing harmonious relations with such beings a person actually has a formative effect upon his or her own history. The Menkū are reminded of the importance to fulfil this task conscientiously by the women during the Menkū's central ritual of the sacred Yetá. Without going into detail about the ritual itself at this point, I shall allow Amarante's voice to correlate these two realities here:

'In the ritual of the 'Yetá' the woman is not allowed to acquire sight of the sacred, but it is her task to dialogue and converse with the Yetá, or, with the spirits which, personified in the sounding body and its sound, sing and dance on the central plaza. In the first hours of dawn, in the houses, lying in their hammocks where they rest with their little children, the women one by one turn into interlocutors of the spirits, and this talk,
or recitation has as its goal the awakening of her people for the new day.

Since the same Menkū word translates into ‘path’ and ‘history’, this “awakening of the people” is the actual existential hope which verbalises itself in prayer and opens itself to the future. The Menkū woman therefore has the mission to awaken humanity, which we can understand as inviting humanity to “be awake”, to be conscious, asking at the same time the spirits of the ancestors to come and be with their people, to accompany humanity on its way, in its “making history”. (Amarante, 1994:16.)

Menkū historicity emerges not so much as emphasising the past to understand the present, but much more as becoming conscious of all the human and spiritual resources of the present to create the future. Envisioning the creation of the future in terms of walking on a path, a linear aspect of history is evoked, similar to Western notions. However, strong emphasis is put on the importance ascribed to the processual and ritual character involved in the awakening to, and walking on that path. Of similar importance is the Menkū’s emphasis on the agency and responsibility of each individual in this creation.

Taking the above into account, we can see that the process of interviewing, translating, interpreting and transcribing was a means to an end for Amarante and myself. Meanwhile, the Menkū’s attitudes showed that they saw the process as an end in itself. The joy that they got out of the social event of listening to Tsuno’s voice and words was one of the main motivations that interested them in assisting us. Consequently, they did not focus on the accomplishment of the task we had laid upon ourselves. This attitude, I would suggest, can be compared to their relationship with artifacts and their notion of maintenance. While it is
important for an artefact to be functional, and this functionality is appreciated in terms of its beauty, it is perishable. Its destruction does not cause a problem since it can be replaced easily. While for us, the perfection and maintenance of an object is of prime importance, it seems to be for the Menkū secondary to the availability of primary resources for creating it. I would like to suggest that the Menkū related to Tsuno’s story in a way similar to information regarding, for instance, locations where they can find buriti palms used for making carrying baskets. Rather than investing energy in the maintenance of the basket, the Menkū cultivate their knowledge of where to find the raw material to make a new one. As this knowledge is accessible to all Menkū, it loses part of its unique character. However, it is the individual who appropriates the knowledge and evaluates it in his or her own way. Similarly, Tsuno’s story of the Menkū’s history is his story, that is present in different ways among all the Menkū. While it is unique, Tsuno’s age, experience and witness of it do not render it authoritative for everyone. It is only one version among many. Each person will order the events in a slightly different way, emphasising what is of relevance for themselves while nobody would claim a collective authority to his or her own ‘text’.

While conducting the interviews, we had hoped Tsuno would respond to our first question regarding the time before the massacre that took place at the beginning of this century by telling us something about the times before the major disruption to their life caused by it, but instead our respondent placed the massacre at the beginning of his account of Menkū past. This, I believe, was a conscious choice rather than being based on a misunderstanding of our question. He wanted to give us his personal history. The time of the massacre coincided with the early beginnings of his life. Several times we heard that he was a small child when the incident
occurred. Comparing himself to one of his great grandsons he exemplified his size. Rather than counting years, Menkū time is measured in terms of the social and productive development of a person. Mentioning that he was carried and breast fed by his mother differentiates his age further. Menkū women carry and do not complete weaning their youngest child until the day before the next sibling is born. The ideal spacing of pregnancies aimed at and controlled by the Menkū is approximately three years.\(^{32}\) We can therefore follow - which he later confirmed - that he had no younger or older siblings at the time of the massacre. Being the first-born child of his mother, we can furthermore conclude that she was quite young since Menkū women normally get pregnant for the first time soon after they have started to menstruate. Apart from that, Tsuno relates his size to the fact that he did not know much. Small children do not know anything because ‘knowledge’ is only attained when being prepared for the responsibilities of the productive life of adulthood. For the boys, real knowledge starts with the initiation to the Yetá, while for the girls it begins during their first menstruation.

But ‘knowing’ also refers to the capacity of understanding and recalling what a person has seen and heard.\(^{33}\) Parallel with being characteristic of any personal history, it is a feature of Menkū talking and reporting that a person can only describe events that he or she has personally experienced. Narrating something that somebody else has witnessed cannot be appropriated as a person’s own knowledge, but has to be identified as the experience of the

\(^{32}\) I shall come back to this in more detail below in the section about Menkū life cycle.

\(^{33}\) This equation whereby knowledge is entailed in understanding is known for other Amazonian groups as well. See Overing, 1988b, and Belaunde 1992.
other. An event that does not form part of one's own experiences cannot be presented in an affirmative manner. There is a hesitation to talk about it at all even if a person might know the details of the topic in question. Because of this attitude, Amarante and I waited in vain for the elaboration about the times preceding the massacre. For us, it seemed possible to describe a reality which one has not lived through but only known by others talking about it. This, I believe, is based on our indirect alignment with Western modes of writing history which ground themselves on primary sources. These are taken as the most authentic data available. However, the historian needs to relate them to his own temporal and socio-political context and interpret them in order to render them understandable to himself and his audience. Historical overviews produced in this way are ascribed a relative truth in themselves until they are criticised and revised in accordance with the appearance of new data or a new perspective on the primary sources. These ‘truths’ created in a historiography by the historian acquire a certain objectivity which allows them to be treated like things. They can be taught in books and discussed independently of their creators.

This different understanding of what can be passed on as an historical fact suggests why Tsuno abstains from referring extensively to what he has been told, for instance, by his mother or other people of the older generation. The main aspects of the story he tells us is based on his own experience only and does not take other sources into account that would refer to the time long before his birth. History is his story about his experiences during his life alone. It is his personal experience. ‘Subjectivity’, in the Western

34 This is made explicit in the use of various morphemes which specify whether the person talking is the subject of what is accounted, and whether the reported incident was witnessed by the speaker or not. Various types of actors are distinguished, as well as points of view, modes and other characteristics of the action differentiated. See Montserrat, 1993:30.

35 See for instance Gow (1991:261) for the same among the Piro.
sense, comes to be the only basis for a description that can claim to have a truth value for the Menkū. As small children are claimed not to have a strong capacity to evaluate their subjective experiences, or, if they do, they might not remember them well in their old age, they are considered to be beings that 'don't know'. With increase in age, experience and memory, the descriptions of later periods of life become more differentiated and knowledgeable. Accordingly, the massacre which marked the beginning of his life and the immediate reaction to it by his people are reported very clearly but in a very reduced way. Only the direct consequences are recalled, which are the killing, everybody running, fleeing, dying, or surviving. These are repeated several times and exemplified ('given physicality') by naming some of the people and their fates.

Keeping these differences to our linear mode of historical accounts in mind, we shall nevertheless try to sketch those events of Menkū past in a chronological manner that can be assumed to have had a very formative effect on the Menkū as we encounter them today. While it is impossible to claim Menkū collective authority for it, these events are always referred to by them when talking about themselves and their past. Lastly, however, I will do this to facilitate our understanding of their past.

36 For similar notions of children's ignorance, see S. Hugh-Jones (1979) and Gow (1991:232).
37 However, it should not be ignored that it has been argued that indigenous historiography can be related to myth, or, that, in the case of the myth of creation, historiographic aspects are involved: 'A myth is at the same time a told story and a logical scheme created by man to resolve problems which present themselves on different levels, that have been integrated into a systematic construction.' (Lévi-Strauss, 1969; also see Guss, 1989; Overing, 1985a) The myth of creation as all other myths can only be known by hearing them. Events, however, that can be witnessed, are of a different quality since they form part of the reality that is perceived by the senses. This does not refrain the speaker from using the logic of myth or the logic of a transcendental reality to interpret and analyse the events that have happened in the sphere of this-worldly experience.
2.4.1.1 The Menkū at the river Tapuru (- 1905)
The ancestors of those who constitute the Menkū today lived in a settlement at the river Tapuru, a small affluent of the river Cravari. Their settlement formed part of a network of several other settlements each at a distance of half a day's to several days' walk from each other.

Map no. 3

Map of the network of Menkū settlement before the massacre in 1905. Note the river Tapuru in the bottom left corner, and settlement nr. 15 which was attacked.
When producing a claim for an extension of the demarcation of Iranxe land, Pivetta and Bandeira (1993), together with the Iranxe, reconstructed a total of seventeen settlements and cemeteries. The ancestors of the present day Menkú had located their settlement at the southern-most tip of the territory occupied. Being furthest to the south, this settlement was most exposed to penetrating rubber-tappers, who maintained ambivalent relations with the indigenous population. It was estimated that from 1890 to 1950 rubber-tappers had established at least two shacks within Menkú territory. While there are data about the use of the Iranxe workforce in exchange for Western goods, more than not the indigenous peoples and their settlements represented an obstacle for the unhindered pursuit of the prospectors' interests. The conflict of interests caused several clashes between rubber-tappers and the Menkú. The worst of these came to be reported to the Rondón Commission working in the area:

'... an act of unqualifiable cruelty against them [was] enacted by the rubber-tapper Domingo Antonio Pinto. The extremely sad happening to which I refer occurred shortly after Antonio Pinto established himself with his comrades at a place rich in rubber trees in the valley of the river Corecê-inaza [also known as river Cravari]. There is nothing to doubt the pacifist and timid nature of the Iranxe. But, in spite of that, the ferocious rubber-tapper believed that it was necessary to expel them from the proximities of his work base; and, since there was an indigenous settlement he and his comrades, armed with rifles, placed themselves in a circle around the settlement. At dawn, with the beginning of the daily drudgery of this most miserable wretched population, these criminals attacked from their hiding places and opened fire, killing the first coming out of their houses into the

39 Indeed, Lisbãa and Amarante criticised the endeavour for not involving the Menkú at all when gathering the relevant data. The appeal has not been recognised by the Brazilian government, leaving the Iranxe to an area which is not appropriate for their traditional economic activities.
40 See map no. 3, p. 70.
open. Those who didn’t die immediately shut themselves up in their thatched huts, in the vain hope of a safe shelter against the rage of their barbaric enemies. As these were already exalted by the sight of the first victims nothing could impede them from giving free rein to their hunger for carnage. So, in order to better kill the meagerly hidden, one of them decided to climb the roof of one of the huts, made an opening and through this, put the barrel of the gun, aimed at and shot down one after the other person who was there, without distinguishing sex nor age. Hunted down like that with such detestable impiety, the Indians died drawing from the outrage of their despair the inspiration of a movement of revolt. One arrow left, it was “the first and only one flung in all this bloody drama”. This one got stuck in the glottis of the cruel rifleman, who fell without life. Only the memory of this event makes one tremble with indignation and shame. Where can there be a Brazilian soul that would not vibrate in unison with ours, knowing that the whole of this population of men, women and children, died being burnt in their thatched huts by their aggressors.\textsuperscript{41}

In accordance with gathered information of Menkū and Iranxe, the massacre described here refers to that committed against ancestors of the present day Menkū. However, the reporters of the Rondón Commission did not realise that actually some of the indigenous peoples of the settlement managed to flee. Tsuno, the eldest Menkū who is the only one still alive having survived the massacre recalled the traumatic event:

“Primeiro branco matou na aldeia Tapuru. Era muita gente.
First whites killed in the Tapuru settlement. There were many people.
Eu era do tamanho de Matyxizinho (de Shui) carregada, no peito, mamando.”
I was the size of little Matyxi (of Shui) carried, breastfeeding.
Todo mundo correu, fugiu. Eu era pequeno, mãe fugiu comigo.
Everybody ran, fled. I was still little, my mother fled with me.
Kezusi, Engasi fugiram
Kezusi and Engasi fled.

\textsuperscript{41} Rondón ([1922]1946:88-89); extract taken from Pivetta (1993:69), my translation.
\textsuperscript{42} The son of Shui was at that time one and a half years old.
Tinha muita gente?
Were there many people?
There were many people. They killed the whole family of Jaukai. They killed the brother of Netu.
Uhkjamu didn't die, he stayed alive. Jaukai ran, fled and didn't die.
Mataram irmão de Netu, o mais velho, mas Netu ficou vivo.
They killed the brother of Netu, the oldest, but Netu stayed alive.
Outro irmão (não falou de quem) também mataram. Mataram a família toda.
The other brother [not named] was also killed. They killed the whole family.

Depois que fugiram, onde ficaram morando?
After they fled, where did they live?
De lá do Tapuru43, vieram para o mato.
On the other side of the river Tapuru. They went towards the forest.
Outros (a turma dos Iranxe porque primeiro era tudo junto) fugiram para o Rio do Sangue = pákjanāi.
The others, the group of the Iranxe, because before they were all one, fled towards the river Sangue (pákjanāi).
Fugiram pra cá.
That's where they fled to.44

Será que turma de Iranxe era junto com Myky?
Was it the case that the group of the Iranxe used to be together with the Menkū?
Era sim. Elas fugiram para lá (Rio do Sangue). Yes, it was. They fled in that direction (towards the rio Sangue).
Jamaxi, seu xará, fugiu pra cá.
Jamaxi, with whom you share your name, fled to there.
Junto vieram para cá. Eles fugiram também. Fugiram uns para o mato e outros para o Rio de Sangue.
Together they had come there. They fled as well. Some fled to the forest and others towards the river Sangue. 45

43 The Tapuru river was a small affluent of the river Cravari. Apart from the settlement at the river Tapuru there have been other settlements at a distance of a half-a-day's to a two days walk.
44 See map no. 4, p. 76.
45 This is the key to the existence of two different groups - Menkū (those who fled into the forest) and Iranxe (those who fled towards the river Sangue, joining up with those living in other settlements) - as we know of them today. I will elaborate this more further down.
Tsuno’s account evokes a picture of a traumatic past that was initiated by the massacre. The key topics that we are presented with in the first part refer to the killing by whites, the amount of people the Menkū then consisted of, the young age of the speaker, the running, fleeing, dying or survival of his people, and the localities where they fled to (forest or savannah).

We learn that there used to be many Menkū who lived in the settlement at the river Tapuru. All of them tried to run away, but many of them were killed by the white invaders. Of those able to escape, some retreated into the forest. Others fled to the savannah towards the river Sangue, where they joined other members of their larger group which lived in different settlements which were not touched by the massacre. The fact that they directed themselves to different geographical regions caused the separation of their group since, before that, he says, ‘everybody was together’. ‘Belonging together’ is to be understood as pertaining to the same cultural group that shares a cultural identity, and which was at the time dispersed in different settlements. By giving examples of who belonged to the former and who to the latter group he gave evidence

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46 The maize is dried hanging over the fireplace in the houses.
47 See map of network of active and passive settlements as memorized by an Iranxe, map no. 3, p. 70. According to the accounts of Tsuno, which is confirmed in this map, the settlement of the Tapuru was one of several settlements of the larger group.
of the fact that the Menkū separated into those today referred to as Menkū and those called Iranxe. According to him, the group nowadays referred to as the Iranxe was constituted by those who fled towards the savannah, while those whom we know as Menkū are the offspring of the group that escaped into the forest. I could not confirm any mythological distinction of the two groups, albeit differences in the way certain myths are told.

2.4.1.2 The period of separation and further decimation
(1905 - 1971)
I shall divide this section in two subsections describing events that happened to Menkū and Iranxe during this period respectively. Even though the two groups have the same ancestors, I shall refer to that part of the group which later came to be referred to as Iranxe by the latter name. The name “Iranxe” is in fact a Paresi word which the latter used when introducing the former to the Rondón Commission.

2.4.1.2.1 Menkū

“Primeiro, quando fugiu, gente pouco. Depois aumentou bastante mas morreu tudo.”
First, when we fled, there were few people. Then [the population] increased a lot but all died [again].

48 During the transcription of the interview there was a discussion among our helpers about the original habitat of the Menkū. While some argued that the forest was a new habitat for their ancestors since they originated from the savannah the others supported the view that the Menkū have in former times lived in the forest before settling at the river Cravari. When elaborating the notion of different geographical spaces in chapter 6, the data suggests that both habitats are familiar to the Menkū. Independent of the establishment of a chronology it is helpful to know that the Menkū have lived at least for the last one and a half centuries on the fringe of the Amazon forest. Savannah areas were accessible to them, even if that involved expeditions lasting for many days.

49 This is also valid for the denomination “Saluma” defining the Enauwenê-Nawê Indians.
finished in the area of the river Noratu, approximately 200km to the north-west of where it had started. The Menkū used to live all around the area of the municipality of the recently founded town of Brasnorte.

Map no. 4

1905 attack of rubber tappers (arrow) and consecutive movement of Tsuno's group (dotted line), and of those joining relatives in other settlements in the territory already inhabited by the group (fine dotted area). Those moving north later become known as Menkū, while those remaining in the dotted area later become known as Iranxe although their self-denomination remains Menkū. For clarity I here refer to the latter also as Iranxe.
Tsuno tells us that he cleared a lot of gardens in the area of Brasnorte. An intrinsic relationship is built up between living, felling trees, and gardening. The presence of a garden or its remains becomes synonymous with the settled life that had once taken place in its vicinity. There were four settlements on the land occupied today by the town of Brasnorte along with several others in the surrounding area. The settlements were named according to their location. One was close to a large lake, another one next to a small forest, another where one could find lots of stones, yet another at the headwaters of a small stream, etc. Tsuno tells us that he walked a lot and knew all of them as well as all the gardens and brushwoods. While naming all the settlements and referring to their gardens, he repeatedly expressed his wish to show them to his grandson, Jamaxi. I shall quote another part of the interview with Tsuno in order to illustrate the multiplicity of settlements that existed. This is even more interesting knowing that until this interview was conducted it was a common belief among the missionaries and those working with the Iranxe that the Menkû had since their separation been a rather small group, consisting of few more than those encountered at the time of contact.

Nome da aldeia era Matapjata e tinha uma lagoa perto da aldeia. [...] Matapjata was the name of the settlement and there was a lake close to it. [...] Outra aldeia Patomympjata. Era mato baixinho. Patomympjata was another settlement. There, the forest was low.

Outra aldeia Mauwakanapjata. Outra aldeia Waryripjata. Another settlement was called Mauwakanapjata. Another one Waryripjata.

Outra, Aiopjata Tinha muita pedra. Também morei ai. Tinha outra aldeia na cabeceira Pákjatympjata. another one Aiopjata. There were many stones. I also lived there. There was another settlement in the headwaters, called Pákjatympjata.
Aí muita gente morava
*There, many people lived.*

Depois muita gente morreu. Você podia ir espiar, não é Jamaxi.
*Afterwards many people died. You can go and look, can’t you, Jamaxi.*

Muito comprido terra na capoeira, queria mostrar pra você. Depois morreu tudo.
*There was a lot of brushwood, I would like to show it to you. Then all died.*

... lá em baixo Amiehpjata, outra aldeia. [...] Outra aldeia chamava Patomynipjata
*...there, below, there was another settlement, called Amiehpjata. Another settlement was called Patomynipjata.*

Matauhpjata aldeia grande, muita casa, casa, casa, muito Myky.
*Matauhpjata was a big settlement, there were many houses, houses, houses, many Menkű.*

[...] Mauwakanapijata também tinha bastante gente, muita casa.
*At Mauwakanapijata there were also many people, many houses*

[...] Meu pai Jaowy tinha casa lá no meio, Canoeiro matou ele perto do correto, lá mesmo.
*My father, Jaowy, had his house there, in the middle. Rikbaksta killed him there, close to the stream.*

O mais velho morava lá em cima perto da estrada. Mákainy (*bicho*) matou ele.
*The oldest lived there, to the north, close to the street. Mákainy killed him.*

Matyxi tinha casa dele perto da estrada... Gente era bastante, acabou tudo.
*Matyxi had his house close to the street... There were many people, all finished.*

Tinha terreiro grande, depois morreu tudo. Hikau sempre jogava bola, Jaukai também.
*It was a big territory. Afterwards all died. Hikau always played ball. Jaukai as well.*
Dessa aldeia acabou história. Agora vou contar de outra aldeia.
*Of that settlement history has finished. Now I will tell of another settlement.*

[...] Mais pra cá tinha outras aldeias: Amämjehpjata, Amkanamjehpjata. More to where we are now there were other settlements called Amämjehpjata and Amkanamjehpjata.

Tinha Myky muito, a gente andava na estrada, fazia roça, nós andávamos nas aldeias.
*There were many Menků. We walked on the paths, made gardens, we walked to the settlements,*

... andava numa aldeia chegava em outra aldeia, tinha bastante aldeia, aldeia, aldeia.
*leaving one settlement one would arrive at another settlement. There were many settlements, settlements, settlements*

A aldeia Mauwakanapijata ficava no meio, tinha casa bastante, muito Myky.
*The settlement called Mauwakanapijata was in the middle. There were many houses, many Menků.*

Fazia muita casa pertinho, pertinho: casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa.
*The houses were built close, close to each other: house, house, house, house, house, house, house, house, house.*

Fazia muita casa. Bastante Myky, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, terreiro grande.
*Many houses were built. There were many Menků. House, house, [...] a lot of land.*

Não dá para contar todas. Casa, casa, casa, casa, casa, ...
*Its impossible to count all. House, house, house, house, ... [counts up to nine houses before stopping to count]*

[...] Mimäihi era uma aldeia, Jaukai meu Vovó morava pra cá. 
*Mimäihi was one settlement, Jaukai, my grandfather lived there.*
Meus avôs moravam pra cá, pai dos avôs moravam pra cá.
My grandparents lived there, the great grandparents lived there.
Uhkjamu morava pra cá, sogro meu morava lá mesmo.
Uhkjamu lived there, my brother-in-law.

Tinha muita casa, casa bastante, lá mesmo. Lá mesmo tinha bastante. ...
There were many houses there. There were many houses.

Mentioning the people and families who lived in one or the other settlement one can gather that during this period of separation the Menkú population increased again to about 250 people. However, most of these died later on due to intertribal aggression and illness. As with the size of the group, there was also ignorance on the part of those working with the Menkú up till then, with regard to the extent to which the different causes of decimation have actually contributed to the near extinction of the group. So far it was believed that the majority of deaths were inflicted upon the Menkú by intertribal aggression when, in fact, it was to be attributed to Western illnesses.49 While not specifying the kind of illnesses, Tsuno clearly connects them to the danger involved in living close to the road which passed close to one of the settlements. Probably, this road was the old connection between Diamantino and the northern area of Mato Grosso. It can be assumed that the road exposed the Menkú to occasional contact with people passing by. While some of these might have belonged to neighbouring indigenous groups such as the Rikbaktsa to the north and the Nambikuara to the southwest of the area of Brasnorte, I believe, most of the few people who used the road were prospectors. It is through the latter that the Menkú must have been contaminated with one or several non-indigenous illnesses that managed to bring the whole group close to extinction.

49 In both cases, it is the respective ‘other’ who is made responsible for the fact.
The incidents of intertribal aggression involved Nambikuara and Rikbaktsa. While the former are remembered to have killed one Menkū, the latter have raided Menkū settlements twice. The survivors recalled them killing several men and abducting some women and children. Meanwhile, the death of the oldest Menkū that had fled from the Tapuru was, according to the Menkū, caused by a spirit. From all these various traumatic events, only nine Menkū survived. Six of them are still alive today, including Tsuno who has witnessed most of the crisis.

In his account, Tsuno says that everybody died. We can only understand this information if we take into account the amount of people necessary to assure an economically, politically and ritually self-sustaining life of the group. As every human death equals the loss of a universe of knowledge, experience and innovation, Menkū culture became what could be maintained by the survivors. Being reduced to nine people, certain roles within the community could no longer be fulfilled. This reflected itself most clearly in the loss of medicinal and shamanistic knowledge, in the disuse of certain linguistic features and vocabulary, and in the simplification of certain economic activities, and also in the alteration of marriage rules to which I will turn to in another chapter, as well as in ritual life. One example of the latter is the ritual of the katētiri flute, which revolves around a dance involving many people and lasting for several days. After the escape of the Menkū from the massacre, they were too few to be able to maintain the singing, dancing and provision of food necessary for carrying out this ritual. Tsuno says he was told about this dance by his parents; however, he must have never seen it being practised due to the lack of sufficient people. Only with the renewed contact with their relatives after 1970 was

50 The linguist Ruth Montserrat who has been working on Menkū and Iranxe language has provided evidence for this process in her comparative study of syntax, grammar and words of both dialects. Personal communication.
the ritual reintroduced into the community. The older Iranxe still
know how to perform this ritual since their settlements were not
as affected by the massacre and they were able to practise it well
into the 1940s. The younger Menkū have learned it from them,
although Tsuno has never been seen to participate in it since its
revival in the group.\textsuperscript{51}

Some ten years before contact, the group established itself in
two settlements of two houses each, close to the little river Rico
about 18 km off the river Papagaio (Lisbōa 1979:10). In 1969, signs
of their presence were noticed by a rubber-tapper and reported to
the missionaries at Utiariti (Holanda Pereira and Moura e Silva
1975:25). Iranxe at the mission post had already in 1953 informed
the missionaries about the possibility of encountering another part
of their group towards the north.

2.4.1.2.2 Iranxe

The Iranxe, constituting themselves out of those that fled the
massacre at the river Tapuru into the savannah as well as of those
that lived in other settlements at the time, had a completely
different fate than that of their relatives during this century.
Having stayed in the south, they were exposed to the Brazilian
frontier much earlier. Celso Iranxe states that at the times of
Rondón more than 500 Iranxe died in a measles epidemic. At that
time the Iranxe were still living on the right hand side of the river
Cravari.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} I believe that this again has to do with epistemological questions regarding the
transmission of knowledge. The appropriation of certain knowledge has to happen at
certain stages of one's life and needs to be mediated by certain people. Taking up the
practice of a ritual that one has only heard of in one's childhood and which is
reintroduced by somebody with whom Tsuno has a relationship of a father-in-law /
son-in-law, 70 years later, seems to make it impossible to appropriate the knowledge
of its performance.

\textsuperscript{52} See Pivetta (1993).
In 1909 a first visit of three Iranxe to the telegraphic post of Utiariti is recorded by the Rondón Commission (Moura e Silva 1957:144). They are said to have exchanged some tools upon which they returned to their settlement. In 1928 the anthropologist Max Schmidt went in the company of Paresi trying to encounter the Iranxe. While they did not succeed then, some months later some Paresi took three Iranxe who had come to Paresi territory to Utiariti where they were presented to Schmidt.

Since their establishment in the region, the Jesuit missionaries had conducted several unsuccessful expeditions to locate Iranxe settlements. Only in 1947 a group of rubber-tappers accompanied by Paresi Indians succeeded in doing so. Already in the following year fifteen Iranxe were taken to the mission post of Utiariti. Several visits to the post were made by them subsequently.

Upon having established a contact with the Iranxe, the Service for the Protection of the Indian ordered their transference to the SPI post ('Posto Tolosa') which had been set up especially for their administration close to the assumed Iranxe territory. In the following years the Iranxe moved between this post, their settlements, and the Jesuit and ISAMU's mission posts at Utiariti.

In 1950 rubber-tappers working in the area provoked further clashes with the Iranxe. While using several Iranxe as workforce the rubber-tappers abused the indigenous women. Apart from this, the Iranxe, like the Menkù, suffered intertribal aggression in the middle of this century. In 1954 they were attacked twice. While the first attack was conducted by Tapayuna, Rikbaktsa Indians were responsible for the second which left seventeen Iranxe dead. These various attacks pushed the Iranxe out of their traditional forest
various attacks pushed the Iranxe out of their traditional forest habitat into Paresi land. (Pivetta 1993:140) A map shall illustrate their movement.

Map no. 5

Map of situation at 1950
In search of help and protection from the various threats to the survival of their group, more and more Iranxe directed themselves to Utiariti (Holanda Pereira and Moura e Silva 1975:14). The Jesuits report that apart from three families that stayed in their settlements, all Iranxe were at this stage at Utiariti. In spite of this fact, the missionaries claim that ‘from this date onwards the native and spontaneous tribal life of the Iranxe stopped’ (Holanda Pereira and Moura e Silva, 1975:14, my translation).

At Utiariti, life was organised according to strictly conventional Catholic mission practices. (Indeed, in the past, the Jesuits considered their time at Utiariti to have been the most efficient period of missionary activity.) The Jesuit mission post was a large complex comprising of a church, a school, a farm, an infirmary, and houses for the indigenous peoples as well as for the missionaries. The week was divided in days of work (Mon. - Fri.), of fishing and hunting (Sat), and of church and rest (Sun). The day was structured in a similarly fixed way, with set times for prayer, meals, school and work. Apart from the national curriculum, the pupils were taught the Catholic catechism. In addition, and depending on gender, the Indians would learn sewing, cooking, hygiene and health-care (women); and agriculture, sugar production and technical subjects such as carpentry, construction and car mechanics (men). At its peak, about 300 indigenous people were residing at Utiariti. Apart from the Iranxe, these belonged mainly to the Iranxe, Kayabi, Apiaká, Rikbaktsa, Paresi, and Nambikwara. As in most traditional missionary enterprises, the missionaries concentrated on work with the youngsters. Upon contact with an indigenous group they would make a special effort to assemble the children at the mission post. To gain influence over these, they were competing with the respective elders and shamans. The residences at the post ensured that younger people were separated
from older ones, as well as the married from the unmarried. Cross-cultural marriage was promoted in order to weaken the bond to the respective culture.\textsuperscript{53}

While at the mission the indigenous labour force was used to build and extend the mission post as well as maintain its machinery. They were also responsible for food production under the instruction of the missionaries. Planting of rice, and the making of sugar were two important economic activities. Portuguese was the language to be spoken, while the use of indigenous languages was prohibited.

The closure of the mission post of Utiariti with a move of the indigenous groups of the post back to their original territories was a response to the changes brought about by the new approach to missionary work that was formulated by the Catholic Church on its Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and further developed by the Latin American Episcopate at its conference in Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979). When Utiariti was closed in 1969 the Iranxe leaving the mission post rejoined those members of their group who had never come and live at the mission post. Fission among the latter had led to the creation of three different settlements that were called Uaporé, Paredão, and Cravari. Of these, today, the two latter still exist.\textsuperscript{54} From then on, the missionaries attended to the group in their settlement. They were joined in 1971 by a Catholic sister who established herself in the Uaporé settlement in order to work among the group in the areas of sanitation, schooling and hygienic orientation. Additionally, volunteers of OPAN came to live with the Iranxe.

\textsuperscript{53} For the period of 1954 to 1974 the Jesuits report 18 marriages of Iranxe with members of other indigenous groups that they have met at Utiariti with a total offspring of 37 (Holanda Pereira and Moura e Silva: 1975:24).

\textsuperscript{54} The land on which the first was located was appropriated by a Brazilian landowner who established a big farm on its land.
Coinciding with the resettlement of the group, the Ministry of the Interior decreed the delimitation of the Iranxe territory in 1968.\textsuperscript{55} Up to this date the Iranxe still reside there. However, as the decreed delimitation of the territory does not coincide with their traditional habitat, they have, so far unsuccessfully, attempted to have the borders of their area revised.\textsuperscript{56} Their efforts are all the stronger, given that their present land is not very fertile and does not meet their economic needs.

Today, Iranxe interact with the surrounding national society in various ways, taking up occasional work on surrounding farms. In 1996 one Iranxe became a driver of the municipality of Brasnorte.

\textbf{2.4.1.3 Contact, reunion and growth (1971 - )}

The contact and missionary presence among the Iranxe gave them incentive to search together with the missionaries for possible relatives of their group. This cooperation led in 1971 to the establishment of the first contact with the Menkù. The group then consisted of twenty-three people living in one settlement. While three elders died in the first year of contact, having been infected with the ‘flu the rest of the group survived the exposure. A further map shall illustrate this.

\textsuperscript{55} Decree number 63,368 of the 8th of October 1968 released by the Ministry of the Interior and confirmed by FUNAI

\textsuperscript{56} See Pivetta and Bandeira (1993) and footnote above.
Map of situation in 1971, when Menkū were contacted, Utiariti was resolved, and indigenous groups connected to Utiariti returned to their territories.
The reunion of the two groups generated an interesting dynamic between them which has been formative for the recent history of both groups. Because the Menkù represent the traditional way of life, those Iranxe that had refused to go to Utiariti decided to move and live with the Menkù. Through intermarriage new kinship relations and marriage options were created. Other Iranxe came to live as well, but did not stay on. While in the beginning Iranxe came to visit the Menkù frequently this has decreased today due to various reasons. While there was a lot of excitement among both groups to have met again, those Iranxe who have not joined the Menkù often engage in a condescending discourse pertaining to the traditional mission enterprise and its integrationist strategies, pitying the Menkù as poor, retrograded, and, at times, stupid. Meanwhile, they enjoy the Menkù’s hospitality and use their facilities when needed.

Since contact, the Menkù have augmented significantly in number. Today they are about eighty people of which two-thirds are children, which represents an increase of its population encountered in 1971 by three. Over the years, only four adults died, while five babies did not manage to survive.

The invasion and burning of the Menkù settlement-of-contact in 1974 by timber-logging companies who owned the land adjoining to Menkù territory have led the Menkù to move their settlement some 20km away to where they are still today. A mud road connects their settlement with the surrounding farms with which they have by now established amicable relations.

Having a car, and two Menkù able to drive, they nowadays go to Brasnorte about once a week. The main reasons are to see the doctor and to buy or sell goods. When I was there, the Menkù had not
engaged in any paid labour. However, they did sell wood in order to open up a passage to the river Papagaio some 13km from their present settlement.

Map no. 7

Map of location of previous and present Menkū settlement within the demarcated area, following a map drawn by Zalaku.
Chapter 3

At the settlement

In this chapter I intend to give an insight into my encounter with the Menkū, the collection of data among them, as well as the settlement as it presented itself to me then. I will show to what extent the settlement is the basis for social relations, and the manner in which it allows for the incorporation of others on the basis of ritual activity. The subsequent two chapters will take the notion of incorporation further in that the following chapter deals with the preparation of food, the provision of which is the precondition for a harmonious integration of outsiders. Meanwhile, the chapter following onto that deals with the incorporation of non-human outsiders which - in part- also involves the offering of food, while at the same time preconditioning its production. Approaching the Menkū as an outsider myself, it will become clear that my integration into the group was largely based on the shared involvement in the production of food and people. I believe that also the missionaries' 'inculturation' was favoured by the Menkū because the former revealed their efforts to engage in all activities of the Menkū's productive life that are geared towards living well, and to support and mediate this quest to the non-indigenous outside. The non-hierarchical complementarity of the genders will reveal itself throughout this chapter. It is exemplified in the construction of the home of the nuclear family, which can realise its important function on the basis of the joint efforts of husband and wife. While a house is only built by a man, it can only be filled with life-sustaining hammocks when he has a spouse who

57 Most clearly the Menkū's incorporation of the missionaries expressed itself in the fact that they were offered marriage partners soon after contact. The missionary Lisbōa accepted and married Hokusi with whom he has now two children.
is responsible for their crafting. Regarding the reception of outsiders, such complementarity is further indicated by the fact that the arriving visitors are greeted by both husband and wife. We shall see how such complementarity realises itself in the incorporation of those outsiders who differ from the Menkū by not sharing the same temporal sphere (the dead) or that of culture (missionaries, settlers and other outsiders such as myself).

3.1 The beginning of the journey

3.1.1 My encounter with the Menkū

I first heard of the Menkū in 1989, when my husband, Tadeu Caldas, was commissioned to make a film about their agricultural practices. He himself was introduced to the group by Odenir Pinto de Oliveiro. The latter was in contact with the missionaries of CIMI who contacted the Menkū in 1971, one of whom was still living with them at the time the film was made. Interested in the story of the Menkū and their ‘resistance to change’ (Lisbôa 1979) as was claimed by the missionaries, I prepared my research proposal. Having visited the Menkū briefly in April 1993, I began my longer stay among them in October 1993 together with my daughter Charlotta, and at times with my husband. Apart from a small break at the end of the year, we stayed with them until April, when I had to leave for health reasons earlier than expected. My hope to give birth to my second child while in the field, and thus have a first hand chance to explore Menkū notions surrounding parturition, was disappointed. However, by then I had established a good contact with the missionaries whose unconventional aim was to strengthen the cultural identity of the Menkū, rather than exposing them to Christianity. Research into the theological basis of this approach to catholic mission, both in Brazil and Britain, followed. While acquiring an insight into the ideological framework of the missionaries’ work, I acquired a better understanding of their day-
to-day life among the Menkū through the study of the (unpublished) communal diary kept by them. The copy of the entries of the first 25 years since contact proved invaluable also to complement my ethnographic data. In particular, this is the case for the entries made by the missionary Elizabeth Amarante Rondón, who used surprising insight in her ethnographic descriptions of daily events. When I went back in 1996 for three months - then with my two daughters of two and three years - I intended to follow up many of the questions raised during my reading of the missionaries' diary. However, I discovered that the ethnographic knowledge about key questions held by the missionaries was less than expected. While this was in part due to them asking different questions than myself, it was also to be explained by the very practical orientation underlying their 'missionary' work. Their primary aim was to foster Menkū cultural and economic self sustainability, and not to study particular cultural traits in order to translate literally or metaphorically Christian concepts for the group. Driven by my own questions I then concentrated, during my second longer visit, on Menkū ethnohistory and kinship, areas that had not been studied at all until then. Elaborating upon these two aspects when writing up, other data seemed to fall into place. This was supported and complemented by a new reading of the diverse missionaries' publications about the Menkū and their relatives, the Iranxe. The work of Amarante (1983, 1994, 1999) and that of the Jesuit and anthropologist Pereira (1985) became especially relevant. It is for this reason that I cite their work throughout my thesis, thus allowing for more perspectives and voices reflecting upon Menkū values and living. Any perspective gains more substance through a multi-perspectival lens. Apart from describing aspects of Menkū culture that have not been explored profoundly before, I see my contribution to a better understating of this small central Brazilian group being that of wedding the various perspectives
with the Menkū discourse and discussions, and also with my own experiences of living with them. My children obliged me to live a Menkū's woman's life by remaining for the most time at the settlement involved in the production of food and people (my children). The interaction with the women while engaging in those activities are part of my best memories of my stay among them. Having children united us, and comments about them enlivened any conversation. Lastly, as I will show below, the fact that I had children convinced them that I was a real woman in spite of all the other evident differences between myself and them. This was, following Lévi-Strauss (1973:384) and Viveiros de Castro (1998:475) their 'test' of the degree of my human nature.

3.1.2 Collecting data

The data on which this thesis is based is to a large degree from my own observations and questions. When my Portuguese was not expressive enough of what I wanted to ask, my questions were at times translated by Amarante into Menkū. Yet, the Menkū do not talk a lot about things that are evident to them. Do's and do not's of daily life - and the language - are not items to be taught. Observation was the key here, and writing about it, I realised that I had noted a lot in the seemingly very trivial living of daily pursuits. Secondly, the missionaries' communal diary proved helpful for the historical facts and statistic overviews as well as important happenings such as births and deaths and visits by a neighbouring shaman. The diary furthermore allowed me to gather much data on the relationship of the missionaries with the Menkū, only some of which I will be able to explore in this thesis. The compilation of Iranxe myths (Pereira 1985) is used as a reference for portraying the wider context of certain issues. I am, however, aware of the limitations this usage implies, since to date no comparative work has been done of Menkū and Iranxe mythology. Its
use is thus preliminary and awaits a more detailed analysis once
the Menkū material is compiled. As mentioned above, I was not able
to gather any myths while among the Menkū on my part.\textsuperscript{58} I relied,
perhaps too much on Amarante's view, who always argued for there
being a difference between the Menkū and Iranxe myths. This
remains to be a fascinating theme for later investigation. My
inability to collect any myths was due to the fact that if myths are
told this happens predominantly at night, when everybody is in
their hammock. For both of my stays among the group, the Menkū
had built or allocated a house for us which was slightly apart from
theirs. Direct participation in a family's evening was thus
restricted, since I had to look after my own. Moreover, my
knowledge of Menkū is still shaky. My attempts to learn it were
discouraged by the Menkū themselves in that I unfortunately could
not convince them to teach me their language in a more systematic
way.

Lastly, the presence of my husband in the field proved very
helpful, since he could give me some insight into the male world as
it predominantly manifests itself as separate in the ritual complex
of the Yetá, as well as in the agricultural activities related to it.
Let us now have a look at the settlement itself as we found it in
1996.

\subsection*{3.1.3 Arriving at the Menkū settlement}
The settlement of the Menkū is reached by a truck's journey which
lasts from 4 to 40 hours depending on the season. The journey
starts in Brasnorte, a town of then 4000 inhabitants which was
founded in 1985. It passes several deforested areas, timber yards,
and cattle ranches, before reaching the signpost indicating the
beginning of the demarcated indigenous area which is under the
protection of FUNAI. As in other indigenous areas, access is

\textsuperscript{58} See Introduction, chapter 1 above.
conditioned upon permits issued by FUNAI, or possible - as in my case - through personal contact with the missionaries working among the Menkū. Once Menkū land has been reached, which was demarcated as such on the basis of the effort of the missionaries in 1978, dense forest giving shade and a diverse wildlife allows for a more comfortable journey.

Announcing itself from afar, the whole Menkū community awaited the truck we were arriving with for our second longer stay among them in April 1996 at the settlement square. As always when the truck arrives, the Menkū surrounded the truck to greet and investigate the arriving people. In our case, the size of my children as well as the boxes of food, utensils and clothing generated most comments. Smiles were exchanged, and quickly all items from the back of the truck were taken down and brought to the houses. We were allocated a small house where we quickly were helped to put up our hammocks in the most sensible way. Kataki, the chief's wife showed herself most concerned in this respect. After we had given her and her husband the presents we brought for the community (fishing hooks, glass beads, string etc.), we went around the houses complimenting everybody. The time was just sufficient to have a bath at the river before withdrawing into the house and sorting ourselves out for our first night after two years.

3.2 Outline of the settlement April 1996
In April 1996 the Menkū settlement was comprised of seventeen buildings enclosing the central square in a more less rectangular way.¹⁹ Twelve of the seventeen buildings provided dwellings for the various households. One of them was used by the missionaries while two were shared by two households respectively. Apart from that there was the dwelling of the spirits of the mythic ancestors, the house of the Yetá, situated to the north-west, approximately

¹⁹ See map and table on page 99.
150m away from the centre of the settlement. Located at the same distance from the centre, though towards the south-west, the Menkū have built a shelter where they nowadays bury their dead. On the south western edge of the square the Menkū have situated the shelter for the sugar cane mill. Close by, a path leads to a small river which yields small fish and is used for bathing and washing. Additionally, there was a toolshed adjacent to the house of the chief, which he vacated to provide a house for myself and my family during our last stay among the Menkū. The school and pharmacy were located at the north eastern corner of the square.

In the twenty-five years since contact the Menkū have altered the general outline of their settlement several times. Transformations took place in regard to its two main components, the buildings and the central square. Buildings have changed in form, use and number. Consequently, the central square also mutated in form while its use, apart from accommodating some additional activities, remained the same. In the past, as I was told by the Menkū, the settlement had a circular form creating a round central plaza at the middle of which the Menkū positioned the poles to support the men’s hammocks during the ritual of the Yetá. The chief’s house was the largest in the circle. From the back of it a path led to the house of the Yetá.

At the time of contact the Menkū settlement was comprised of three dwellings. The two houses accommodating the twenty-three people stood close to each other, though leaving enough space in between for ceremonial and non-ceremonial activity. The third house cannot be discerned from the aerial picture (Lisbôa 1979:10). Being the earthly dwelling of the ancestral spirits, the house of the Yetá was hidden among trees, and small in size. Shortly after contact, the Menkū changed their settlement to its present
Upon arriving there, the houses were erected in a similar fashion, producing a central square in their middle. Over the years, more houses were added since the families grew and Iranxe came to live with the Menkū. The space was enlarged until, in the early eighties, a new space was cleared to accommodate a large communal house. It was a new experience in terms of space, building method and living,\(^{61}\) for the central square was in front of the house and not enclosed by other dwellings. As this experience proved unsuccessful, families started to build small houses again towards the late 1980s, and one by one moved out of the big house. The three 'versions' I have seen between 1993 and 1996 have always conformed to this loose formation of houses arranged around the central square. New houses were erected in front, behind, at one or the other side of the old house. The poles that used to mark the square's centre and which are not relocated unless the whole settlement changes location, are therefore at times more central than at others. Transformations to the general outline of the settlement happen as a slow process as each family changes its dwelling in accordance to its own time, though once one family starts to relocate itself the others follow eventually.

Apart from the way people wanted to live together, changes to the traditional settlement pattern were also effected through the establishment of new buildings which became necessary with the introduction of new ideas and customs forthcoming from both Iranxe and missionaries. I refer here especially to the house for the

\[^{60}\] See chapter 2, above.

\[^{61}\] It was an initiative of the missionaries who, at the time, were not knowledgeable enough to foresee that such a change in residence would have far-reaching consequences in the material culture especially. Since then, for instance, wooden planks have been used to cover the side walls. The Menkū have never been accustomed to large longhouses but always preferred to live in rather small, enclosed units. For Menkū social relations to be enacted they need the outside of the house, and the complementarity that is generated between the inside and outside. The big communal house only consisted of compartments of each nuclear family which were, however, not separated from the others; nor was there an explicit social space surpassing the individual compartments.
two-way radio of the missionaries linking them with the administrative centre of the mission. This was later accommodated in one building, together with the school and the pharmacy, housing the introduced methods of education and health care. Furthermore, this relates to what is referred to as the 'cemetery', a building that was unnecessary in the past since the dead were buried in the house where they used to live. Besides the sugar cane press shelter - a necessary innovation for this introduced crop - there are chicken coops, a water tank, the truck-garage which is also a petrol store for truck and motor boat, and the chief's tools shed. The latter was required after the introduction of tools needing careful maintenance and corrosion-protection.

Traditionally, the Menkü changed the location of their settlements every few years. The need for change was usually brought about by the exhaustion of the gardens which are used for three to four years after clearing before secondary forest is allowed to grow back. Then another patch of primary forest is chosen, always leaving enough space in-between the cleared parts. The yearly allocation of new plots is continued until there are not enough left to serve all families. If the distance from the settlement to the gardens gets too far, some or all members of the group might decide to change the location of the settlement. Another reason for change can be the mere wish - as recently proposed by Zalaku - to have another settlement, or there is fissioning of the group due to conflict.\textsuperscript{62} The latter option, however, is only reported for the Iranxe. I suggest that the Menkü consisting of so few people could not afford to split.

Compared to former times the Menkü have resided at their

\textsuperscript{62} Instead of leaving on their own accord, however, the group has also been pushed out of their settlement several times during this and last century, as was pointed out earlier. See previous chapter on ethnohistory.
present day settlement for a very long time. Apart from being limited in their range of movement by the demarcation of their land, this process of sedenterisation is related to the increasing incorporation of Western goods. Materials used for houses, hose-pipes, and water-pumps providing access to water in the settlement square rather than at the river, the availability of a truck, the rearing of chickens, as well as the planting of a fruit orchard have all contributed to this process. As long as the conditions for good living can be met, no move will be made, since any change now means far more work than ever before. A road has to be cleared for the truck, new chicken houses have to be put up, and precious materials for houses that would last for a longer time would either have to be left behind or dismantled and transported to the new location with great labour.

While having benefits, such apparent sedentariness also creates ecological and economic problems. Ecologically, it is disadvantageous since long term clearings are created that return to forest with much more difficulty. Moreover, the pressure on the land surrounding the houses and fields increases. Economically, one of the problems is that to transport produce from gardens which are nowadays often more than 6km from the settlement, the truck (and hence fuel, etc.) is needed.63

3.3 Social spaces
As a place where humans live together, the settlement can be subdivided in three kinds of social spaces, each based on different living functions. Separate houses are spaces of the nuclear or extended family, often visited by those living in the other houses of the settlement. In contrast, the central square is the communal

space *per se*, as we shall see below.\(^{64}\) Meanwhile the house of the Yetá is exclusively for male initiates, due to the taboo the ritual complex of the Yetá is imbued with for women.

### 3.3.1 The individual house

The individual house represents the dwelling of a nuclear or, at times, extended family. In contrast to the settlement square, it is a place of separation and individualisation. Like the creation myth in which a big bellied human being stood at the exit of the rock from which all people emerged in mythical times, the house is the enclosure from which - with the help of pregnant women - people come forth to join the living. It is through the house that people come into the community at birth. Until the construction of a cemetery house, the deceased remained in the house, while the living left the house upon burying the dead where their hammock used to be. The living constructed a new house and could only use the space occupied by the old house once the latter collapsed. As the house brought forth a new member into the community, it also enveloped the dead - and thus was appropriated by them - until it lost its enclosing structure, collapsed, and buried the dead under its remains.\(^{65}\) Now, the *living* remain in their house, while the dead are all buried outside. All the dead who have died since the Menkú lived where they do now, are buried at the same place, a spot where, however, they never lived.\(^{66}\) Yet, they remain with the living in so far as their grave is located close to the settlement. The expulsion of the dead from their houses inverts the impermanent settlement pattern to a more permanent one. Where a death necessitated a move and reconstruction of a house, the living only move when their house starts to collapse. A new house was built

\(^{64}\) Taking into consideration that the main social space of a Tukanoan longhouse is in the front part of the large maloca, one could argue that the Menkú exteriorise their social space to the settlement square. See S.Hugh-Jones 1993:111.

\(^{65}\) Goldman ([1963] 1979:185) has pointed out that the similar practice to be found among the Cubeo emphasises the importance placed on the house itself.

\(^{66}\) This was another change influenced by the presence of missionaries.
close to the old one, benefiting in its construction from the material that is still worthwhile of the old house. Such change is also brought about by the fact that other more lasting materials are used, which prevent a quick collapse.

Compared to the outside which is permeated by the light of either sun or moon, the interior of the house is a rather dark place. Sunlight only enters through the small low entrance. The roof is tightly thatched while any holes in the wall are quickly sealed in order to maintain the requirements for the staging of certain rituals. In the myths sunlight, and light in general, is considered an ordering principle. Consequently, as the myth of the origin of the day tells us, it was the ideal location for the armadillo to hide the day with its daylight.\(^67\) The armadillo used a gourd to contain the daylight. With the passing of mythical times, the gourd came to be used as a receptacle for storing the potential of life, such as water, honey and seeds particularly. I therefore suggest that this receptacle can thus be seen as a recurrence of the image of the house. The inside is a space of darkness, which is only useful for the community once opened to light. Night-time provides the most prominent opportunity for 'mixing', for making love, or - in the myths especially - for incest or betrayal to take place covertly. As long as a door is shut, the family withdraws itself from community involvement and signals to the others to be left undisturbed. Shutting the door when going travelling signals the same unavailability, rather than the intention to protect a few personal belongings from others. The parents of a newborn child observing the couvade also stay inside the closed house, thus expressing their inaccessibility. The child only really joins the community when taken out of the house. By then it will have received a name, and parents can join in communal affairs again. Limitations are only set on the parents' diet and this remains a family affair and does

\(^{67}\) See Holanda Pereira, 1985.
not concern the community as a whole. Inverting the feature of the house as being the locus through which a person emerges into the community, the house at the same time represents the potential for withdrawing from it. Family members withdraw into the house to rest, find or prepare some food, do some handicrafts on a rainy day, and chat. Yet a house is not only an enclosure for people but also for their belongings which can be recognised as an extension of their personhood. Being a personal space, people can keep anything they do not want others to have access to. They cannot only hide themselves, but also goods and food. The negative evaluation of using the house in such a way is expressed in various myths, most poignantly however in the myth of the origin of the garden, in which the chief tries to hide his newly gleaned crops from all others. The Menkū actually hid their tools and other things in their houses, when hearing that Iranxe or members of the neighbouring Enauwene-Nawe were coming to visit, both of whom are known to help themselves to anything they like.

A second aspect of the house as an enclosed entity is that it gives shelter not only from others but also from nature, in the form of weather and animals, and the spirits which incorporate themselves in them at times. During the day one therefore only sees somebody working in the house when the weather is bad or when a task such as the finishing of a hammock is expected to take longer than a day. Most work shared with others is done next to the house, where the shade together with the light breeze provides comfortable working conditions. At the same time, a person signals their pleasure in sharing work with others, and this is soon

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68 Based on such understanding a person's belongings are also buried with it upon death, rather than inherited to descendants.

69 See annex.

70 Given this differentiation of space it should nevertheless be said that a location for work is chosen rather freely. The above considerations should not be understood as generalisations but only as tendencies for a certain behaviour. There are always exceptions.
reflected in other women or men coming to join the respective person.

3.3.1.1 Building a house

A normal house has a height of three to four metres. The roof is of a dihedral or polygon form, and used to reach down to the floor. Now that wooden planks are used for the walls, it comes down to about one and a half metres from the ground. It rests on wooden beams that form the highest points of the walls. These are made of carefully selected, smoothed tree trunks that are inserted deeply into the ground and covered with sape grass or palm leaves. A house consists of six upright beams, marking the four corners and the centre in the shorter sides. These are interconnected by smaller beams which are resting on the horizontal ones. Once these are tightened one branch after the other is attached with a vine to the highest beam and interwoven with the previous one. A beautiful pattern of interwoven leaves seen from the inside of the house is generated. But sape grass and palm leaves have in some cases been replaced with corrugated iron. Wooden planks replace sape grass walls, and the general affect is poorer insulation coupled with a reliance on expensive goods which are acquired from Brasnorte and are reused when a house becomes derelict. There are indications, however, of a growing dissatisfaction with iron roofs among the Menkū.

When on trips, the Menkū make a makeshift shelter with two branches of leaves. When they stay longer in a place, they rapidly construct a shelter of a dihedral form, often using the trees as supports for hammocks. In the settlement, they utilise the existing spaces between the rafters and the leaves to store small objects. They stick their arrows into the thatch. On the floor, close to the beams of the wall, they store the gourds, pots and other cutlery, as
well as small belongings. Clothing, increasingly used by the Menkũ, is kept in bags, baskets or wooden boxes.

3.3.1.2 Making a hammock

Every house is crisscrossed with hammocks that are tied to the main poles and beams supporting the walls and the roof. Hammocks not only fill most of a house, but also comprise the most significant and important feature therein. They are places for resting, chatting, eating, contemplating and all forms of human intimacy. The Menkũ make hammocks of tucum fibre and of cotton, preferring the latter because tucum fibres are harder, and more arduous to produce. This preference is expressed in a myth which tells the story of cotton being introduced to women by a tinamou bird (nothura maculosa): 71

‘A woman was making tucum thread for a hammock when she heard a tinamou bird singing. She became hungry for the bird’ flesh when the latter turned to her and said, “You wanted to eat me? Here I am, you can do so.” Seeing that the bird was of a human form she refused, saying that she thought it was a bird she had heard singing. Having asked what the woman was doing, the bird person said to her, “Look under my wings and see how I have embellishments of beautiful cotton and finely painted lines! . . . My mother also has this and we sleep in a hammock of cotton.” “So,” said the woman, “then bring some for me too! I want to make a hammock of cotton.” “Wait here,” replied the bird person, “I will bring some for you.” The tinamou bird did not delay and returned with a basket full of cotton and a spindle. The bird person taught the woman how to gin the cotton and spin it with the spindle. Then she made a hammock for the woman to show how it is done. At the end the woman said, “But I also want to have the seeds of the cotton to plant.” “Here it is, and you can keep it. You plant the seed, increase the cotton and always make hammocks with it. You must,

however, never throw the seeds away”, said the tinamou bird, and left.\textsuperscript{72}

Once the cotton is harvested, women spend many weeks cleaning, ginning, carding and spinning, and this is a time of great sociability.\textsuperscript{73} The spindle is made of a long, thin, straight stick that has been smoothed to an even roundness; to the bottom of which a round dried fruit of the buriti palm is fixed. The weight of this ball at the bottom of the stick ensures the spindle always to hang upright, while ensuring the spun thread not to come off. Spinning requires a delicate feel for the torsion of the thread, and skilful weaving and knotting are required to produce a distinctively beautiful and functional knot, ensuring a comfortable hammock and demonstrating the productive talents and experience of a woman.

\textbf{3.3.1.3 Whose house is it?}

Physically building a house is a man’s task. While he will discuss with his wife the approximate size, it is completely up to him to gather all the raw materials needed. When using the traditional method to cover the house this is a lengthy process. I remember passing a footpath behind Senzo’s house which was lined with endless bundles of sape grass he had prepared over the preceding days to be used for his house.\textsuperscript{74} In this respect, the amount of work going into the building of a house resemble that of producing a hammock, which is a product of female labour.

As much as anybody has the right over his or her own produce, the space of the individual house is the responsibility of the family that dwells in it. ‘Ownership’ is expressed in the processing and consumption of food within the family that take place here in a

\textsuperscript{72} Note the affinity between birds and women, as well as the recurrent theme that when asking for something, a person will receive abundantly from nature. See chapter 4, below and also Belaunde (1992).

\textsuperscript{73} Carding is facilitated by introduced utensils for this purpose.

\textsuperscript{74} In fact this sigh generated a feeling of sadness in me, when contrasting the enormous effort that went into its production with the increased use of alienated corrugated iron.
more private way. Although access for others is - with exception to phases of withdrawal necessitated for example by the observation of the couvade - generally not impeded, the more intimate relationships within the nuclear family is generated here, experiences of the day are shared, discussions take place and myths are told. Furthermore it is the prime locus of procreative activities, education and socialisation, that are shared between the male and female head of household.

Given the uxorilocal residence pattern, however, I believe it appropriate to argue that the family house has a female connotation. While gender guarantees a man’s affiliation with the house of the Yetá, it on the other hand predestines him to leave his parental house and immerse himself into his spouse’s home. Women stay in their mother’s house, albeit separating off at times a compartment for their own family by a wall, or by building their own house next to that of their mother’s or their sisters’ once their own family grows. Consequently, in 1996, Shiseki was sharing her house (house no. 10) with her two youngest children, Shui and her husband Yotenbu, as well as Shuo’u, who was still a bachelor then. Also Shiseki’s father, Tsuno, and her divorced brother Shunju inhabited a corner of the house. Next to them was Iwaya’s house, her oldest daughter, with seven of her nine children. The two oldest daughters built houses next to hers, while Shisaii, the next eldest daughter, still lived in her mother’s house with her husband and two children. Adjacent to the houses of Iwaya’s two older daughters, Kishisi and Hokusi, there was another house which was subdivided into two and housed the families of Shiseki’s other

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75 Such evaluation contrasts with discussions about the house as they were held in the early 1970s when the house was seen from the male point of view, effecting a stress of the affinal relationships in its constitution. (See for example Overing Kaplan, 1973; but also S. Hugh-Jones (1993) who stresses the affinal nature of the house by involving the women and affines in its construction of the roof especially.) While this remains one aspect of it, I suggest to stress the wife and her family through both processes of uxorilocal residence and marital relationships.
three daughters, Atarikii, Kishi and Kezusi. A bit further away
Shiseki's son Shakubu had built a house together with his parents-
in-law. It was slightly withdrawn from the settlement square, but
close enough to hear and partly see what was going on there. Back
on the square, the next house was that of Riaki and Jouki, who are
married to the chief's son Tsuyabu. The other side of the house was
inhabited by the chief Wasurebu and his wife Kataki. From this side
of the house, he as the chief still had closest access to the house
of the Yetá. The only other dwelling was that of the old Iranxe
couple, Zalakussi and Zosaki, who lived on their own, away from the
other houses. The following outline emerges:
Also note list of families and their children in annex (page 344), where residence of individual family members has been stated for 1996.
However, such female belonging to a house does not imply that women are exclusively bound to the realm of the house - which has elsewhere been described as the domain of the inside, the private and the domestic - while men are to be associated with the settlement square and the house of the Yetá only, elsewhere associated with the outside and the public.76 Men have as much ‘right’ over the domestic space, to live, move and work in it as their spouses. Meanwhile, the women use the central square freely to follow their productive activities. It is the ritual of the sacred Yetá which imbues the two spaces of house and central square with a gendered connotation, since during this ritual it is the women who remain enclosed in the individual family houses while the men remain on the square outside.77 There are other rituals that take place on the central square, that lift this gendered aspect. It will become clear that these rituals are less connected to economic activities, but instead relate to aspects regarding the community of people, their relationship with the dead and with visiting outsiders. These leads us to a consideration of the settlement square where most of these rituals are enacted.

3.3.2 The settlement plaza
The central square of the settlement has the quality of a reception hall, connecting the representatives of a spatial and temporal outside in a formal way with the 'inside', as well as integrating the individual coming forth from this 'inside' - which is at times represented by the separated individual, the house, the endogamous unit, and the realm of the living in general - into the wider community. As such, it is a space of transition and transformation

76 For these arguments see Ortner (1974), and Collier and Rosaldo (1981), as well as Overing (1986) who exposes their imposition of an underlying male bias to the study of non-Western cultures.
77 I shall come back to this ritual in chapter 5.
from a state of separateness to unitedness, from individuality to collectivity and vice versa. These transitory and transformative qualities realise themselves in rituals and games performed on the central square. As we shall see in the subsequent chapter, they are also actualised with regard to the preparation of food and material artifacts.

3.3.2.1 The central plaza as a space for the reception of the outside

In order to describe the reception of the outside and its representatives, it is important to distinguish between the various kinds of outsiders in relation to whom the Menkū as a group form an inside. It is helpful to distinguish these two conditions along three angles constituted on the basis of temporal, spatial, and cultural difference. The first allows for the distinction of living Menkū from their dead kinsfolk, as well as that between the present and primordial times when the creation of all benevolent and malevolent beings and the transformation of beings into processable materials took place. The second refers to spatial differentiation between inside and outside, turning relatives whilst living in another settlement into outsiders. The third angle relates to all those people and beings that form part of a completely different cultural universe. Pertaining to the third are the members of Western society, such as the missionaries and settlers.

For each of these various types of outsiders, the Menkū have established differing modes of receiving, transforming and integrating them into their community so that, at least in some respects they can take part within the Menkū's 'inside'. Transformation is effected by appealing to sameness rather than difference, much in the same way as what has been said for the
Piaroa who appeal to cognatic kinspeople when joining a new settlement. (Overing Kaplan 1975) Furthermore, the actual proximity allows for a reduction of difference on the basis of shared experience during the time of the visiting.

The reception of the outside constituted by temporal difference takes place first and foremost in the ritual of the Yetá. During this ritual spirits of the mythic ancestors manifest themselves to be able to interact and commune with those living in the earthly condition. In the ritual, these spiritual beings - accompanied and supported in their expression by male action - offer guidance which is acknowledged and integrated into the community by women as the prime interlocutors. The transformation and manifestation of the communing spirits is fulfilled when their integration into communal life can take place. Unless the interaction between these two sides is related to and applied to the Menkū's earthly condition it is meaningless. The central square provides the space for this dialectical relationship to emerge and to be reconfirmed at each performance of the ritual. At the same time, it provides the locus of earthly action in which the Menkū living their daily life aim at the realisation of ideals expressed in the ritual. Meanwhile, the participation of individually remembered, and more recently deceased kinsfolk is ensured through their being constantly remembered by the Menkū in the ceremony of ritual weeping.

3.3.2.1.1 Ritual Weeping

The smallest incident that might make somebody remember his dead father, spouse or any other relative can generate a session of ritual weeping. This is staged individually by either sex, and is tied

\[\text{In regard to gendered difference, McCallum (1989) argues that it is particularly in the ritual that the gendered roles associated with the inside and outside are enacted. For a description of the ritual of the Yetá, see chapter. 5, below where I will argue along similar lines.}\]
to one's status as a producing adult, since only such togetherness (in the form of sharing and receiving) merits this expression of loss, and only here - in some ways similar to Piro notions of memory - memory is created. The setting of this ritual is unpretentious and informal, not bound to any location, though often it is a particular location or activity that makes one remember the particular deceased. The ritual, which has occurred as much as 67 times in 1978, 37 times in 1987, and 46 times 1991, is an expression of the longing for the present ancestors, the memory of a still living history; it is expressed in a dolorous, chiding, intense weeping which can suddenly be heard emerging from somewhere in the settlement.

Longing for somebody who is dead is as normal as to care lovingly for a newborn baby. Yearning is human, an individual affair that can be expressed freely by anybody, without disturbing the life of the rest of the community. Nobody comments, although others might join in and start to lament the loss of their ancestors, which they often share with the initiator. Reasons are manifold, in fact as any incident can set off a memory, there is a lot of potential for such ritual weeping. Tsuno's tale furnishes an example: Tsuno had lost his wife in the first years after contact. Often, Tsuno fetched firewood for Amarante who cooked her own meals. After each time he unloaded and carefully arranged the firewood, he went straight into his hammock and started to weep. One day when asked why he did this he responded that every time he brought firewood he was reminded of his wife because he used to do the same for her.

R ritual weeping can take place anywhere since any incident at any moment and place might provoke the memory of dead kin.

75 I will come back to the notion of memory as used by Gow (1991), when dealing with the interaction with the dead in the ritual of the Yetá, below.
76 Personal communication Amarante.
However, most memories of people are activated and created in social interactions, and it is in the settlement that this is most intense. The settlement creates and provokes memories, and the latter can be seen in the greeting of spatially defined outsiders, as will be shown in the next section.

3.3.2.1.2 The ceremony of ritual greeting
When members of one settlement come to visit, the moment they arrive they are met on the central square by their hosts, men and women. There is a certain order as to who are to greet and respond to each other first. It is the chief and his wife who start off the ceremony with their equals of the visiting group. They are followed by the elders before everybody else joins in. In fact, the greeting consists of sharing memories the visiting person evokes, thus resembling the ritual weeping in content. Shared experiences are remembered and this in turn summons memories of the dead who had been part of those experiences. The common ancestors are revered and an immaterial space is created for them among those present. This is fully realised when offering food to the visitors and in performing the ritual of the Yetá with the visiting relatives once they have settled in. Those who normally live apart have reestablished their commonness and created an intimacy among themselves.

Only after completing the ceremony of ritual greeting, are the participants able to individualise themselves again by visiting relatives in the houses or by talking to another person exchanging information in a non-ritualised way. Outsiders not related to the Menkú converse with them and, at times, with the missionaries before they are taken into the house of either. Only in circumstances where familiarity with the outsider has been generated is that person going to be expected to visit the various

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This is also common for the Piaroa, personal communication Overing.
other households. An open invitation to come to the 'inside' of one's dwelling is rarely voiced in a direct form although it is met with interest and curiosity if visitors make their way to the individual households.

When staying longer, the visitors receive a space in the individual houses and this is allocated to them by the chief couple. To here they will also retreat in between the communal events. In part it turns into their home for the time of the visit.

The presence of related outsiders often instigates the performance of games, rituals, parties and collective food production. Often it is also the wish to carry out these activities that leads to the invitation of members of another settlement in the first place. At the same time it is at those times that potential marriage partners meet. In the following I shall describe two such activities, both of which can be understood as fostering social cohesion and integration of outsiders.

3.3.2.1.3 The head ball game
Tsuno mentioned the head ball game as a common entertainment of the Menkū once they had reestablished themselves after their separation from the rest of the group at the beginning of the century. In the myths, it is mentioned several times as a form of entertainment that could be enjoyed just by the group itself or with visiting groups from other settlements.

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82 See chapter 2, above.
83 Meneses and Lima (1974:29) point to the sexual connotation that can be ascribed to the movement of the ball in the myth of the origin of the moon. The game was staged by a woman who wanted to find out who had raped her. During the game, the ball first enters into the house of her incestuous brother in hiding. Upon the call of the player who went to fetch the ball there, he also joined the team only to be recognised by his sister. In a second deviation the ball then enters into her house, similar to a man moving into the house of his future spouse. She only returns the ball once she exposed the incestuous act of her brother to the whole community. See Holanda Pereira, 1985:83.
The head ball game is played with a ball made of the milk of a particular rubber tree (mangava). It is played by men while the women sit around the field to watch and cheer their teams.\textsuperscript{84} The field is established by sticking two arrows or stalks of wood into the ground. An imaginary line is created between these which separates the two teams. A bet is put forward by each team and is positioned at the bottom of the two sticks. Among other objects it can consist of groundnuts, cassava, pits of the pequi-fruit, maize cobs and tucum fibre. The man who has assembled one of the teams hurls the ball into play, while his rival team-leader may reject the first throw and recommence the game. The ball is then headed by the opposition and territorial points accrue as respective throws and headers advance a team. Failing to push a team back and regain one's field leads to the loss of a team's advantage.\textsuperscript{85} Meanwhile the women forming the audience cheer one or the other team. Lots of animation is created through their indirect participation.

The head ball game is staged irregularly. The missionaries report a range of from none to twelve games in any year, while I saw only one in 1993 and another in 1996. Reasons for the rather great variation can be seen in the fact that the game firstly involves a lot of food and bets, and secondly in that it is more enjoyable when played among many players. The large amount of food necessary for catering for the players and audience represented a burden for such a small group. Moreover, there were neither that many visits between a bigger group of Iranxe to the Menkū, nor the inverse. However, always when this happened, a game or the dance with the katētiri, to which I will turn next, or both seemed to have been staged. Indeed, Zalaku once mentioned to me that the dance of the katētiri, which involves many people, used

\textsuperscript{84}This game also seems to be known to the Nambikwara and the Enauwene-Nawe, both neighbours of the Menkū.

\textsuperscript{85} See also Holanda Pereira, 1985:65.
to be staged before a head ball game. The fact that this particular
dance has not been enacted by the Menkū before renewed contact
with the Iranxe in 1971 may suggest why there were also not many
head ball games. Those times that the head ball game was staged
among the Menkū after contact, it was done independently from the
katētiri.

3.3.2.1.4 The dance of the katētiri
This dance is accompanied by the playing of a small and a large
five-pan flute. The flutes are played by men but unlike the Yetá can
be seen by women and uninitiated children without any danger. Each
person paints their bodies with red paint (made from mixing and
pounding the seeds of annatto with water until a thick paste is
formed) and black charcoal powder. Patterns are created that vary
from person to person. At times men wear head-feather
adornments. Bow and arrow are held by the left hand, resting on
their left shoulder. The men stand side by side while dancing in a
circle. They are followed by one or several rows of women and
children who accompany the sounds of the flutes by humming. At
the centre of the circle the person who invited everybody to
celebrate and dance place large amounts of 'real' food, that is
meat, cassava bread and chicha. Even though the dance is
sometimes performed without food at the centre, it is the ideal to
have abundant food for maximum happiness. At a break or at the end
of the dance, some parts of this food will be distributed among the
community, while some will be offered by the men to the ancestral
spirits at a later stage.

Participation is not compulsory, and the missionaries report
that some people never take part. Tsuno, one of the elders, was one

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86 I do not know whether there is an archetypal pattern which is transformed by each individual in
a different way or whether there are different types of patterns. Furthermore I am unable to give
any details of the signification of the various patterns as they can be seen today.

87 See the notion of 'real food' as elaborated in the following chapter.
such, and the reason that suggests itself from his own words was that he never saw his parents dancing it after having fled the massacre at the river Tapuru. Therefore those younger than he had no chance of learning it either. Given, furthermore, the need for a large group of participants, the size of the Menkū after decimation during this century prohibited them from performing it had anybody known it well. When Zalaku came to live with the Menkū he soon reintroduced the ritual, in spite of the small size of the group and their ignorance of the dance's moments. He mentioned once that the ritual originally lasted for several days of consecutive dancing and feasting, inducing an exceptionally high communal morale.

When the indigenous groups adjoining Brasnorte were invited on the national day of the Indian in 1993 to present themselves, the Menkū and Iranxe cooperated and chose the head ball game and the katêtiri dance to display their own culture. Comparing the rituals in retrospect, they are the cultural manifestations that offer themselves most easily for an audience, being the most expressive, 'decorative', and freest of taboo. In contrast, the ritualised greeting ceremony, as well as the dramatised weeping and the public orations to which I will come back at a later stage, are related to particular circumstances or counterparts with whom or in memory of whom it is performed. The ritual of Yetá excludes itself on the basis of its taboo for women and children and the impossibility of carrying the means of the manifestation of the ancestral spirit's voices to be presented to an open space. Moreover, the head ball game and the katêtiri are the most suitable ceremonial activities which emerge in the context of incorporating those 'others' who share the same temporality, but are differentiated from the Menkū on the basis of their normally geographical (and cultural difference in the case of the residents of Brasnorte) distance. The incorporation of the recently deceased

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88 See chapter 1, above.
is actualised in ritualised weeping and greeting, while ancestors in general are enabled to participate in the productive life of the Menkū in the complex of the Yetá.

I shall now turn to the productive activities themselves that take place at the settlement and lastly enable the transformation of forest and garden produce into edible food. On the basis of that data, I will argue that the settlement is the space for human social living. The powerful vegetative forces of the forest are there eradicated to make space for human dwellings. Produce from the forest and garden are brought back to the settlement in order to be domesticated into assets that allow for good human life as tools or food.

The transformative aspect of the settlement is however, not only expressed in its being a place of transformation of goods, but also of people, as we shall see in the third part of the thesis. It is where a human being's transition into life (by birth) or out of life (by death) realises itself. This quality imbues the settlement, furthermore, with the capacity to structure the territory inhabited by the Menkū. While traces of cultivation indicate former inhabitation to the outside, the memory of those ancestors buried during the lifetime of a particular settlement and venerated there, structure their inhabited space in a more immaterial way.89

89 The future has to reveal how far these features of the settlement, and thus Menkū ethno-geography, remain the same given the changes to Menkū economy and way of living based on the exposure and selective incorporation of Western values and practices. For example, the structure of the above memory has to change if the camp does not move on and the dead are no longer buried in the houses, thus becoming part of the settlement, rather than individual houses. ‘Traces of cultivation’ will differ in response to any sedentary immobility, etc.
When dealing with Amazonian dietary habits and preferences we can recognise a distinction between food that constitutes a proper meal and that which does not. The significance of 'real food' for the production of people has been explored for the Piro by Gow (1991), who understand the consumption of 'real food' that is tied to particular forms of work and exchange as crucial for marking Piro identity. While eating 'real food' creates bonds of nurturing, and thus kinship, the consumption of 'fine food' which is linked to one's engagement in a system of habilitación establishes somebody as being 'civilised'. Viveiros de Castro (1998:479) has placed such explanation into the wider context of the universal symbolic importance of food and cooking regimes in Amazonia. He demonstrates that such diversity ranges from the mythological 'raw and the cooked' of Lévi-Strauss, to the Piro idea of difference from white people being based on the type of food being consumed; from the food avoidances which define 'groups of substance' in Central Brazil (Seeger 1980) to the basic classification of beings according to their eating habits (Baer 1994:88); from what he calls
the ‘ontological productivity of commensality’ to the omnipresence of cannibalism as the ‘predicative’ horizon of all relations with the other (Viveiros de Castro, 1993). In his argument about Amazonian perspectivism he suggests that these sets of habits and practices revolving around food constitute the body, which is the location from which Amazonian notions of identity and difference emerge (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 480). Food plays an important role in the continuous fabrication of the body, which is not thought of as consisting of some passively inherited substantial essence, but as based on an active process of making which finds its different expressions throughout Amazonia (Viveiro de Castro, ibid.).

As has been shown for the Cashinahua, the Piro and the AiroPai, the definition of real or proper meals is furthermore tightly linked to modes of production which involve both sexes. Proper food is that which is generated by the complementary agency of both men and women. Any ingredient eaten on its own, and thus representing only a man’s or a woman’s work, sickens the one who eats it. Individual health and social well-being is linked to eating a combination of foods resulting from both male and female productive efforts. This attitude also holds for the Menkū who consider a proper meal to consist of the combination of meat or fish, with cassava bread and a drink traditionally made of cassava or of pounded maize mixed with honey water. As I will show below, the cooperation of the sexes in the production of each of these reveals the complex interweaving of male and female agency. Meat and fish is hunted by men, though processed, divided and shared by women; the production of the crops of the garden involves both sexes, while their processing is solely administered by women.

The materials that go into the production of food, as well as the processing which renders them into good food pertain to three
distinct realms: the forest, the garden, and the settlement. While the forest supplies the human community with meat and fish and many materials for the production of utensils and food supplements such as wild fruit and insects, the garden is the realm of agricultural produced crops. At the settlement not only are most of the utensils made, but also the processing, mixing, distribution and consumption of the food takes place.

Abundant good food is, however, not only a sign of a multi-levelled cooperation of the sexes. It is preconditioned upon the maintenance of a good relationship with the non-humans who work in the different realms of forest, garden and settlement where food is produced. Abundance is preconditioned upon a proper relationship with the masters of the elements and animals, and the ancestors. Also the maintenance of these relationships is imbued with a gendered connotation. The emergence of the natural landscape is an example of the need for male-female complementarity on the level of the masters of the elements. Hunting, fishing and gathering in the forest exposes men to the dangerous spirits dwelling within it, with whom especially women are said to have maintained an ambivalent relationship in mythic times. Meanwhile, the garden is a key element in understanding the male-female interaction and complementarity on a ritual level. Its creation was related to the emergence of the secret and sacred Yetá, the sight of which is tabooed for women and uninitiated children. The protection and participation of the ancestors in human life is ensured through the staging of the ritual of the Yetá, in which both sexes take up an important and interdependent role. Finally, the settlement reveals a gender complementarity in the production of real food, since it is here that the conditions for its processing and consumption are created. The settlement is a place of transformation and socialisation, a process in which both men and women are equally
involved.

By dealing with each of these three realms it will thus be possible to describe in the following chapter the quality of the relationships the human beings have with all other beings who inhabit their universe of intentionality. While an outline of the notion of the forest will allow an insight into the malevolent agency of the asocial masters of the elements and animals, a depiction of the garden and the complex of the Yetá will reveal how the benevolent ancestors express their participation in human existence. The primary locus for human interaction with them is the ritual of the Yetá, which itself is preconditioned upon the abundant availability of 'real food'. Without such food, no ritual can be held. The description of the productive activities at the settlement will lead us to a consideration of social relations between humans, which will be the focus of the subsequent part of this thesis.

4.1 Providing the ingredients: hunting and gathering in the forest

The forest provides the Menkū with foods such as meat, fish, insects, wild fruits, and medicinal plants as well as with raw materials that go into the production of houses, utensils and tools. While meat and fish are ingredients for 'real food', insects, wild fruits, as well as certain garden produce is complementary to it. By themselves, these complements do not serve to represent a full meal. Utensils and tools produced from raw materials gathered in the forest, are constitutive of 'real food' in so far as they are needed for its processing. Meanwhile, the garden contributes the ingredients for bread and drink to the meal. We shall start by looking at the production of meat, which will be followed by a description of the utensils needed for the production and
processing of the other main ingredients.

Hunting is a completely male domain, though, as among the Piaroa (Overing 1988), much less highly evaluated among the Menkū than among many Amazonian groups such as, for instance, the Gê. This downplaying of successful hunting is, I believe, related to the fact that the Menkū are not a warrior group. Warfare is undertaken only as a means of defence, rather than an end in itself, unlike for instance among the Suyá where it is related to the initiation of boys, or among the Shavante, where it is a means for the stylised display of virility. (see Overing, 1988:83) Such evaluation of hunting is reflected in the myths’ elaboration of the constant availability of game (and other natural resources) for the one who looks for it. If game is easy to encounter, the efforts that go into its appropriation are less than if there was a mythical and/or actual scarcity of animals for human consumption. Nevertheless, it is not an easy undertaking, as is reflected in the advice of lnuli to a hunter. When a hunter’s wife complained about her husband not bringing back any game, the benevolent spirit lnuli residing in the celestial abode recommends him to tell his wife that he did not have success because it really is difficult to encounter game.91 For the Menkū, a lack of success does not indicate an inferiority in regard to male capabilities. Rather, the reasons for ‘failure’ are exteriorised and are beyond human control. Thus, discontent and tension within the marital couple is avoided, and differentiation - within the group as well as among men - on the basis of a competitive attitude to productive skills is circumvented.

Hunting is a potentiality at all times when a man leaves the settlement. Whether walking in the forest with his wife, or going to the garden, or travelling by truck to Brasnorte, a man will always look out for spoor and anything that moves. The readiness to

91 Holanda Pereira, 1985:77.
Hunt is a state of being which is associated with not being at the settlement (of Menkù or other people, such as Brasnorte). Hunting can be done by a man on his own, or together with others. The involvement of others is of particular importance when groups of animals have been spotted, or the type of animal hunted needs concerted action, such as digging out a group of armadillos. Apart from that, a hunting expedition can be coordinated with other men. This is usually done to respond to the wish to hold a ritual or celebration. Inversely, a successful hunt often causes a ritual to be held.

The myths elaborate on the rights of a hunter to his hunting trails as well as to the bounty of his hunt. However, an animal that is found dead in the forest is neither used nor touched, out of fear that it has been killed by a spirit and is poisoned. In order to serve the human community, an animal has to be killed by a human whose identity and agency in the killing of the prey have to be clearly discernible. The authenticity of the hunter's agency is a precondition for the transformation of the game into a safe asset; only then it can be introduced to the rounds of sharing that guarantee benevolent social relations.

Hunting is dependent upon a profound knowledge of animals, their preferred habitats and foods as well as the forest environment itself. Young boys might receive from their fathers a set of untipped arrows and a bow for playing. Through practice and the instruction of their fathers, they slowly learn to master identifying, locating, aiming, and shooting at animals. Otherwise, this knowledge is gained through the sharing of a man's experiences with other hunters. Upon the return of a successful hunt, the man will spent hours describing the details of his trip to

92 See my description of the ritual discourse which is often used for this purpose. See chapter 8, below.
the forest. Knowledge about the whereabouts of animals is shared, thus contrasting with the Piro (Gow 1991:101) who keep information about the location of animals to themselves. In making the knowledge available to whomsoever wants to pursue the game on another day, further devaluation of the individual hunting achievements is expressed. At the same time, the wider community is enabled to benefit from the ‘research’ done by the individual successful hunter. As well as that, the hunting of certain animals is also influenced by the seasons. For instance, the tapir which likes to eat cashew or pequi fruits can be hunted with more ease when these ripen. Knowledge of where such trees are, as well as of the stage of fruit maturity, is important in this respect. Hunting is also facilitated by the rains which make tracks more discernible. This coincides with the decrease in fishing activities which do not render much success then due to the high water level of the rivers, allowing fish to disperse. Yet the hot dry season is also advantageous for hunting since the animals are described as moving more slowly. The dry season, as we will see below, is also the time of clearing and burning. The brushwood cleared provides fewer hiding places for the game and permits the hunter to shoot more easily.

The Menkũ use bow and arrows as well as guns for hunting. While the manufacture of the former only involves relatively local resources, the shotgun with its ammunition relies on interaction with the non-indigenous outside. The type of animals aimed at will decide which weapon the hunter uses. As well as that, different types of arrows are used depending on the type of animal to be shot.

Menkũ hunting is facilitated at times by digging traps. These serve especially for catching bands of wild boar as well as paca
and peccaries. Once in the hole they are shot or beaten (especially armadillos) to death. The traps are made by digging a large hole in the ground that is then covered with branches and leaves.

At all times a hunter is accompanied by a dog if he has one. The bad treatment these received at the settlement seemed to me to contradict their potential of helping a hunter to succeed in locating game that has been shot. As Gow (1991:102) also showed for the Piro, pity for animals is not appropriate, since it is the degree of cleverness of the animals which decides upon the animal's fate. The animals which are shot or kept by humans are the ignorant ones. A similar attitude seems to prevail among the Menkü. 93

4.1.1 Game
The Menkü hunt a diversity of animals. These include paca, monkeys, peccaries, armadillos, tapirs, anteaters, and agouti. 94 In a list established by Amarante of all game eaten, the Menkü distinguish 28 different kinds of earthbound animals consumed. 95

Consumption of these animals is regulated by certain taboos which make them inedible for specific groups of the population. Some, such as the spider monkey and the land turtle, are only suitable for young girls. Others have to be avoided by children or newly married women (white-lipped peccary). Only old people are

93 Being only familiar with the at times rather intimate pet relationship characteristic of Western culture, this treatment was astonishing to me. There was clearly a different conception of the animal's 'soul' underlying such differing behaviour. For the difference in Western and Amerindian concepts about the relationship between souls of animal and humans, see Viveiros de Castro, 1998.

94 See list in annex 4.

95 According to an Iranxe myth, the identification of suitable animals for hunting took place at the very beginning of the emergence of the human being from the stone of mythic times. When returning from their first hunts in mythical times, the hunters showed caught game to an old man who had remained at the settlement. He named all of them and indicated the taboos of consumption applying to each of them, until all were covered including the birds. See Pereira, 1985:15.
supposed to consume meat of the great anteater, the zogue-zogue monkey as well as a type of spider monkey. Monkey, paca and peccary can be eaten by everybody, while tapir is only tabooed for pregnant women. Cattle raised on ranches adjoining Menkū territory are not imbued with particular restrictions.

The ambivalence of the consumption of certain animals is related to the complex of 'perspectivism' as explored by Viveiros de Castro (1998). Declaring humanity as the original condition of all human and non-human beings imbued with intentionality (and thus, a point of view, or a perspective), animals are 'ex-humans'. According to Viveiros de Castro (op.cit.472), 'the past humanity of animals is added to their present-day spirituality hidden by their visible form in order to produce that extended set of food restrictions or precautions which either declare inedible certain animals that were mythically co-substantial with humans, or demand their desubjectivization by shamanistic means before they can be consumed (neutralising the spirit, 'transubstantiating' [sic] the meat into plant food, semantically reducing it to other animals less proximate to humans), under the threat of illness, conceived of as a cannibal counter-predation undertaken by the spirit of the prey turned predator, in a lethal inversion of perspectives which transforms the human into animal.'

Although the diversity of Amerindian peoples challenges Viveiros de Castro's generalised applicability of the argument, I use it here as a framework within which to place the interaction between humans and other intentionalities. Menkū human integrity is affected by the agency and identity of animals, masters of the elements, and the deceased. In order to live well, and be not - or

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96 As for the Menkū the myths of many other Amerindian groups tell how animals lost the qualities inherited or retained by humans. See Brightman, 1993:40; Lévi-Strauss, 1985:14,190; Weiss, 1972:169-70.
only benevolently - affected, people have to be aware of the former’s intentions. Especially those animals and masters of the elements feature in Menkū myths with which a specific predatory or prey relationship exists. However, the imposition of the same categories, such as the notions of soul, clothing, and perspective, upon different kinds of beings remains problematic. For example, the Piaroa animals no longer have a ‘soul’, nor diseases to pass on to people (see Overing, 1985b). In regard to the Menkū, more research still has to be done in order to understand the food restrictions and the way these relate to the particular ‘soul’ ascribed to the animal in question, and to see whether this aspect conforms to Viveiros de Castro’s theory of perspectivism.

What can be said for now is that the Menkū strictly observe taboos on consumption in order to avoid any possible harm. At the same time no big deal is made of them in the form of conversations. Nobody expresses pity for themself or somebody else not being able to consume certain animals. Rather, the community knows about the status of each person as a matter-of-fact, and evidences it when sharing-out meat. Food-related taboos are thus an unquestioned reality, at least as far as their own people are concerned. Likewise, life-threatening advances of wild animals such as jaguars or anacondas on humans are always related to the predatory relationship which malevolent spirits of the forest maintain with humans. If a person has died, it is always due to the agency of such a spirit which took the body of a jaguar or another dangerous animal. In order to discover the identity of such spirits the shamanistic ability to see has to be used. Shamanistic transformational capacities are among the Menkū,

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97 I could imagine that extra attention is paid to them because of the small size of the group. The risk of losing somebody is too big to dare violating the taboo.
98 Meanwhile I was offered tapir meat even though they knew I was pregnant. I believe they left it up to me to decide what its consumption would do to me.
99 See also chapter 5, below.
however, not needed for the reduction of hunted animals to those less proximate to humans, nor for the transubstantiation of meat into plant food.

A predatory relationship with humans is ascribed to earth-bound animals, while, as we shall see below, birds and fish have a more benevolent connotation.

4.1.2 Fish
For the Menkù, fish play an important role in the individualisation of the human being by providing personal names for children to be born.¹⁰⁰ Those which gave names are also appreciated as providing ingredients for 'real food'. I have not noticed any food restrictions imposed on the consumption of fish. From what is known, the Menkù differentiate eight types of edible fish, which at the same time function as name givers in mythical times. These include the traira (robafo), pacu, piava, acará, matrinxà and janangueza.¹⁰¹ However, there are also a large number of consumed fish that have no equivalent in a personal name.¹⁰²

Compared to their neighbours, the Enauwenê-Nawê who have exceedingly elaborate traps, the Menkù do not have a very elaborated fishing culture. Fish is an important supplement to the diet, but the techniques applied are nevertheless simple. Fishing can be done throughout the whole year, although it is more efficient during the dry season, when the receding rivers have drawn fish into the river-bed. Rather than spreading out into the riverbanks, the fish are then concentrated in a rather small terrain.

In the same way as fish provided names for girls and boys in ¹⁰³ These names are, however, not used when referring to fish. See also chapter 7, below.
¹⁰¹ For extensive list see annex 4.2.
¹⁰² See annex 4.2.
mythical times, fishing is an activity that can be practised by both sexes. While one might see a man going off with his children to fish in a stream, women also go off together. Men can conduct collective fishing expeditions, but all the residents may leave the settlement to stay for a few days or even weeks at the river-bank or a lake in the forest. It is thus not an activity that is exclusive to one sex only. Yet the fishing methods are gender specific. While women fish by catching fish with their hands or with hooks, men use the gun, bow and arrow as well as fish poison.

4.1.3 Insects
The favourite insects eaten by the Menkū are maggots and ants, as well as the larvae of certain wasps. Bees are liked for their honey while their wax is used in the production of utensils.

4.1.3.1 Ants
In November 1993 I recorded the following event in my diary:

'There is excitement in the settlement. Kezusi comes to me asking me for a plastic bag, saying, "iča!". I am surprised. Then I hear that Senzo had seen flying ants. Women fetch their children, a little mug and take some water with them in a basket. Somebody asks me to come along. We walk swiftly until we come to a big ant nest. Ants are flying out. Very quickly the women and children wrap pieces of plastic around their feet and hands and pull out those crawling to the exit of the nest. They hastily put them in the mug of water for them to be incapable to fly. In less than an hour they have collected large amounts of ants which they carry back to the settlement. Remembering the location of ant nests from the previous year, they set off to see whether the ants there have also started to fly. The following days I receive many portions of ants, some of which I still have to process before eating them. The plucked ant bodies are roasted lightly until they get a crunchy texture. (Charlotta loves the alteration of our menu and eats the peanut-like creatures in handfuls.)'

Ants provide an important supplement to the diet at the beginning of the rainy season. The Menkū eat the female leaf-cutting ant, 'iti', as well as the male termite, 'aara'. It is mostly the women who go out to fetch them. Mythologically, ants have two
important aspects. As we will see below, they appear firstly as responsible for ensuring newly acquired crops to be shared among the whole community. Secondly, the gathering of ants has a pronuptial connotation. The myth of origin of the female leaf-cutting ant as it is told by the Iranxe not only elaborates on the theme of uxorilocality and brideservice, but also thematises the need for gendered division of labour and mutual acceptance of spaces of solitude. We can thus conclude that, like bees, ants are recognised as beings having an elaborate ‘social organisation’. Similar to honey in the past, ants are shared with other families and thus also reveal a socially integrative function on the level of daily life.

4.1.3.2 Maggots
As well as ants and bees, maggots or bamboo grubs are also an important addition to the dietary economy. They are appreciated for their buttery texture and, in nutritious terms, are welcomed in times when game is rare. Eight different types of maggots for consumption are distinguished, none of which have a name giving function.

These maggots dwell in the moist parts of rotting wood. While they develop on their own in the wilderness, and especially well during the rainy season, the Menkù also provoke their appearance by felling the particular types of trees the insects like. Now and then they go into the forest to check their growth. When they have reached a size of three to six centimetres, depending on the type, they wrap them in leaves and take them back to the settlement. As with honey and ants, the maggots are collected by men and processed by the wife. Often she shares them with other female heads of household. This is done before or after processing

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103 I will elaborate on this further in the next chapter.
104 See annex 4.3 for list.
Mythologically speaking, maggots are, as with ants, related to the marital union as well as to abundance. The abundance that is granted by nature is only limited by the (mythological) human being disregarding the requests forwarded by the masters of the animals. In the case of the ants, the mother did not manage and process the produce (ants) forthcoming from her son-in-law's brideservice properly. Her disrespect for his produce made him stop providing her. For the maggots, the wife of the master of the maggots did not respect his request not to watch what he was doing. Discovering his secret way of producing the maggots (spitting them out of his mouth), the husband stopped and flew away.

In most Iranxe myth where abundance features, it is related to a woman who engages with a master of the animals. Her marriage allows her (and her mother) to make claims on the husband for the provision of food. He responds to it according to his capacities, though only as long as she does not witness his process of production. The moment a woman disregards the condition put on her by her husband (or son-in-law), and witnesses it, the secret of the diverse productive powers is revealed. It needs a woman engaging in a marital relationship in order to start off the productive process. By marrying, she draws the various masters of the animal into the realm of sociality. The master's productive potential is made available to humanity only on the basis of such conjugal union involving two persons of opposite sex. However, the magic abundance generated by the productive powers of the masters of the animals is only maintained to the degree that the secret remains unknown to the women. I suggest that what has to be kept secret is the fact that parts of a (male) animal human are transformed into edible food, thus turning the consumption of so
produced food into an act that has cannibalistic features.\textsuperscript{105} As we will see below, a similar structure can be described for the relationship of women to the productive processes inherent in agriculture.

4.1.3.3 Bees, honey and wax

Like fish, bees and wasps have provided personal names for people, thus contributing to the individualisation of people, and indicating their similarity to human socialised living as it expresses itself in the settlement.\textsuperscript{106} Their mythological importance for the human community is reflected in the usage of bees’ products.\textsuperscript{107}

Honey is an asset that is available in abundance for the one who looks for it. It can only be collected successfully by somebody who is knowledgeable. Being a male task it is reserved for adult men. As bee nests are often attached to trees, the collection of honey mostly involves tree climbing. A fire is lit on a bunch of twigs attached to a stick. Once the insects have escaped or died and the fire has died down, the men take out the combs and gather the honey in gourds. The honey combs are melted to provide an important material for sealing, bonding and sticking of things such as 

\textsuperscript{105} For instance, when eating maggots one is actually consuming (mythical animal) human spit. See also Overing 1985b who describes a similar process for the Piaroa.
\textsuperscript{106} See chapter 7 on kinship, and section on names.
\textsuperscript{107} The Iranxe mention bees and wasps commonly in their mythology. These insects are in general associated with living socially and thus have a positive connotation. Meanwhile, wasps are evaluated in a more negative way, which is, I believe, due to the fact that their products are much less useful than those of bees. The man who had liberated the day from a gourd that was kept by a woman’s husband was protected from punishment with the help of wasps. The woman lied to her husband by saying that in the hole where he was looking for the offender, there was not the offender but a nest of wasps. Refraining from searching there saved the offender's life - and guaranteed permanent availability of daylight. Meanwhile, the enxu wasp (nectarina lecheguana) has been related to thunder. Thunder used to walk around in a nest of this wasp. Upon disregarding his advice that children should go inside the house when it starts thundering and raining, he killed two children who were still playing at the fire when he was walking about. Their potential to kill is furthermore expressed in a myth where three boys kill their grandmother by making her step into a wasps’ nest.
as threads, lids, feathers etc., while making utensils or artifacts. In the past, honey was a much desired source of sweet food. It is still collected nowadays. However, with the introduction of sugar cane the interest has ceased slightly, and not as much effort is put into the arduous collection of honey as in past times.

Bees' products are in general collected for use or consumption within the nuclear family. When collected abundantly, honey was also shared with others. Meanwhile, the wax always remains for predominant use of the man who fetched it, since it is mainly used for those tools and utensils made by men. Given the ascription of ownership of tools to the maker, such limited distribution is understandable.

4.1.4 Birds

The Menkû have an extensive knowledge of birds. While identifying more than 190 species, they were able to name sixty-three birds that are in one or another way used for domestic purposes. Only some of them are eaten, others are used for tools, such as arrows, while some are needed for adornment or kept as pets. The edible birds include the currassow, guan, piping guan, trumpeters, and macuco.

If not shot with a gun or an arrow, birds are caught with the help of traps made of string. The hunting of birds is a male affair, as much as the production of traps. Such a trap is made of a flexible yet resistant stick that is stuck in the ground and curved by fixing a string made out of tucum do campo to it. The string has a sliding knot at the point of the stick that is in the ground, and the

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108 However, only the combs of certain bees and wasps are used in tool making.
109 For a list of the bees that are differentiated, see annex 4.4.
110 See Amarante, 1999 for the whole list.
111 Apart from indigenous birds, the Menkû nowadays also consume chicken and ducks which they rear at the settlement.
bait is fixed to the loop by a shackle. When a bird or a small animal touches the bait, the sliding knot is loosened and, because of the flexibility of the stick, suspends the victim by the neck.\textsuperscript{112} As with the arrows and other utensils, although made by men, products produced by women go into their manufacture.\textsuperscript{113}

Once a bird is caught, the feathers valued for adornment are plucked and processed by men, while when a bird is killed for its meat plucking is done by the woman. If used for consumption, they are usually shared with the immediate and close kin.

Birds have a generally benevolent connotation as they are advocates for the human being, and its social order. In the myth of origin a small black vulture left the primordial rock residence and brought back a flower from his visit to the outside. While the sandpiper bird softened the stone with its saliva, only the beak of the woodpecker was strong enough to enlarge the hole through which the humans escaped. Having led the Menkū out of the stone, they are also in part responsible for enabling the people to live well out there. A song-thrush (mockingbird), who used to be a person and the chief of all people, provided humanity with the Yetā which, as we will see in the next chapter, are a precondition for engaging in agricultural activities. The tinamou bird brought cotton to the women and introduced them to the art of spinning and knotting cotton hammocks.

On the other hand, Iranxe myths show how birds help the human being to overcome life-threatening spirits they are revealed to. The wood owl as well as the parrot help the three orphans to kill Xinkaruli and Māmju’u who devoured entire settlements.\textsuperscript{114} The

\textsuperscript{112} See Holanda Pereira, 1985:130.
\textsuperscript{113} The same applies for the inverse, as we shall see below.
\textsuperscript{114} Holanda Pereira, 1985:134.
tayra (*tayra barbara*), toucan, kingfisher, curassow, tanager and macaw help the humans to kill Wanali who stole and ate their food. In fact, all these birds gained their red coloured patches from Wanali’s blood, thus expressing their mythological supremacy which expresses itself metaphorically in the fact that they are air bound rather than earthbound as the masters of the forest.\(^{115}\)

In several instances, birds are also revealed as guaranteeing the acceptance of certain taboos such as the avoidance of incest. Only the guan and the trumpeter *originate* from a woman that has offended the social order by having intercourse with her son-in-law.\(^{116}\) When her daughters kill her these birds emerge from her belly. Similarly, the sparrowhawk (*fumaceiro cinzento*) originated from the youngest of three sexually frustrated brothers who committed incest with their mother out of the desire to have intercourse. While the two older brothers are killed in the settlement of their subsequently acquired wives, he refuses to maintain his marriage - which would allow him to have proper access to female sex. He leaves their settlement by transforming into this type of sparrowhawk.\(^{117}\) The *Jandainha-do-mato* bird and the parakeet are creations of the forest spirit Mamsi who appropriates a child that is left unprotected by its parents. The black vulture eats the cadavers of the dead of a whole settlement that have been killed because a young woman belonging to the latter deceived her husband. She pretended interest in her husband while actually being after another young man.\(^{118}\) Several other birds disclose a woman’s unhappiness with the brideservice she is receiving from her son-in-law. The crested cariama, trumpeter, black vulture and toucan all offer her much food, saying that if she had given them her daughter they would always have provided this

\(^{115}\) Holanda Pereira, 1985:141.  
\(^{116}\) Ibid: 108.  
\(^{117}\) Ibid: 184.  
\(^{118}\) Ibid: 165.
for her. It is, however, in the end the daughter's actual husband himself who is able to provide most for her.\textsuperscript{119} Further connection between birds and helping is revealed in the myth of the urutau who forgot his song. With much patience he is reminded of his song by the curiango and encouraged to start singing it again, which he has done ever since.\textsuperscript{120}

4.1.5 Fruits

The Menkũ named twenty-seven fruits collected in the forest for consumption. Unlike some of the plants gathered for making tools and artifacts, the fruits have, in mythological terms, a less elaborated history of creation. This, I suggest, has to be related to the fact that they are only considered as a supplement and not as constituting real food. They do not undergo the socialising processes of processing and distribution. They are collected for immediate consumption, thus not many large amounts of wild fruits could be seen as they are mostly already eaten in the forest. Fruits introduced by missionaries and cultivated at the settlement are another valued addition to the dietary diversity. They are also picked and consumed individually, although it is mostly young children and adolescents who enjoy climbing trees and might harvest a whole basket-full for the family.\textsuperscript{121}

4.2 Gathering materials in the forest: utensils for the production of 'real food'

The forest provides the Menkũ with raw materials for baskets, bows and arrows, tools, ritual ornaments, hunting poisons, cosmetics, fuel resins, clay, glues, colour pigments, beverages, oils and spices. These material are all to be found in the primary and secondary forests and other ecosystems, such as savanna

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid:209.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid:222.
\textsuperscript{121} See Caldas, 1993:19.
patches and water-logged places.\textsuperscript{122} Apart from the bow and arrow, and plant materials used for adornment, the need for most other items was created with the emergence of the garden, since they serve the processing of crops. In the myth of the origin of the garden, to which I will return below, a son upon being buried by his mother instructed her to make a number of utensils. Upon lamenting the apparent loss of her son - whom she had buried upon his request and who during her absence transformed into the garden with all the traditional produce consumed by the Menkû - he said:\textsuperscript{123}

'Mother, do not cry! I will live here on my own and I will only die if you forget me, do not attend or care for me at the right time, and if you do not plant and clean me. You make a sieve, a pot, a mat of buriti leaves, and a wooden hoe. And say to father to make a basket, a grater, and to fetch a cutlass. In a few days, when you and father have finished all this, you come here with him and bring a basket.'

As we will see below, the garden and its care is an important complex to understand Menkû economic and ritual activities, as well as the involvement of both sexes in them. Indeed, conjugal cooperation preconditions the possibility to benefit from the garden produce. As much as the boy emerges from the couple's conjugality, the care (= parental nurturing) for his well-being, his management (= education) as well as the use and harvest of his produce (= benefit from his productive capacities) are tasks shared by the two sexes that constitute a couple involved in production and reproduction. This complementarity is already indicated in the instruction of the son to his mother, since utensils produced by both her and his father are equally relevant for the different stages of harvesting, carrying and processing the crops used for consumption. Taking into consideration that producer and user do not always coincide, as for instance in the case of the grater and

\textsuperscript{122} See ibid.

\textsuperscript{123} See 'The origin of the garden', in annex, and Holanda Pereira, 1985:26, and the following chapter 5, below.
the basket made by men for the exclusive or part usage of women, the interdependency of both sexes is evident. Yet, apart from the hammock which is not considered here, a woman does not make utensils for exclusive male usage.

As with the other activities that surround the production of real food, only those people get involved in it who head a household. In the same way as a child can only be born to a couple, the production of utensils used for hunting, gathering, as well as for gardening and the processing of crops is done by those who have a spouse (and children). Unmarried men or women might help their parents in either task but they are not obliged to do so. It is a spouse and children, or conjugality and its outcomes, that enable and make a man to engage in these productive activities.

4.2.1 Utensils produced by men

4.2.1.1 Bow and Arrow

For the bow, a yellow piuva plant (tecoma ochracea) growing at the borders of brushwood is cut and split in half. With the help of either a sharp incisor tooth of a rodent tied to a stick, or with a knife, the inside will be planed while leaving the natural curve on the outside. A thin string of tucum fibre - made by rolling the fibres together - is attached to both ends. The heated wax of the jati bee is used to rub on the string. Meanwhile, arrows are made of a thin bamboo (arthrostylidum sp.) which is heated in order to be straightened out. For the tip another type of bamboo is used. Three types of points are distinguished: a sharply pointed one that serves for fish and small game; an untipped one for hunting birds; and a bigger pointed one for large game. The use of poison into which the tips are inserted has been recorded, however I have never seen it being made.
The Menkù take great care in the manufacture and maintenance of their hunting gear. The acquisition of the right type of wood and bamboo might involve several days' walk. The bamboo for the arrows can only be collected at the beginning of the dry season. At times, the men stage an expedition solely to fetch large amounts of the bamboo needed.

Men also participate in the production of tools for the processing of crops by making baskets used by both men and women as the general means for transporting goods, and providing women with the grater used for the processing of cassava. The myth of the Iranxe furthermore constrains the father to make a cutlass. However, such a weapon is not in use among the Menkù. Rather, they work with a bush knife (machete), that was introduced by the missionaries. This serves both men and women for a number of tasks in agriculture and the domestic realm. Both Iranxe and Menkù myth neither mention the manufacture of the stone axe which was used until contact mainly for clearing. This, I believe, is to be explained out of the fact that in the myth the transformative forces of nature itself took over the clearing work. Only with the introduction of the sacred Yetá can this task be done in conjunction with the sacred instrument - and thus with the spirit forces - by the men themselves.

4.2.1.2 The grater
Traditionally, a grater was made from the adventitious roots of a certain palm tree (*iriartea ventricosa*) which had thorny tips. They also used the rugous cask of a particular tree (*itmarake’y’, botanical name unknown*). Today, however, this is replaced by a grater made of tin which has been perforated many times with a nail, causing the tin to bend upwards around the holes. The tin is nailed to a wooden plank with the reverse side facing upwards in
such a way that enough space is left in between.

4.2.1.3 The basket
Menkū baskets are made from bacava fibre. The long fibres are gathered high up in the trees and brought back in big bunches. Each fibre is up to two metres long and up to 5mm wide. Some are bent in the middle, while others are not. Around seven unbent fibres form the bottom of the basket, into which the bent ones are inserted. They are interwoven with each other\textsuperscript{124} and, ascending, more are inserted increasing the width of the basket. These are interconnected with horizontal fibres. An even pattern of hexagonal forms is created, corresponding to what Ribeiro (1987:318) and Roth (1924:141) have defined as a hexagonal reticular plait work. Three elements interpenetrate each other, two of them constituting the warp, being positioned diagonally, while the third element, the weft, is horizontal. At the top the basket is slightly wider than its main trunk. When the desired height is reached, the longer ends are bent and reinserted into the already woven pattern. While finishing it beautifully, it at the same time strengthens the edge of the basket. The inner bark of the embira tree (thymelaeeaceae family) is used for the strap. A piece, corresponding in length to the size of the basket and to the person who is to use it, is attached at the sides of the main body with a thin twisted rope made of the same fibre. For stability, a piece of wood is inserted at either side between the carrying belt and the basket.

The Menkū distinguish three baskets used:\textsuperscript{125} Firstly, the ‘pyri,’ used for all kinds of things, including the transport of firewood, hammock, game, and harvested produce; secondly, the ‘pytopy,’ a smaller basket used for smaller items; thirdly, the ‘mykjeta,’ a basket exclusively used for storing the dough of

\textsuperscript{124} ‘Ali’ is the Menkū word for weaving, making baskets and sieves.
\textsuperscript{125} See Amarante, 1999:8.
cassava. While I was among the Menkù I could not recognise differences in baskets other than in size. Cassava dough was generally kept on top of the fireplace rather than in a basket. It is known that the Menkù also used to soak the dough generated from the pequi fruit. I have, however, not seen this being practised and therefore am unable to say whether a different type of basket is used for this purpose. The Iranxe Zalaku made a smaller basket which had a much tighter woof. While children liked to play with it, I did not see it being used productively.

4.2.2 Utensils produced by women

4.2.2.1 The sieve
The sieve commonly used among the Menkù ranges from 40cm to 80cm in diameter. It is made from bacava fibre (oenocarpus bacaba) which is split into strings of a width of approximately 3mm. A part of a bending vine is formed into a ring and the ends are fixed together with a rope of tucum fibre. Bacava fibres are inserted at a small distance from each other into the vine and the rope, thus starting off the weft. The warp is interwoven at an angle, itself also inserted at the edge of the sieve between the vine and the tucum fibre. The firm texture generated by the fibre and the type of weaving help to resist the pressure exerted when expressing the prussic acid of the cassava; its slightly rounded form facilitates the work.

4.2.2.2 Pots
The Menkù used to make pots of clay found in certain areas of their territory. The ashes of a particular tree bark ('kapyixake'y', botanical name unknown) were mixed with clay in order to provoke a neutralisation of the extreme plasticity of clay.126 Smaller and

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126 See also Lima, 1987:175.
larger pots were formed and their surface was smoothened with the leaf of a plant belonging to the laurel family (*laureácea*). Apart from this, they were not further decorated.\textsuperscript{127}

With the demarcation of their land, however, the Menkū lost access to good clay, thus rendering the pots they made into easily breakable items. The introduced aluminium pots have proven to be much more resistant and were thus quickly appropriated and integrated into Menkū culture. They represent a much valued present as well as being an item they acquire in exchange for handicrafts produced for settlers or visitors. Women will trade their newly made necklaces or hammocks for this purpose in Brasnorte. This seems to follow the general pattern that the producer owns and controls their craft and changes it into items that belong to his or her gendered world. Concurrently, Tsuyabu acquired a rifle for a bow and arrows made by him. While he sold necklaces made by his daughter he refused to buy anything for her in her place. Since they were her necklaces, the money is hers, and therefore also the choice over what she will do with the money.

4.2.2.3 Mats

During my time among the Menkū, I saw nobody making a mat of buriti (*maritia vinifera*) leaves. I was told that nowadays only Iranxe make these mats to sit on and work on. Those that I have seen in use by Butashi (Iranxe), mother-in-law of the Menkū Shakubu, were approximately 1.5 metres by 1 metre. The buriti leaves were simply interwoven, thus producing neither patterns nor any differentiation of colour or shade. The edge was slightly reinforced by turning over those fibres that were too long and integrating them back into the already woven part.

\textsuperscript{127} The simplicity equals that recorded for the neighbouring Paresi. See Lima, 1987:207.
4.2.2.4 Wooden hoe
From what my husband and I have seen and heard while in the field, the Menkú did not use wooden hoes. They also do not seem to appear in the vocabulary related to Menkú alimentation compiled by Amarante (1999). Instead, they work with digging sticks that they insert into the ground to make a space for a seed, or to loosen up the soil so that they pull out roots. These sticks, however, are not specially made. They are found and used the way they are.

4.3 Cultivating crops in the garden
In this section I shall give a brief overview of the agricultural crops cultivated by the Menkú, as well as the way these are spread over the year. The cosmological and ritual context within which Menkú agricultural practices and their dependency upon the interaction with the dead by means of the sacred Yetá are situated, shall be dealt with at a later stage.

A Menkú household has several gardens, some of which are near to the settlement, while others are further away. Towards the end of April, the men start to clear new gardens for planting, using slash-and-burn techniques. For slashing, the Menkú traditionally used stone axes which have nowadays been replaced by metal ones. Brush is cleared simply using a stick. Once the round patches have been cleared, they burn the cut vegetation. This is done very carefully so to avoid the fire catching areas that were not meant for clearing. Therefore it often involves several men who manage the fire from different sides. Although all the vegetation is burned, some large trees remain standing while felled tree trunks that did not burn completely cover the ground, and are later used as firewood. By the end of July, the burning of the different gardens is

128 Metal axes and bush knives were among the presents left by the missionaries when trying to establish contact with the group. In exchange, they received a stone axe on their next visit to the area.
usually finished.

The following three months represent the height of the planting season, although as late as December one might still see somebody planting or replanting crops for those that did not germinate after the earlier attempt. Cassava is planted from August through to December, maize from August to November. With the beginnings of the rains, September and October see the most intensive activity, including the planting of hard maize, beans, pumpkin and cotton in September, with the planting of rice, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, banana, gourd and melon in October. Rice is sown until December, while pineapple seedlings are dug in the ground as late as November.

Depending on the crop, secondary or primary land is cleared for cultivation. Forest land is given over to maize, while secondary forest is cleared for planting cassava. Cropping can be done continuously for a maximum of three years before allowing the forest to fully regenerate. In both maize and cassava gardens, intercropping with secondary crops takes place. The stems and trunks of trees left standing after burning are used to grow yams and climbing beans. In the second year after burning not only annuals are planted but also perennials like tree cotton, annatto and certain types of palm trees (see Caldas, 1993:9).

The growth process is observed attentively. Often the gardens are visited collectively to see whether there are any problems with pests. Much anticipation or disappointment is generated by what is seen. Knowledge is exchanged, problems are discussed and possibly regenerative actions planned where needed. There is a great diversity among the plots which is created by the particular knowledge, preferences, needs and seed availability of each owner.
In the weeks following the end of the planting season, food is often short. While the old crops are slowly used up, the new ones are not yet ripe. Towards the end of December, the Menkū sometimes run out of cassava and sugar cane. Children's craving for the non-alcoholic drink made of maize and sugar cane juice can only be soothed by taking up the traditional activity of collecting honey that is mixed with water. The children's complaint is heightened by the growing anticipation with which the Menkū await the ripening of first crops. Great happiness is generated when somebody comes from their garden and brings back a fresh cob of green maize. Life can continue, children and ancestors can be fed, rituals and feasts can be held again.

Meanwhile, the hard maize used for chicha matures a little bit later. Towards the end of February things begin to change. This is announced by the availability of more fruit which precedes the ripening of other crops planted in the garden. Brazil nuts fall from the trees, bananas begin to ripen and the first rice can be cut. Soon after, pequi fruits and guava are mature. By April, the Menkū enjoy water melons, papaya, more bananas, guava and Brazil nuts as well as lemons. While the gardens have been visited regularly since the planting season for weeding, harvesting only begins there now with sweet potatoes, large groundnuts, broad beans and kidney beans. By May, yam roots are also dug up. Now food is abundantly available. The happiness which is created by this reflects itself in a relaxed atmosphere in the settlement. Many trips are made to the various gardens to collect the food. Men get very busy in making baskets from strings of buriti-palm to carry harvested produce back to the settlement. The women invite each other to come along to their gardens to collect. The vegetables are plentiful until about June.
While sweet potatoes and yam are harvested for a longer period, beans are usually finished by then. Before the end of the harvesting season, both men and women prepare for the planting of the next season. Seeds of the different cultigens are separated and the selected ones are kept in gourds which are closed with a maize cob and sealed with wax.

Once the clearing, planting and harvesting has been done with the company and cooperation of the Yetá, the agricultural activities become a matter for the individual family which has full autonomy over the way their garden is cultivated and has responsibility for the outcome of their work. At times the couple work together, at other times the wife will go to the garden accompanied by her younger children. The rights over the produce are with the individual family cultivating the garden. Most of what is produced is for the consumption within that household. While a part of what has been collected by the invited guests in the garden of the hostess is for the latter, the rest of what has been harvested by the former stays with them to be consumed by their families.

Menkú agriculture is gender specific insofar as the sacred singing of the ancestral spirits involved. Only the clearing of the garden is an exclusively male activity. Meanwhile, planting, weeding and harvesting is done as much by women as by men, once the latter have carried out the initiation of each activity and for each main crop with the involvement of the Yetá. ‘Main crops’ define themselves out of their relevance for the constitution of real food, that is maize, cassava, and - since contact - also sugar cane. For each of these crops, forest is cleared. All other crops such as beans, yam, sweet potatoes and groundnuts grow in-between or along these plants, and especially in the maize garden.
4.4 Processing gathered foodstuffs into real food at the settlement

Apart from gathered wild fruits, all other food acquired in the forest or garden is processed by the use of fire. Traditionally, Menkū used annatto wood for starting a fire by friction. Nowadays, matches are very common, although they are not used that much since a fire is mostly lit by taking some from another hearth where the fire has been kept going. Since it is in frequent use, it is rare for a fire to go out completely. Different types of wood are used for different purposes, depending on whether a strong fire is desired, or a slow burning one with even heat, etc. The wood is usually collected in newly cleared gardens, since they bear different types of wood in the most easily accessible way. Firewood is collected by men and women alike; however, if men are around, they will do it predominantly. Meanwhile, the use of fire for the processing of food by cooking, baking or grilling is generally a female chore, though men often participate in the processing when a large animal is being roasted.

At present, the processing of cassava, sugar cane and maize represent the most prominent activities in the realm of food production carried out at the settlement. Given that the Menkū notion of 'real food' encompasses a combination of meat or fish with cassava bread and chicha, these three ingredients are essential for being fed properly. Contrary to other crops, they are also available most plentifully throughout the whole year. Let us now turn to the processing of the elements constituting real food.

129 See Amarante, 1999:8.
130 Although there might be a lack of cassava, dried maize and sugar cane at the height of the rainy season (Dec/Jan).
4.4.1 Meat
Apart from one animal, the paca, which is boiled, all game is prepared by grilling. Depending on the size and the type of game, it is divided beforehand or it is grilled as a whole by the couple who received the game from the hunter. Again varying with the size of the animal, a larger or smaller grill is built and a fire is lit. The grilling process is controlled carefully. The game is turned from time to time and the dripping fat collected. The roasting of undivided game is a very social event since many people come to sit together around the fire for hours. It is a time for chatting, hand-crafting, mending, and just being together. At the same time, other food such as beans or tubers is prepared in the ashes of the fire and eaten with those around in an informal way. In cases of very large game such as the tapir, the game is divided where it has been killed. Apart from the liver, which is grilled and eaten on the spot, the meat is taken back to the settlement by whoever got some. When large amounts of blood are collected during the partitioning, it can be processed too, though this is only done by the Iranxe who boil the intestines that have been washed well and fill them with blood.

Fish is generally processed by grilling. Each pair of fish is wrapped in leaves and fixed with a piece of string, and once grilled can be conserved for a few days before it is eaten either back at the settlement or on a trip.

With a decrease in the availability of game and fish, it is not processed on a daily basis anymore. The Menkū comment a lot on a lack of meat and try to counteract it with fish or roasted maggots. At the beginning of the rainy season also roasted ants are favoured instead of meat. Both ants and maggots are subject to the same circles of sharing as game and fish.
When none of the above is available, a woman might decide to kill a chicken or duck. Poultry has been raised for these instances and for the eggs for about two decades. They were introduced by the missionaries. When found, the eggs are eaten boiled. In contrast to game and fish, chickens tend to pertain more to the female realm of production, roaming freely around the settlement. However, it is the men who build their houses and fences in order to protect them from raids of predatory animals venturing into the settlement. Being produced by the individual household, the meat and eggs of poultry undergo no extended rounds of sharing. They tend to serve the immediate needs of the nuclear family. At times, some will be given to other close kin.

4.4.2 Cassava bread

A female head of household might involve herself up to three times weekly in processing bitter cassava. Often she is joined by other women who have to do the same. Her main assistants are her daughters although at times also her husband might help her a little. She goes off to her cassava garden with her youngest child in the sling, her basket and bush knife. Mature plants that promise large tubers are selected. The whole root is pulled out of the ground, the tubers separated and several cuttings of the stem are replanted by sticking them straight back into the soft soil in the place of the tubers. If one woman has already harvested enough to fill her basket to the rim while others are still collecting more, she might start to peel her tubers on the spot, rather than helping them to finish filling their baskets. Otherwise this is done at the settlement where the rest of the processing takes place.

The peeled tubers are put into a large bowl filled with water

\[^{31}\text{Only I was helped occasionally, since I was extremely slow compared to them.}\]
where they are washed. The bowls which are used today are made of aluminium, hold enough water (collected from the water tank located at one corner of the settlement) to serve for washing the tubers at the settlement, rather than at the stream. The tubers are then grated with the cassava grater. The collected pulp is kneaded on a sieve whereby the poisonous prussic acid is extracted and gathered into a bowl. Round balls are formed from the pulp and are left to dry for a few days, either in the sun or over the fireplace. If the family is about to run out of dough, quicker drying is achieved by placing the balls overnight on the cleaned and evened soil which absorbs the moisture quickly. Once dried to a certain stage, they can be used for the preparation of cassava bread. The poisonous juice used to be processed into a drink which was consumed on a daily basis. Nowadays, the extracted juice is mostly thrown away, since the preparation of cassava chicha is a lengthy process, involving many hours of attended slow cooking. Chicha made of sugar cane and pounded maize is prepared quicker and its taste is preferred to the traditional cassava drink.

While the preparation of the cassava dough is often done by several women at once, sitting together and chatting while working, further processing is done on a more individual basis. The reasons for this are on the one hand the differing needs and times when family members want to have cassava bread. On the other hand each family prepares its food on its own hearth, and, as these are all located apart from each other, joint preparation might well happen in respect to time but not space. To make cassava bread, the Menkür break off a piece of dough, crumble it up and mix it with a little bit of water. The mixture is pressed into a saucepan (formerly a flat round clay plate) and turned around once it has heated up and started to stick together. I have not noticed any competitive tendencies in its production, as for instance described
by Belaunde for the AiroPai. Making a Menkû cassava bread is an essential female chore, though it is not used as a measure for female maturity.  

Iranxe living with the Menkû have introduced sweet cassava which they process by boiling or frying. During my time among the Menkû it was very rare to see Menkû eating sweet cassava. Other types of cassava mentioned by the Menkû (Amarante 1999) are not as commonly used as the bitter cassava. Indeed, I did not notice any use of it during my stay among the group.

4.4.3 The Drink
The favourite drink among the Menkû nowadays is a non-alcoholic or only slightly fermented chicha made of pounded maize and sugar cane juice.  

The sugar cane stalks are stripped of their leaves and bundled in bunches of thirty to forty of approximately two metres in length. The heavy bundles are carried back to the settlement either individually or on the truck and deposited at the hut of the sugar cane press. The press is operated by at least two people, one of whom turns the large wooden beam in a circle, while the other sticks the sugar cane stalks between the rotating wheels. Often, however, one will find several people helping, while others are sitting around the mill assisting and watching their little children. Small pieces of sugar cane are given to the children which they suck with great pleasure. Depending on whether chicha is produced for a festival or for individual family consumption only, more or less people help in its production. Husbands and unmarried sons join in. As well as that, members of different families might participate in the operation of the press. When, however, the drink

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132 This corresponds to the downplay of evaluating and comparing the men's hunting skills. I suggest that the size of the group does not allow for too much differentiation, neither among men nor among women.
133 As mentioned above, the Menkû used to prepare a cassava drink before the introduction of sugar cane, or just mix honey with water.
is produced for individual household consumption, old people such as Zosaki and Zalakussi (Iranxe) are worst off, since they cannot rely on anybody's help. At times, some younger girls or the missionaries might come to help them.

Meanwhile, seeds of mature dried maize are separated from the cob, leaving some seeds for planting and some for the chickens to eat. The selected seeds are pounded in a large wooden mortar. If not done by the mother herself, usually an older daughter of the household together with another girlfriend or sister will do this. The two face each other with the mortar at their feet between them, and alternately let the pillar drop into the mortar. The regularity of the even pounding sounds invokes an impression of apparent ease. As when operating the sugar cane press, such cooperation always generates fun and laughter. Quickly the maize meal is finished and added to the freshly pressed and strained sugar cane juice. The mixture is brought to boiling. Once the maize starch has thickened the juice, the drink has reached its preferred stage. Chicha, kept in large aluminium pots, and cassava bread are always to be found in a household.

4.4.4 Seasonal supplements
Depending on the season, the Menkü complement their basic meal by a variety of fruits and vegetables. Indigenous and introduced types of bananas, pineapples, passion fruit, acerola, cashew, as well as such introduced fruits as oranges, lemons, guava, mango, are among the many fruits eaten fresh, unprocessed, and in large amounts when available. Vegetables and other starchy foods include maize cakes and rice, the latter being introduced by the Iranxe soon after contact. While maize cakes are baked in wrapped leaves in the ashes, rice is simply boiled. The missionaries furthermore recorded the preparation of a bread made of the pequi fruits, though I have
never eaten it while with the Menkū. Apart from that, the Menkū like to eat just-ripened green maize, beans, yam and sweet potatoes, as well as groundnuts. While they bake the maize, tubers and beans, they usually pound the groundnuts and mix them into the cassava bread dough or together with other starchy food. The Iranxe have furthermore introduced the production of sugar, which is an arduous process since it involves large amounts of sugar cane juice and continuous boiling over several days to allow the water to evaporate. Those who help in the processing of sugar are usually given a share once it is finished, though the Menkū have often complained that Butashi (an Iranxe) does not share generously.
This chapter will try to give an insight into the 'perspectival quality' (Århem, 1993) of Menkū thought, and show how this quality determines the Menkū relationship with the non-human world in the production of real food. Following Århem, Viveiros de Castro (1998:469) has defined the Amerindian 'perspectival quality' to relate to 'the conception, common to many peoples of the continent, according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects of persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view'. Apart from the interaction and cooperation between humans, Menkū cosmology stresses two kinds of relationships that are of primary importance in the production of good food and people. These are with the masters of the elements and animals, dwelling mainly in the forest, and with the ancestors or the dead residing in a celestial abode if not coming to life on earth during a ritual or for visiting. The relationship with the former is predominantly explored in myth, where according to Viveiros de Castro (op.cit.:483) 'every species of being appears to others as it appears to itself (as human) while acting as if already showing its distinctive and definitive nature (as animal, plant or spirit)'. Certain spirits challenge, however, daily life as lived by human humans today at the settlement, by being the primary cause of death. Shamanistic perceptive capacities are necessary to discern the predator's identity and expel their agency from the realm of human society. This has been the prime reason for calling one of the shamans of the neighbouring Nambikwara to the
Meanwhile, the relationship with the dead, as we will see below, materialises itself in the garden. It is furthermore enacted in the ritual of the Yetá as well as in the remembrance of the dead expressed in the ritual of weeping and greeting. Before turning to them, let us gain an insight into the workings of the masters of the elements and animals.

5.1 Non-humans dwelling outside the settlement

5.1.1 Māmjju’u and Xinkaruli: mistress of the savannah and master of the natural life forces (father of the forest)

In mythical times, the masters of the elements have been responsible for shaping the earthly landscape. Savannah, forest, river and streams have gained their present form through the interaction of humans - or, in the sense of Viveiros de Castro (1998), of animals with a human soul - with the powerful and threatening masters of the elements. In reflection to the two types of landscapes the Menkū and Iranxe are exposed to, they distinguish between Māmjju’u, mother of the open land, and Xinkaruli, father of the forest. In mythic times these two masters existed by coexisting. Correspondingly, the two ecosystems they represent are exploited for their resources that go into the production of different aspects of real food, as outlined in the last chapter.

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*This was impossible before contact in 1971, since the two groups had no established relationship before then. However, the Menkū say that the sibling pair Katakí and Senzo were found as orphaned babies on a river bank. The Menkū recognised them as Nambikwara with whom the Menkū (and Iranxe) share the most cultural traits compared to any of the other surrounding groups. (I will come back to them with the myth of the garden, below; and when dealing with kinship, in chapter 7, below). When it came to the identification of appropriate marriage partners for Katakí’s granddaughter Katakisi, the girl’s father Tsuyabu took her to a Nambikwara settlement hoping that she would find a suitable man from among them on the basis of her descent from Katakí. (In the end she did not, to the hidden relief of the endogamously oriented community.) Apart from that, no other mention is made of the relationship of Katakí and Senzo to the Nambikwara. Those Menkū women and children abducted and adopted during Rikbaktsa raids in the 1950s are not mentioned further, thus suggesting the stress on socialisation during childhood, adolescence and marriage as the factors defining a person’s identity, rather than affiliation.*
Mâmju'u and Xinkaruli lived by devouring entire settlements. This was only challenged by the last remaining humans consisting of a grandmother and three orphaned brothers, who entered into a relationship with them, and tried to stop their predatory and cannibalistic advances on human society. With the instructions of their grandmother, the three orphans managed to overcome Mâmju'u', although as a price for her death she scattered all the things the boys had seen in her belly and transformed them into thorns and stumps to injure them and everybody else forever. In the place where she fell emerged a field without vegetation, at its edge appeared the forest, and around the forest there was open savannah filled with hostile bees. Yet the three boys could not kill Xinkaruli. Every time they tried to shoot him, and cut him into pieces, he gathered his bits together again and chased the boys. For Xinkaruli is filled with vitality, incorporating the ever-renascent strength of the earth. In the same way as the two masters existed in their dialectic duality, the Menkû environment is shaped by the interaction of the two gendered forces they represent. In order for humanity to exist, male and female productive forces have to interpenetrate each other.

The interdependence of the male and female domains, represented in the cooperation and coexistence of the two spirits killing all but one relative of the orphans, not only enables physical life, but also has the potential to generate the social life of people living together. While the sun, reflected by its antithesis, the

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Xinkaruli following the boys indicates an underlying astronomical connotation of Orion and the Pleiades. This constellation announces the rainy season, in which fertility and plant growth revives. The Pleiades are elsewhere referred to as 'the boys', such as, for example in Lévi-Strauss (1964:239 and 248; there myths no. 131 and 132), as well as among the Kamaïurá (Villas Boas, 1972: 146), and among the Rikbaktsa (Pereira 1973: 36). The Tukuna have a story about Monmaneki travelling in a canoe in the horizontal plane, while suddenly being made to travel upwards (Lévi-Strauss, 1968). Also the dismembering of the monster combines with the mytheme of Orion, the cadaver in pieces as in a Macushi myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1964:228). See also Meneses and Lima (1974:69).
aberrant moon, seems to be related to the quality of life, Māmju’u and Xinkaruli affect the conditions that allow for material and physical well-being. Without their agency, the world would be a hot prairie that allowed only bees to exist in diversity and abundance.

However, in order for an environment to exist in which the human being can live well, the two spirits have to complement each other: Xinkaruli would have no means to express himself if there were no diversification of the earthly surface, while Māmju’u would have had no chance to transform into forest, open field and settlement, had there not been the dynamics of Xinkaruli’s vitality. Good food, houses and tools can only be generated when these two spirits coexist and interact peacefully with each other. However, the human being needs to maintain a humble relationship to both. Even though the boys managed to kill Māmju’u, they had to submit to her eternal punishment. Xinkaruli, however, was never overcome. This is why his vital and threatening presence is felt daily in the growth force of the tropical rain forest that climaxes in the rainy season. Yet his energies can be tamed and channelled for productive use in clearings, the gardens where agriculture is practised - and in the settlement where all materials forthcoming from the forest are transformed into assets that permit people to live well. In order for Xinkaruli’s and Māmju’u’s forces to be useful rather than destructive to human life, they have to be known and managed properly. Those, like the boys in Māmju’u’s belly, who know how to move in them (the created physical spaces), and those, like the boys fleeing Xinkaruli, who know how to move with them (the seasons) will be able to live well.
5.1.2 Non-humans dwelling in the forest: animals, and masters of forest and rivers

The forest is the prime representation of Xinkaruli's forces of vitality. Everything grows together into a dense and at times impenetrable chaos. The forest is a place that lacks exposure to the human's ordering capacities. Being a human characteristic, associated with social living, these ordering capacities are intimately linked to the related human ability to generate and maintain productive social relations. In this way the forest as a realm of asociality is opposed to the settlement in which social living is generated. Similarly, the forest is filled with such beings that can be described by their asociality, seen from the point of view of the human being.

The forest is permeated by the intentionality of spirits and animals who are imbued with potentially life-threatening forces. The spirits are conceptualised as dwelling in the forest, always malevolently and greedily awaiting the human being. By attacking the human being they at the same time question the social skills which identify the human as different from all forest inhabitants. For them the human being represents the 'other' that disturbs the wilderness by trying to appropriate parts of it to be used for the generation of human well-being. Thus, I suggest, spirits not only express their predatory perspective of the human being as their prey (see Viveiros de Castro, 1998:470), but they envy the human being's ability to live together socially. At any possible moment when valued human customs guaranteeing sociality are disregarded, the spirits have the chance to manifest their presence. While the human being blames the spirits when things go wrong in society, the spirits are grateful when a person forgets their most sacred ability. As the human animals who withdrew into the forest in mythical times, when acting against the social order, and turned...
into animals as humans see them today by taking up explicit animal affects and habitus, the aberrant human beings are desocialised by being killed by the spirits once the humans themselves disregard their own human nature.

5.1.2.1 Fathers of the forest
Most of the spirits dwelling in the forest are imbued with a parental connotation of either father or mother. In the same way as parents are the nurturers and protectors of their dependents, these spirits exert those aspects of parenthood with regard to their habitat. The ecological realm or particular animals ascribed to it is submissive to and dependent upon their parenting. In protecting the ceaseless chaotic growth of the forest, they preserve the realm of asociality as a necessary opposition to the human world. Although, in line with Viveiros de Castro (1998:470) the spirits might perceive themselves as living socially, they are exerting ‘uncivilised’ predation from the point of view of the human being: ‘In normal conditions, humans see humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits; however animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (prey) to the same extent that animals (as prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators)’. Their greed for the ‘other’ aims at controlling the ‘other’ by killing (his humanity), and at times incorporating the (remaining) human beings through cannibalism.

The fathers of the forest have a male connotation. Ajnan lives off devouring cadavers. He manifests himself using differently aged men’s ‘clothing’ (Viveiros de Castro, op.cit.:471). The other masters of the forest disguise themselves by appropriating some human, and some animal features, although they have a set, unchanging appearance. In general, they contradict human appearance by being described as extremely ugly and

\(^{137}\) See also Holanda Pereira’s (1985) translations of Iranxe terminology.
disproportionate bodies. The notion of beauty, which has been described for other groups as an indicator for social skills (see for example McCallum, 1989; Belaunde, 1992; Overing, 1993) might thus also for the Menkù be an expression of capacities of human living (seen from a human point of view). An asocial form of existence reveals itself furthermore in that most of them are bachelors or old men. They are not only unsocial by being in the state of limbo and non-belonging, but they are also asocial in that they do not engage in production and reproduction and the socialising skills of married life in general. Their unmarried status (by age or by being widowed) increases, however, their attraction to female human beings. Rather than realising themselves in sexual affairs, as women commonly have with mythical animal humans, the attraction between spirits and women does not generate sociality or its preconditions. Nor in those cases where a spirit has a (spirit) wife and (spirit) children are they able to generate social living (from a human point of view). In order to escape the spirit’s attraction, a woman needs the presence of her husband. This is especially necessary when she makes herself extremely attractive to them during childbirth or by having young children. In mythical times, young girls offered themselves to the powerful and dangerous Jakolo spirit. Meanwhile the boa constrictor (which is as a snake always associated with spirit’s ‘clothing’) expressed its favour for the female realm by protecting a woman from her husband who had transformed into Ajnan and was chasing her. When, however, these generally malevolent spirits escape the realm of female attraction, which maintains them in a social orbit, they gain cosmic heights. Xinkaruli’s fate who turned into Orion is the most literal expression of this tendency.
5.1.2.2 Mothers of the water element

In contrast to the forest-dwelling fathers of the forest, the masters of the water element have a female connotation. Correspondingly, it is a woman’s task to go and fetch water, the source of life. However, in mythical times access to it was conditional upon intercourse with the lizard. Upon a woman’s refusal of his sexual advances, he dries up all the rivers and hides the water in a very strong and tall type of bamboo (taquaraçu-de-brejo). Since without water the people would die, the mother obliges her daughter to have sex with the lizard. Human beings’ access to the water of rivers and streams is thus conditioned on the availability of female sex, in the same way as the continuation of human life would be impossible without this availability. As in the case of Mămju’u and Xinkaruli, the humans - here mediated by women - have to maintain a humble and submissive relationship to the ‘masters’ of the element in order to be able to appropriate it for their needs.

Fathers of the forest and those of the rivers and streams thus stand in an opposite-sex relationship to each other. While the one has an underlying male connotation, the other is associated with the female realm. Yet both complement each other in that they provide one of the essential ingredients of real food, that is game meat or fish. Both are equally valued. Associating the provision of meat by either game or fish with one sex only, the underlying opposite-sex connotation of both realms is however superseded. The emphasis on male agency underlying the provision of meat is only complemented again when taking into consideration the other constituents of real food - cassava bread and chicha. As we saw in the previous chapter, these have a female connotation especially on

138 Nowadays one often sees Menkû men fetching water either at the stream or a small water tank closer to the settlement.
139 The lizard has nowadays a thin and long throat because the girl that refused to have intercourse tried to strangle him.
the basis of a woman’s processing activities that go into their production.

5.1.2.3 Animals
In line with Viveiros de Castro (1998:470), animals as much as spirits are imbued with a perspective similar to humans. They see themselves as humans, as anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages, and they experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture. They see their food as human food, and their bodily attributes as body decorations or cultural instruments, and their social system as organised in the same way as human institutions. In contrast to the unproductive, destructive, and thus asocial outcomes of women’s affairs with fathers of the forests, women’s engagement with those humans who ‘masked’ themselves as animals in mythical times is different. Here, the (married) women’s attraction to the mythical animal humans is usually fuelled by an unsuccessful attempt to provide food which the husband failed to do. The searching gesture is however not equalled by men. Only women are accounted to engage with the mythical animal humans in sexual or marital relations. Men do not, thus imbuing the forest’s animality with a male connotation. For present-day Menkù, the affairs of their mythic female ancestors have proven to be highly beneficial to their economy, since much of the foodstuffs forthcoming from the forest and consumed by the Menkù today were generated by them.

5.2 The interaction with the dead in the garden and at the settlement
The Menkù have an ambivalent relationship to the dead. Death causes distress among the living since it indicates that their community has been subject to predatory advances. Any death is induced by predation of the masters of the forest in disguise.
Furthermore, death poses a threat to the living because some masters of the forest are attracted by the cadavers of those being buried, thus potentially causing more deaths. Yet, once dead the soul ascends to the house of the benevolent Nahi, to which I will return below. The loss of individual deceased is mourned, and at times remembered by the dramatisation of emotions in ritualised weeping.

At the same time, the spirits of mythic ancestors are revered for their capacity to protect humanity. This spiritual reality is activated in the Menkū's most sacred ritual of the Yetá. During the ritual the spirits of the protective mythic ancestors leave their house that is hidden from the sight of the women, and come to the public space of the settlement or to the localities of the different productive activities. These are, first and foremost, the gardens, where clearing, planting and harvesting are done or initiated with the presence, and under the active protection of the spirits of the mythic ancestors. The particular importance of the ritual of the Yetá for the agricultural complex has to be related to the fact that the source of all agricultural crops is the buried body of a mythical ancestor. At times, the spirits of the mythic ancestors also accompany the men to the forest and riverbanks during collective hunting or fishing expeditions.

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140 See ch. 6.8 below.
141 On the basis of the difference between those individually memorised deceased from those constituting ancestry per se, I will use the term ancestors for those not known personally to individuals. They are those with whom the living did not live together socially in the same temporal realm. They are invoked on the basis of what I will call here 'cultural' memory.
142 I use the term Yetá following Holanda Pereira (1985) and Amarante (1994). The Menkū themselves avoid using the term. Instead, they circumscribe the ritual by referring to the 'bichinho' (little animal), which is 'coming out'. This is often also done so by the missionaries when mentioning it in their communal diary.
143 Here, the Menkū have a significant similarity to the Nambikwara. According to Lévi-Strauss, Nambikwara cassava gardens emerged from the body of a buried boy, and the emergence was as for the Menkū connected to the sacred sounds resembling those of wind instruments. (1973) For the Barasana, the burned bones of a boy transformed into the ritual Jurupary instruments. See S. Hugh-Jones, 1977:211. See below, and annex for summary of myth of the origin.
Taking the mythical ancestor's involvement in food-related activities into consideration, food gains an ambivalent connotation. While, on the one hand it can be seen as a form of materialised protection, on the other hand its consumption represents a cannibalistic act. I will argue below that these qualities of transformation involved in food production are a key factor in understanding why the ritual complex of the Yetá is imbued with danger in particular for certain members of the community. Let us then look at the complex of the Yetá which allows for the participation of the ancestors in the efforts of the living to ensure a good existence.

5.2.0 Describing the ritual complex of the Yetá
The Menkú hold a taboo in regard to the Yetá. During the ritual, the spirits of the mythic ancestors manifest themselves through singing and dancing. However, women and children have to protect themselves from the sight of the sacred since, otherwise, they would generate great danger for them and the whole community. Thus they shut themselves into the houses for the length of the ritual.

Belonging to the female gender myself, this also applied to me as well as to the missionary Amarante. Therefore certain difficulties are involved when writing about the physical nature of the Yetá. In order to respect the Menkú’s taboo to know or even write about this aspect of the sacred as a woman, and in a document that is read by women and, possibly, later by the Menkú themselves, I shall follow Amarante (1994:25) when referring to the Yetá. She writes that ‘for the Menkú the Yetá is the sacred ritual, the singing voice of the spirits [...] who come to protect humanity’.
On a comparative level, reference to what has been described as 'Yurupari' for other Amazonian groups proves helpful. My reference to the 'phenomena' of Yurupari rites and instruments is thus not only to be understood as an association of similar cultural traits, but also as a means to propose a *material* similarity between sacred objects used in Yurupari rites and those to be found among the Menkū. Any unclarity in my description is hopefully to be explained out of my attempt to respect what I - and with me all other women - am allowed, and, thus, *able* to know. In line with this limitation I state that the sound to be heard during the ritual of the Yetá *are* the voices of ancestral spirits. The material source of the sounds *are* the bodies of the visiting ancestral spirits. When referring to other groups I shall accordingly write about the sounds of the sacred, refraining from relating these to any physical *instruments*.

To conclude these preliminary observations I would like to suggest that there seems to be a differentiation of the impact of sense-perceptions. Firstly, knowledge of processes of transformation seem to be linked to visual impressions. While visual impressions of tabooed objects are harmful for certain individuals, and as 'pars pro toto' then affect the the whole community, this does not apply in the same way for auditive impressions. I suggest to argue that an expression of the sacred can be credited and maintained where realities involving a transformation can be obscured. A merely auditive experience manifests and documents a reality without having to disclose the material source of the experience. Furthermore, sound has a manifold and multidimensional expressivity. In regard to the material source of sound in the ritual of the Yetá, and in Yurupari rites in general, there might even be an association between
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intentional earthly existence.\(^{145}\)

### 5.2.1 Yurupari

Until the work of Goldman ([1963] 1979) and Stephen and Christine Hugh-Jones (1979&1979) was available, the ceremonial complex surrounding sacred instruments of the Tukano and Arawak peoples of the Rio Negro has been traditionally described as ‘Yurupari’.\(^{146}\) Revealing the limitations of this term, the above mentioned authors argued that all researchers were led astray by this ubiquitous and meaningless term, a lingua franca and Hokuan word for ‘devil’, ‘spirits’, ‘sacred’, ‘mystery’, used by indigenous groups to satisfy all foreign curiosity about their sacred practices. This also held for the description of any rites involving the cult of sacred, secret, and taboo-to-woman instruments. Even though the Menkū, as well as the neighbouring Nambikwara who have similar practices, live in Central Brazil, comparison with northwest Amazonian groups suggests itself in regard to the Menkū ritual of the Yetá.

### 5.2.2 The acquisition of the Yetá and its companions

As the myth of the origin of the garden tells, the Menkū garden and all its crops emerged from the body of a boy his mother had buried on his father’s camping ground in the forest.\(^{147}\) When the mother left the place where she had buried her son upon his request, and without looking back, she heard particular sounds. As the son had

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\(^{145}\) I could not confirm that this rather occidental association of breath and soul (as in the greek ‘pneuma’) has any validity for the Menkū context. I do, however, find it helpful when reasoning about the particular choice of material means through which the spirits of the ancestors manifest themselves to the human community.

\(^{146}\) See also Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971) who wrote on Jurupary. S. Hugh-Jones (1979:309) made a detailed list of descriptions of Jurupary rites by authors and the indigenous group their studies refer to.

\(^{147}\) See annex for summary of myth, following Holanda Pereira 1985:24. According to the missionaries, the Menkū tell a similar myth which might have differences in details, but not in the general semantic structure. As I had no occasion to record the Menkū version I have to rely for now on the Iranxe account as recorded by Holanda Pereira.
urged her not to look back upon leaving the burial site, the mother could not see what was happening to him. However, she could hear the sounds which she associates with the manifestation of the deceased.

During the ritual of the Yetá, the sounds are not only associated with the deceased boy, but with ancestrality in general. Not individual deceased are evoked here, but primordial ancestors. The same connection holds for the Cubeo where the ancestors of the sibs, the Behüpwanwa, manifest and express themselves during their earthly visit in a similar manner. Also the Barasana establish this linkage, by giving each pair of spiritual 'voices' a name each of which relates to one of the first ancestors of the different sibs.

The Iranxe account of the myth does not clarify the connection between the deceased and the sounds other than by affirming it. The myth tautologically recalls the people saying that as the buried boy, whose body transformed into all the crops cultivated by them, uttered sounds that resembled the sounds of the sacred instruments, they needed the latter to help them work in

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147 Interesting observations could be made here about the son's authority over his mother who obeys his request not to look back to him.
the garden (Holanda Pereira, 1985:31). Consequently the people started searching for the means which would allow the spirits of the ancestors to manifest themselves during their earthly visits. Like the procurement of game and raw materials for domestic use, the acquisition of this means in mythic times followed the principle that the one who looks will find the desired object.

Rather than being stolen from the women, as among the Cubeo (Goldman [1963]1979: 193) or the Barasana (Stephen Hugh-Jones 1979:127), the sacred means were given as a present to the chief of the searching people by the bird human who was the chief of all people. He gave them several kinds, each representing a different personality, and a different character. Some were tame while others were wild, some were big while others small; some were married and had children while others were bachelors.

When handing over these most sacred objects, the chief of all people explained that the men had to look after them very well. This included first and foremost the observation of the taboos associated with their handling. Their sight by a woman or an uninitiated child would incur the need to kill them, and possibly the whole group they belong to. The taboo is installed to safeguard the knowledge and its transformative powers, as I shall argue below.

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151 What seems to be of importance to the person who told the myth to the compiler, the missionary and anthropologist Holanda Pereira, in the first place is the fact that there is an intrinsic, irreversible and unquestionable relationship between the sacred sounds and the whole agricultural complex. Therefore the tautological affirmation of the relationship of these two realities supersedes any need for giving evidence of the association between different kinds of sacred sounds and their material origin. It can be assumed that those Iranxe who related the myth, were able to do so since they had already been missionised, and thus lost respect and partly disregarded their old taboos. Otherwise a disclosure of the material source of the sacred sounds would be impossible. I could imagine, though not confirm, that this myth was only told among men, and to boys during their initiation, since it encapsulates the secret of transformation of the sacred. (I shall come back to a boy's initiation in chapter 5.) For this reason the missionary Amarante withhold Holanda Pereira's compilation from the Menkû to this day.

152 See Meneses and Lima (1974) and chapter 6.
5.2.3 The Yetá - a female taboo

While it was a woman who heard the sacred sounds first, women are forbidden to see the Yetá, and to hear others speaking about it.\(^{152}\) If they do, they have to be killed in order not to pass on to other women or uninitiated boys the knowledge they have gained through the exposure. While no such death is reported for the Menkú during the last decades, the Iranxe told missionaries that Manoel Maria Iranxe killed five women because of it in 1957. If, in a settlement a woman was not killed after having seen the sacred, men of another settlement would be obliged to kill not only the women but - pars pro toto - everybody in the particular settlement.\(^{153}\) The changed demography of the Menkú which reduced their settlements to one and the numbers of women guaranteeing procreation to a minimum, as well as the disregard for traditional practices among the Iranxe, have, I believe, contributed to these drastic measures not being taken by either group for a long time.\(^{154}\) Nevertheless, the Menkú do not challenge the conditions imposed by the ritual of the Yetá.\(^{155}\) Nobody talks about it explicitly at the settlement. When there is a mention of it, it is circumscribed by referring to it as 'bichinho', little animal. Women and small children stay away from the house which the spirits of the

\(^{152}\) It is for this reason that Amarante warned me to write about the material object itself, rather than circumscribing it, in a public document such as this thesis, since otherwise the Menkú, their cultural practices, and their respect for her and myself would be severely disturbed.

\(^{153}\) As the Menkú (and the missionaries) are very oblique they do not talk about the complex of the Yetá, even more so when the topic is raised by a woman. I can thus only speculate on the reasons by establishing links to the context of the complex of the Yetá. See below.

\(^{154}\) Evidence for this change can be found in the missionaries' notes who reported an incident of a visiting missionary accidentally showing slides of the Yetá he had taken on a previous visit. Amarante writes: 'Afterwards, from behind, Kishi embraces me, smiles and comments quietly. The next day Zalaku comments on the slides that Ivar had shown of Iranxe [during a manifestation of the Yetá]. All the men thought it was funny that the women saw Alonso [...] The men said, however not very angrily, that things like this should not happen again.' Communal Diary 18. and 20. September 1982. Occasionally they also report of women peeping through the holes in the walls.

\(^{155}\) S. Hugh-Jones mentions the actual fear women have of the HeWi instruments, which is actively induced by mock hysteria from the elder women. See 1979:129.
ancestors use during their earthly visits and where the means of their audible manifestations are kept. According to what my husband told me it is rather small, and hidden behind bushes some 150 metres from the settlement square. This does not, however, imply that women are ignorant of the features of the Yetá. As S. Hugh-Jones (1979:129) recorded for the Barasana, most women know what the sacred instruments look like and know more or less exactly what is going on on the other side of the wall. Though, Meneses and Lima (1974:41), who have made a structuralist analysis of Iranxe myth, explained this taboo as a male means of control:

'The bond that unites father and son seems to be much stronger than the conjugal link. It seems that we are dealing with a patrilinear and patrilocal society that has failed to tame the rebelliousness of the women and to subordinate them efficiently to the supremacy of the men. In this context the Yetá is an extreme remedy; the presence of a threat of death - which would physically eliminate certain individuals - reveals that the group was incapable of obtaining a consensus of its members in regard to some fundamental norms.'

When Bamberger (1974) elaborates the foundations of male dominance in 'primitive societies', she comes to a similar, though also rather naive, conclusion. Such interpretations resound with past objectifications of women by defining them as items of exchange between groups (Lévi-Strauss, 1968; Rivière, 1969), and with arguments for defining one sex as more desirable than the other, as was, for example forwarded by Siskind (1973) when linking male hunting skills to sex. Apart from Strathern's (1984) criticism of the underlying importation of a 'commodity-based-property-logic', Amazonian ethnographies have revealed the

156 S. Hugh-Jones (1979:130) mentions the women's resistance to seeing the instruments when missionaries tried to expose them to the Yurupari.

157 My translation.
inappropriateness of interpretations which reduce the highly complex notions of gender and its metaphoric paradigm of forces operating in the universe to the political domain of male dominance over women.  

When considering the Menkū, a closer look at the ritual of the Yetá and its immersion into Menkū values of living well, will make clear that also here this gendered divide is not necessarily a male means to gain power. The data presented below suggest understanding the complex of the Yetá as a problematisation of given, irreversible oppositions that are represented in the existential difference between the male and the female, between the initiated and the uninitiated, as well as between the living and the dead. In order to elaborate this further I shall first turn to the ritual of the Yetá itself and then consider how its enactment overcomes the multiple threat to group cohesion posed by the taboos attached to it.

5.2.4 The ritual of the Yetá
While sometimes a ritual of the Yetá might precede an economic activity in the garden, as will be shown below, at other times it is staged independently from any activity. It is also enacted when communal morale is high, when a profusion of game calls for an expression of thanks to the benevolence of protecting ancestors, and at times also when key moments in a person's life-cycle, such as initiation or marriage, or recovery from a severe illness take place. The number of rituals held during a year varies remarkably, though with a general tendency of decrease in number with the years. While in 1982 the ritual was staged ninety-nine times, and in 1984 fifty-nine times, in 1986 thirty rituals of the Yetá were

158 This has become particularly evident in the works of Goldman ([1963] 1979), Forrest (1987), Overing (1986), McCallum (1989), Belaunde (1992), and Harvey and Gow (1994), which provide extensive data about the complementarity, equal interdependency and cooperation among spouses.
staged, while in 1990 as few as ten. During my time at the field, I only witnessed the ritual once, and this from within our house which was at a distance of thirty metres from the centre of the settlement square.159

The ritual of the Yetá is convened by one or several men and their respective wives. When a Yetá ritual is to be held, the news is quickly passed around in the settlement. The initiative of the host is reflected in the food preparations that precede the ritual. Often, a husband can be seen helping his wife in pressing the sugar cane nowadays used for the making of chicha. Once enough real food has been prepared, it is all put together at the host’s place. Poles are prepared in the middle of the central square. Meanwhile the women do their last necessities before withdrawing into the house for the evening and night. A hole was dug in the house in case somebody had to go to the toilet; a small fire is kept lit inside for preparing cassava bread if necessary. There is an ambience of anticipation throughout the settlement.

The food prepared by the host and his wife is brought to the separate ritual house of the Yetá. It is carried there by the men. Status and age seems to govern the order in which they approach the house that is hidden behind trees and shrubs, yet close enough to the settlement for those therein to hear the sounds emanating from it. Everybody who has been initiated is usually participating although there is no coercion to do so. The chief and elders will be the first to go to the house of the Yetá. The host, who is helped by other men to carry the food, will also be one of the first to arrive. Younger married men follow whilst bachelors and more recently initiated boys form the end of the single file chain.

159 When I was told about it, it was already time to shut myself and my children inside the house. As I was on my own they asked three young girls to sleep with me in the house.
At the house of the Yetá the food is offered to the spirits of the ancestors. Here the secrecy of the ritual - which at the same time gives it its sacred potency - starts. Already in this offering the presence of the ancestors as they have transformed and incorporated themselves in the earthly realm in that moment is expressed and confirmed. Some of the food and drink is consumed by the gathered men. The men become mediators of transformation and of the manifestation of the spirits of the ancestors. Rattles, which are made by women, and which are not imbued with the same taboo, support the voices of the spirits of the ancestors.\textsuperscript{161} First sounds can be heard.

While being active in the earthly realm the Yetá is considered to be as vulnerable to physical harm as a human being. If, for instance, somebody steps on a bodily part of its mediator it is the same as if stepping on the Yetá itself because, once activated, there is complete merging between the one who allows the ancestral voices to be heard and the sounding body. In fact, the mental disjunction of the two which could be induced by a visual perception of the process, seems to be a key element for the ritual complex. Holanda Pereira (1985:27) When a man knocks his head at a Yetá, it is necessary to prepare in a bottle gourd used as a drinking vessel an infusion of medicinal plants and wash the Yetá with this infusion. Afterwards, the person has to bathe himself with this infusion, in order not to get ill. Also, when any part of a man's body is hit by a Yetá he has to wash that part of his body to avoid getting ill.

The ritual begins at sunset. At this moment, the ordering

\textsuperscript{161} The rattle is made of the kernel of the pequi fruit (\textit{caryocar brasiliensis}) or the fruit of the guarioba palm tree (\textit{cocos comosa}), which are fixed together with a string of tucum fibre (\textit{astrocarium humile}). They are for exclusive ceremonial use.
principle of the sun withdraws and hands humanity over to the realm of darkness, which can be associated with the emergence of processes of mixing and transformation.\textsuperscript{161} Involving the most vital transformation for the community, the ritual lasts until shortly before dawn. At its beginning a discourse is staged by one of the men, who is often but not always the host of the ceremony. By this time all women and uninitiated children have withdrawn in their well-shut houses.

When night comes the men prepare poles in the patio, bring their hammocks out, light the fire around. After darkness, beautiful sounds can be heard coming from the direction of the house of the Yetá, and approaching the central plaza. The ancestral voices sing with a deep tone in a rhythmic tune. At times their singing is accompanied by rattling and stamping of their feet. Women begin to respond from the interior of the houses, with sounds as if following the melody. The musical conversation continues, another response is made by the women. After a while, silence takes over, most on the outside are half asleep in their hammocks, though the singing of the Yetá continues.\textsuperscript{162}

In fact, the interaction between the ancestral singing on the central square and the women inside the houses is more complex. While there are collective responses voiced by all women together, there are moments when each woman responds individually, and converses with the ancestors and benevolent spirits as they express themselves in the ritual. Amarante notes that,

\textquoteleft the parts differ when the ancestral spirit is Pató, Patunakjae or Naripukae, and each of these belongs to one of the women. Also the texts differ according to the moment in the ritual. There is one just after

\textsuperscript{161} Such a notion of darkness emerges from the myths, as well as from social skills of the representation of the opposite, the sun and light in general.

\textsuperscript{162} See also Caldas 1993:10.
dark when the Yetá has come out, one at dawn and yet another one at the moment when the ancestral spirits return back to their residence.\textsuperscript{163}

In the first round of the women’s responses to the ancestral spirits the former direct themselves to the latter individually, expressing their happiness that they have come to dance here and protect the people. Walking in a circle around the settlement plaza, the singing ancestral spirits stop in front of the different houses from which the women respond consecutively. The conversations between a single woman and the Yetá seem to be a means of expressing individual concerns as well as reconfirming the general message of the ritual. The responding woman converses with them using kinship terminology that stresses a same-generational in-law relationship. Her particular kinship relationship is possibly defined by the relationship she holds with the one who is mediating the spiritual voices on the outside.\textsuperscript{164} This, in turn also defines all other relationships.\textsuperscript{165} While incorporating mythic ancestors, the Yetá also evoke the memory of the more recently deceased. As I have mentioned earlier,\textsuperscript{166} the invocation of such memory can also happen without the context of the ritual of the Yetá, when it takes the form of ritualised weeping. While ritualised weeping is not linked to one sex only, it can also be staged by a man during the

\textsuperscript{163} Missionaries’ diary, 1.4.1984.

\textsuperscript{164} I am aware of the contradiction that exists in the women on the one hand not being able to see the source of sound, while, on the other hand knowing who mediates whose voice in a particular ritual. While I could not confirm this, it seems to me that a woman recognises her particular relationship by the way the voice is expressed, the particular intonation and interpretation of the general tune and rhythm. A woman familiarises herself with different modes of playing during the ritual of the katëtiri, which is of a different kind than the Yetá, though involving sounding bodies of a related kind. I will turn to this dance ritual in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{165} Yet another aspect that I was unable to get a better understanding of was the sequence in which women respond and how the initial kinship relationship is established between an ancestryral spirit and its female respondent. I assume that the sequence suggests itself by the way the spirits walk in a circular way around the settlement plaza when ‘singing’, thus passing each house at a time and inviting responses from within - the sequence of the latter possibly being according to age.

\textsuperscript{166} See chapter 2, above.
ritual of the Yetá.\textsuperscript{167}

After the interval around midnight it is the women’s task to wake up the people of the settlement in a metaphoric way for the new day. This appeal is of great significance since the process of waking not only refers to the time of day, when communal life begins anew, but is actually directed to humanity as a whole:

‘The women wake humanity up to continue walking the path. The same word is used for path and history. If the same word designates the path a much as history, this “waking of the people” is the true existential hope which verbalises itself in a prayer and opens itself to the future. The Menkù woman thus has the mission to wake up humanity, which we can understand as inviting humanity to “be awake”, to be conscious, and to pledge at the same time the spirits of the ancestors that they come to be with their people. accompanying humanity on its walk, on its “making history”.’ (Amarante, 1994:16.)

This task is taken up collectively, by all women interacting collectively to the sounds of particular Yetá. Before dawn and the withdrawal of the ancestral spirits, a third period of responses is staged, again collectively. Even though I have no data to confirm this, I believe that this last part mainly consists in bidding them farewell and thanking them again for their coming.

When the spirits of the mythic ancestors leave the central square, hammocks are undone, and the emptied pots of chicha are taken with them as well. Once the Yetá have returned to their dwelling, a last drink might be shared among those present in the earthly residence of the ancestral spirits, before reintegrating themselves - as human beings - back into the community.

\textsuperscript{167} Being of importance for the interaction with the outside, I shall describe it further in the next chapter which deals with the settlement.
Having described the ritual I now would like to discuss the means by which it overcomes divisions within society that are at the same time generated by the Yetá’s very existence.

5.2.4 Challenging the divide: The ritual of the Yetá as a means of bridging existential differences

On the basis of their analysis of Iranxe myth, Meneses and Lima (1974:35) have argued that the Yetá are a means of division, thus imbuing them with a sinister connotation. I shall take their analysis as a point of departure to challenge the negative attributes associated by them with the complex of the Yetá and the garden.

Meneses and Lima argue that by the enactment of the ritual of the Yetá a disjunction of the sexes is brought about. This is elaborated in the myth of the origin of the garden which problematises the family as a triangle of conflictive relations while exposing it as a necessary unit of conviviality: the son enters into conflict with the father who does not communicate with him but only whistles. The son wants to kill his mother who first refuses to bury him. Father and mother blame each other for the loss of the son. In spite of this, there are unifying aspects between the three members of the family. Father and son share a common interest in hunting; the son decides to die (and thus live eternally) in the clearing where the father was camping; the vision of the Yetá is reserved to initiated men, albeit precipitated on their initiation; the son leaves his spiritual voice as a legacy and response to his father who only whistled to him. Considering the establishment of these disjunctions the Yetá can be seen as an institutionalisation of the gendered spheres of living together. While distanciating the sexes, and the family units, the emergence of the garden also brought about shared spheres of existence:
mother and son go together to the garden, the mother as the one who sows while the son goes as the seed. In return, the mother defends the boy's decision - and thus the need for a better social living that is brought about by the garden - in front of her husband. Following the instructions of the son, father and mother dedicate themselves to the fabrication of tools and artifacts. They go together to the harvest. While she harvests and husks the crops, he transports them. Together they remain in the world of the living and of the consumers above the ground, while the son is buried in the ground and consumed as a plant.

Secondly, Meneses and Lima argue that the Yetá has a sinister connotation by potentially incurring death. The sound of the Yetá emerges with the burial of the son. It causes the death of women who dare to violate the taboo and, in another myth, brings death to the men which is caused by the revenge of the women. In the latter myth the women took revenge on the men for killing a woman's son. He was killed by his father for having told the women of the Yetá he saw and heard while the men were working in the garden. How are we to understand this sinister connotation when relating it to the harmonious social interactions that seem to dominate daily life between the sexes, as well as between the other groups of people upon whom its effect was divisive?

Considering the need for living socially that emerges from the description of the ritual of the Yetá, one is struck by the contrast this establishes with the threatening taboo the Yetá is imbued with for the female sex and uninitiated children. Having outlined the deep divides within society the Yetá provokes, I will argue below that these divides are posed to society in the same

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166 Also S. Hugh-Jones (1979: 249) makes this connection when he writes that the origin myths of Jurupary are also myths of the origin of death.
167 Origin of the waterfall of the river Cravari', in Holanda Pereira, 1985: 158.
way as existential differences exist between men and women, dead and living, and the initiated and uninitiated. In the same way that the attitude towards the Yetá enacts them in daily life, it is only through the ritual that they are overcome. In response to Meneses and Lima I thus argue that difference between separated realms of life is not by itself negative. Indeed, the overcoming of difference which happens in the ritual, as I will show below, allows for a transcended union to emerge. This process of transforming same into different and different into same is then revealed as the basis for a fertile relationship with the non-humans, the interaction with whom preconditions the possibility of living well.

5.2.4.1 Uniting the dead and living

As with the dialectic impact that the emergence of the Yetá has on the differentiation of the sexes, the ritual of the Yetá also works on the relationship between the living and the dead. This is firstly expressed in the fact that the garden’s abundance is caused and sanctioned by the loss and subsequent eating of the (then transformed) son. While on the one hand representing the result of conjugal unity, the son is on the other hand the only one destined to leave the parental household when getting married. Due to the uxorilocal residence pattern, this separation - here expressed in death - is a necessity. In uniting with affines, the son is the only one destined to merge into the ‘other’. His unavailability for his own parents is, however, not a complete loss because the son transforms into the agricultural crops which benefit them and the community as a whole.

McCallum (1989) has argued along similar lines for the Cashinahua.

S. Hugh-Jones (1979: 248) makes a similar evaluation of the He Wi: ‘At He house, categories that are normally kept separate are merged and confounded: the house becomes the universe, the past and present are merged so that the dead are living and the living are dead, present time becomes mythic time, a time when human beings, animals, and ancestors are as yet undifferentiated. The major ritual symbols are the means by which this merging of categories is brought about.’
The need for living together is extended to the realm of the dead. While they long for the presence of those living on earth, the latter are dependent upon their support and protection in order to stimulate material, social and spiritual well-being. While the souls of deceased kinsmen can be visited by knowledgeable people, the former also come to visit at times, disguising themselves as animals. With the creation of the garden in mythical times, their voice is heard for the first time, thus establishing the dependence of the living on the dead to guarantee social wellbeing on different levels. Due to the mother’s perception which connected their voice with the sound of the Yetá, both the living and the dead are given a channel through which they can communicate in the future. It is this communication which is enacted in the ritual, thus transforming the ritual of the Yetá into the primary means of unifying the living and the dead. When temporality and earthly gendered difference - the condition of human earthly living - is neutralised in the ritual of the Yetá, these ancestors convive with the living as representatives of all the dead. This potential for union is furthermore expressed in the fact that the women address the embodied ancestors with affinal terms. When considering Menkú kinship, it will become clear that the appropriate marriage partner can only be procured from the prescribed category of affines.

172 See myth on the visit to the world of the souls, in Holanda Pereira, 1985: 68.
173 ‘Knowledgeable people’ are those that have shamanistic abilities. The Menkú, however, do not talk about shamans, nor was there anybody since contact that stood out as a shaman. It seems that they have been killed in one of the intertribal massacres. With their disappearance their powerful knowledge became also unavailable. It is probably for this reason that the elders have an even more important role today than in the past. Possibly, however, the chief himself had shamanistic capacities. See also chapter 8, below.
174 A similar connotation but different role is played in the ritual of weeping (see chapter 1, above), and that of ritual greeting (see chapter 1. above). Instead of an enacted communication, it is however only a form of remembering the deceased and past moments shared with them. This is similar to Gow’s (1991) notion of memory generated in relationships of nurturing.
175 In contrast to this address, the deceased, of whom the living have a memory of shared moments of life, come upon death to a realm of reduced sociality where gendered production and reproduction are nonexistent. See also chapter 6, below.
By involving the whole productive community in this ritual, this communication is actually collectivised. Not only a shaman can interact with the souls of the ancestors, but the community as a whole is entrusted with the task. By giving the Yetá to the people, the chief of all people thus challenges any hierarchical monopolisation of the control of power. It is left to the whole group of the living to interact with their kinsfolk and ask for their protection. The advice that a Yetá should not sing without others, is therefore also applicable to the shamans. The communication between the living and dead is thus as much dependent upon the ritual as on the need to perform it as a group.

While among the Cubeo and Barasana the He-Wi ritual is staged in the communal longhouse, the maloca, and the women have to remain on the outside, or behind a big screen, this is inverted among the Menkú. Here, the Yetá reside during times of no ritual activity in a separate hidden house, from which they are collected in order to express themselves on the settlement square. Meanwhile, the women withdraw into the well-shut dwellings of the individual houses located around the settlement square. We thus can discern an inversion of inside and outside when comparing the staging of the Cubeo and Barasana ritual with that of the Menkú. This applies in specific to the location of women, men and the sounding of the sacred voices during the ritual. Such an inversion of inside and outside points to the fact that what is of importance is not necessarily the space itself, but the transformation effected through transgressing borders between separate realms, such as the inside and outside of a house, or different domains within a house. However, the Barasana equation of the longhouse with the universe, which it comes to represent during the He Wi ritual cannot be maintained in the same way for the Menkú, since the interaction of those inhabiting the two separate sides during the
ritual of the Yetá both participate actively during the ritual. Women are not excluded from the realisation of the ritual so that an exclusively male society emerges (S. Hugh-Jones, 1977:210) but their communicatory (and thus mediatory) skills are needed to enable the ritual to take place. Equally, the settlement as a whole encompassing the realm where men and women are during the ritual is transformed into a space in which a neutralisation of temporal differentiation is brought about. For the Barasana, the Jurupary rites effectively take each generation back to the source of creation and identify them with the first people. The people inside the house become the first ancestors during the He Wi (see S. Hugh-Jones 1977:210).

The ritual of the Yetá allows for the living to communicate with the dead, while the dead can express their benevolence to the living. I suggest that the overcoming of temporal difference is of greater importance here than the opposition of male and female realms. The fact that is apparently withheld from women is that men are mediators in the process of helping the voices of the mythic ancestors to be heard, who, as we saw above, include different kinds of personalities among them. I suppose that in losing their human nature, the initiated males also lose their gendered identity. Meanwhile, the women respond on behalf of the living. Communicating the requests and pledges to the ancestors, and at the same time turning to the living to wake up humanity, the interlocutors' gender is submitted to the function they take up for humanity as a whole. At the same time, the actors on both sides know their identity. It might be viable to argue that also here a perspectival quality can be discerned. While those on the outside of the house know of their gender, they incorporate differently

\[\text{Overing (1993) has argued that what is kept from the women is the fact that they are actually committing a cannibalistic act. As for the Piaroa one could argue that a state of 'innocent guilt' (Overing, 1985b:274) is enacted here.}\]
gendered intentionalities (the ancestors) towards the other side of the wall. Meanwhile, the women and children appear to themselves as women and children, while for the embodied ancestors on the outside of the house they are the interlocutors of living humanity as a whole, thus speaking on behalf of women and men.

We can conclude that while the semantic content of the ritual brings about a reversal of earthly human temporality, and creates an equal sphere of communication between living and dead, the enactment of the ritual leads us to a consideration of how it explores the differentiation and division of the genders.

5.2.4.2 Overcoming the gender divide
S. Hugh-Jones (1979:129) has argued that one of the problems involved in the interpretation of secret men’s cults such as the Yurupari rites, is that they are generally seen, described and analysed by male ethnographers who give little or no attention to the part played by women. He has managed to counteract this tendency by basing his evaluation of female involvement in the He Wi largely on data gathered by his wife. As a result he provides us with a very comprehensive account of the ritual which proposes an approach to the gender-relationship which disfavours theories of male dominance and stresses a complementarity. The Menkú data can be fertilised by his analysis of the Barasana initiation ritual, although the Menkú complex of the Yetá reveals an even greater complementarity among the sexes than what he could show for the Barasana.

As mentioned above, the ritual of the Yetá can only be staged when husband and wife work together. This cooperation is necessary in the preparation of food and drink as much as for the enablement of the conversations between humanity and its
ancestors. Finally, the garden itself, whose creation was accompanied by the sounding of the voice of a mythic ancestor, is a product of the conjugal unity as such. It is the child of the couple whose body transforms into the crops that sustain Menkū society. The care for him is done by accompanying the crops' growth in the form of weeding, harvesting and replanting. For this, tools are needed, themselves a reflection of conjugal cooperation between the male and the female.

As a consequence of the need for conjugal cooperation, a bachelor cannot stage a ritual since he would have no female counterpart to ensure the production of food necessary for it, as well as the appropriate response to his playing. This, however, does not imply that unmarried members of the group cannot participate. Their participation is expected on the basis of their past exposure to the Yetá. A boy needs to be initiated before joining the men outside, though since the initiation nowadays takes place quite early, they often stay inside with their mothers. Meanwhile, for women their sex determines the side of the ritual they are to participate in, independent of their initiation. Sometimes girls as young as three years old start responding alongside with their mothers. While there is no obligation to do so for them, the Menkū disapprove if a grown-up initiated girl does not participate. Similarly, they got impatient with those female missionaries who had lived among them for some years to learn their part. It seems, however, that a woman soon after parturition and while she is menstruating does not respond.

Moreover, the Yetá can only sound and the ritual be staged

177 Such disapproval would never be made explicit as a reproach.
178 This resulted in Amarante being taught the lines by Engasi and Kishi, after the chieftainess, Kataki, had urged her to learn the words. Amarante nevertheless believes that she knows very little about certain aspects of the ritual.
179 Personal communication with Amarante, who expressed her uncertainty about this fact.
when there is a group of people consisting of men and women. As much as a man needs his wife to complement the two sides - only on the basis of which can the ritual be realised - a Yetá should not sing alone. If it does, the community as a whole is harmed since the chief of all people who gave the human beings the Yetá would come, take them back and cause the death of the respective person. The celebration of the ritual of the Yetá thus enforces on a ritual level the need for conjugal unity and cooperation. As well as that, its realisation stresses the need for group cohesion. Celebrating, working and living well in general are preconditioned on living together.

5.2.4.3 The Yetá as a means of initiation

The secret involved in the transformation of the buried son into the crops of the garden separates women from men, as well as, among the male members, distinguishes the initiated and uninitiated. While the mother could not look back, which would have led to her being exposed to the powerful forces of transformation, the men can endure it once they are introduced to the secret underlying the transformation. A woman’s greater vulnerability is caused by her ambivalent nature and proximity to the processes of production and reproduction. Meanwhile, a man is less exposed to this ambivalence and thus stronger to distance himself from the dangers it involves.

The separation that exists initially within the male domain is overcome by exposing the boys to the Yetá. By seeing the latter, the secret underlying the connection between the ancestor’s voice and the sound is unmasked. This, however, does not induce the loss of its sacredness. While the Yetá is considered the incorporation of

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180 See Holanda Pereira, 1985:27.
181 See chapter 8, below, in which I elaborate the notion of living together in more detail.
182 Parallel to this, the Piaroa say that it is the fact that they are cannibals. This is the secret kept from women and the uninitiated.
the spirit of the ancestors in the earthly realm, a boy's exposure to it initiates his ability to manipulate it for productive and reproductive purposes. Goldman ([1963] 1979:190) has noted that when the Ancients are invoked they bestow on their Cubeo sibmen the specific benefits of bodily growth, vigour, potency and fertility. Among the Barasana (S.Hugh-Jones, 1979:251), men, through ritual and possession of cultural symbols, such as the He instruments, seek to control the He world, which is - among other features - the world of renewal, growth and fertility. By staging the ritual, they return to the source of creation itself (S. Hugh-Jones, 1977:210). Among the Menkū, I argue, the appropriation of all the secrets and rituals and the appeal to the sacred obligation not to reveal their connection to processes of creation and transformation to the mothers and future wives, represents the fundamental point of a boy's initiation.¹⁸³

The first exposure to the Yetá happens in the garden where the initial connection between it and its signification took place. Reaffirming its association with processes of transformation and growth, this exposure only takes place at key periods in the agricultural cycle that are initiated by the management of the principal crop, maize. It is not just the sole crop that emerged from the boy’s head, but only clearings made in primary forest are used for its planting. Moreover, it is one of the first crops to be sown as well as one of the first to be harvested. Apart from that, it is an important ingredient for real food which can be offered to the ancestral spirits, as it is used in the traditional drink, chicha. The initiating role maize plays within agriculture, it also plays in regard to a boy’s initiation. Insofar as the initiation of the boy

¹⁸³ ‘The He state is on a par with, though not identical to, the world of nature.’ (S. Hugh-Jones, 1979:247) Time is ‘flattened’ through female cyclical organising potency, and can therefore reach the ancestors. This is not possible through male potency. Women enter into more intense contact with the He world at menstruation, and more especially at childbirth from which Barasana men are excluded. See S. Hugh-Jones, 1979:251.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter 6, below.
takes place either at the time of the planting or harvesting maize, it also relates the initiation of a man to learning the art of making his productive potential available for the whole group.

As the group's productivity and reproductivity is dependent upon the continuous enactment of the ritual of the Yetá, its functioning has to be conserved. This is enabled by maintaining the secrecy of the sounding body of the ancestral voices and keeping it among those that can handle its powerful agency. While the Yetá thus separates those that know from those that do not, it is at the same time the very means by which the knowledge is transmitted at a given time in a man's life.

In spite of the existential role of the performance of the ritual of the Yetá, and its veneration in general play, the frequency at which the ritual has been staged in the three decades since contact has, as mentioned above, decreased. This seems to indicate that with the constantly growing exposure to Western ways of life the sources of production and reproduction are no longer exclusively linkable to the agency of the Yetá. The challenge to its power is especially noticed in the younger generation whose members are more open and eager to incorporate Western goods and ways of being. Consequently it is an even bigger task for the elders, who are most frequently the sponsors of the ritual, to cultivate the secret of the Yetá.

In spite of the change in frequency, the performance of the ritual itself has not been altered. The general task that was

185 S. Hugh-Jones (1979) has also argued that the Barasana ritual revitalises the reproductive capabilities of the group by tapping ancestral power of the original creation, which women actually have in their bodies.

186 However, abundance of food is also necessary to stage a ritual. The missionaries' records confirm that the game hunted since contact decreased significantly during the years with many other people settling in the area surrounding Menkú land now feeding on the wildlife that the region provides.
expressed in the myth, kept still in the consciousness of the community by the chief, is still realised today. The dialectic relationship between the beautiful, abundant garden and the sound of the sacred Yetá is maintained by the Menkú. The ancestors and spirits realise their generative and protective qualities while the human beings care for them by staging the ritual and by looking after them in the form of respecting the tasks of cultivation, distribution and consumption, and feeding them with proper food.\textsuperscript{187} The mother who would feed her son if he had been alive, has to give transformed food to what he has transformed into. Rather than what is given, it is the gesture of giving itself, which realises itself in caring, that is of relevance here. The ancestors have to be looked after, in order for them to be able to look after the living;\textsuperscript{188} giving implies to be given. The most basic act in which this realises itself literally is the giving of food, a product of gendered social living.

\textbf{5.2.4.4 Differentiation as a precondition for cohesion}

When considering the different divisions the Yetá provokes in society, and the different ways these are overcome by the ritual itself, it could also be argued that the complex of the Yetá creates the preconditions for group coherency itself, since only where there is differentiation can there be a unification of separate, different units. While a secret separates those who know from those who do not, on its own it should not necessarily be equated with a means of power to control others. The Menkú way of life, with its feeling of communal well-being, seems to me to be the first aspect supporting such a position which disfavours theories of control and power over 'rebellious' women (Gregor, 1977) and their young children that have not yet gained independence from

\textsuperscript{187} See chapter 3, above.

\textsuperscript{188} Once a person dies, this gesture is repeated by Nahi, when welcoming the souls of the dead into his realm. See chapter 6, below.
them. Secondly, it is supported by the institution of the chieftaincy which - as with many other Amazonian groups\textsuperscript{185} - has the primary goal of serving such high communal morale, while enabling the individual member (separated from others on the basis of his/her sex, status of marriage and initiation and unique personality) to express his or her personal autonomy. The myth of the origin of the garden exemplifies the chief couple's responsibility in the context of the origin, management and socialisation of the garden's crops. While the aspect of the material source of the crops can be associated with the chief's son, the administration, perpetuation and improvement of its yield can be related to the chief. The chieftainess is to be associated with the transformation of the crops into edible food.\textsuperscript{192} Lastly, with regard to the mediation of existential differences and conflicting relationships, which can never be overcome completely, it is up to the human community itself, supported by the agency of the chief, to work on these in daily communal living. While I shall return to the institution of chieftaincy in another chapter, I shall conclude this chapter by outlining the involvement of the Yeté in agriculture.

5.2.5 The use of the Yeté in agriculture

The Yeté is intimately linked to economic activities. At times, men might take the Yeté on a collective hunting or fishing expedition. It is, however, crucial for carrying out the principal agricultural activities, in that the clearing, planting, and harvesting season are initiated (begun) by its accompaniment of the men to the gardens. While the Yeté starts off a new 'season', the tasks are subsequently carried out by the individual family. An exception to


\textsuperscript{192} One could argue that through this she resuscitates the boy as a social being, only that he is not a person himself anymore, but through processing - the precondition for the creation of real people.

\textsuperscript{191} See chapter 8, below.
this is only the clearing of the garden which is an exclusively male activity. The couple in whose garden the work is to take place are the hosts of the ritual. The wife prepares the food that is to be offered to the ‘Yetá’ as well for its consumption by the men while working in the garden. She does it on her own, or with the help of her close kinswomen with whom she might in part share the garden.

Once the men have amassed tools and food, they set off to the host’s garden. Walking in a single file, they are accompanied and protected by the sounds of the ancestral voices. While they are leaving, the women from the inside of the houses express their encouragement for the ancestors to leave the settlement in order to carry out the particular agricultural task. At the garden, the ancestral voices can be heard singing at the beginning of the work, during the intervals, and at its end. Food that has been prepared by the hostess is consumed in the garden. Having finished for the day, the men return to the settlement playing music. The approaching sound creates a rush back at the settlement, for the women quickly have to finish their work and withdraw into the houses. Then they say to the approaching sound, which is audible at quite a distance,

‘Kayatiá? Āna saxirā.’
‘Did you sing? I heard you.’

Then, when they are arriving, the spirits of the ancestors say that they will enter the Yetá’s house. The women respond,

‘Takirā. Tosana xarikirā.’
‘All right, you can enter and come within.’

The men then take the Yetá back to their hidden residence at the settlement. It is common that food and drink is offered to the
ancestors upon the men's arrival at there. Once this is finished the men join their families and life continues.

Very often there will be a Yetá ritual hosted the following night. Mostly, this is done by the man in whose garden the work had been carried out during the day. At times, it is however also staged by the man whose garden is the location of collective ritual work the next day. Other gardens have to be cleared, other hosts take the responsibility and initiative until the new gardens of all households have been cleared. The same applies to the planting, sowing and harvesting of the various crops.

As the myth of the origin of the garden illustrated, the emergence of the garden was deeply connected to the sounds of the Yetá and vice versa. When leaving her son behind the chieftainess hears sounds that she associates with his screaming. In this correlation the relationship between dead kin and the fact that they incorporate themselves through and in the Yetá is established. As it is the mother who correlates the sounds with her dying son, it can also only be she who decodes the sounds of the Yetá as the voices of dead kin (originally represented by her son) and, consequently, be able to converse with them. The secrecy that accompanied the son’s transformation into agricultural crops, which happened without the mother being allowed to look back to watch, is reflected in the secrecy of the transformation of the men into accompanions and mediators during the manifestation of the mythic ancestors in the earthly realm during the ritual of the secret and sacred Yetá. In the same way as the garden’s crops bring economic abundance to the group, the presence of the spirits of the ancestors, brought about during the ritual, guarantees the future well-being of the group. One could visualise this interaction as follows.
In respect for their son both parents do as the mother was told. They care for him by harvesting in moderation, replanting, weeding and visiting the garden regularly. Rather than taking the Yetá every time such chores need to be done, it only accompanies the key moments - the first slashing, burning, planting and harvesting. After this ritual, it is the individual family, and in particular the women with their younger children, who take over the garden’s management.

5.2.6 Traditional crops and their human origin
In the myth of the origin of the garden we are introduced to the traditional crops cultivated by the Menkū, to the way these have to be treated and renewed, and to the tools necessary for garden management. Most importantly, however, we learn about the human origin of the garden itself, the human element of each crop and the human aspect which incorporates itself in the sound of the Yetá.

Although not all parts of the body are itemised, the myth of the origin of the garden classifies and correlates those cultigens that are mentioned in the myth, to the bodily parts on the basis of
what I believe are somewhat similar features. The form of a maize corn resembles that of a tooth; some gourds have the size and shape of a human head. As much as the mouth incorporates the teeth, the gourd is used as a container to store such vital things as honey and seeds. The nails of fingers and toes are identified with the red groundnuts which resemble them in colour, smoothness, shape and size; the lengthy thin bone structure of the ribs is connected to the beans growing in long thin pods, while the slightly larger and thicker tip of the breastbone coincides with the thicker type of broad bean. The central organs heart and liver not only appear as the life-giving and life-guaranteeing organs per se in Menkū myths, but they are also the only organs that are shared out in a separate circle of sharing when big game is killed. In the myth discussed here, they are identified with the white and red yam respectively. Unfortunately I do not have any data about the evaluation of the yam tuber among the Menkū. Meanwhile, the lumpy shape of the sweet potato resembles a filled intestine, while the testicles share their size and roundness with the smallness of the round arrowroot (ararutinha redound), which is connected to the tuber of the arrowroot in the same way as the testicles to the penis. Lastly, the roundness of the kneecap conforms to the round shape of the small gourd which is not only used for storage but also as a toy for children.

On the basis of the human origin of the cultivated crops, the garden may be seen as an inversion of the original transgression of human beings into the asociality of the forest habitat which led to

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193 It was the cutting of Māmjū'u's liver and heart which finally ensured her collapse; see previous chapter. As well as that the separating-out of liver and heart furthermore guarantee the sure death of animals in other myths. The importance of heart and liver has been stressed by other authors for Amazonian patterns of consumption. See e.g. Vilaça, 1993:291.

194 The heart is always reserved for the chief alone, while the liver is grilled and shared among the members of the community before the rest of the game is consumed. See chapter 8, below.
their transformation into animals. In opposition to game dwelling in the forest, the crops forthcoming from the boy buried in a forest clearing are imbued with an intrinsically social character. Food not only generates happiness, as outlined above, but its generation is intrinsically linked to living well, in that its production and consumption are activities that are done together. Producing or consuming food for oneself alone is not only considered asocial, but it is impossible, given the gendered division of labour existing among the Menkú. Real food, as mentioned before, consists of meat, cassava bread and chicha. Not only the ingredients but also the tools they are made with reflect the interdependence of the couple as well as of the community as a whole. Hunting and gathering is a more singular activity, that can and is done on an everyday basis by a man on his own. It preceded - mythologically speaking - the agricultural state. When the human beings emerged from the rock, they sat down under different trees and soon started hunting and gathering. In contrast, the garden is a product of established social living, which expresses itself in the myth in the existence of the nuclear family, of living in separate houses that constitute a settlement united by the leadership of the chieftaincy. Without any such differentiation, social life as the living together of different individuals, would not exist. Inasmuch as the garden emerges from the couple’s child, which can be considered the principal outcome of the marital union, the production and processing of garden produce are dependent upon the married couple. Any ritualised activity of the men in the gardens is dependent upon the women, insofar as the wife produces all the food, and the women as a whole encourage the ancestors to go with the men to do the work. As men have to be fed during their work, and the production of cassava bread and chicha is a female task, no work party could be held by a man without the existence and support of his wife.

Similarly, a wife who could not count on the productive activities

195 See chapter 6, below.
of her husband in hunting and the (ritualised) carrying out of agricultural tasks, would have nothing to share within the nuclear family or among relatives and friends. In order to share with others, she needs to have access to those crops that from the basis of 'real food'. As she would not be able to complement the meat brought by her husband in order to produce real food, she is in the same way dependent upon him, as he upon her.

In order to produce the components constituting real food, however, each household has to cultivate all traditional crops. Today, the entirety of the cultigens that have originated form the body of the son can still be found in Menkü gardens.¹⁹⁶ According to the myth, the loss of a crop would actually be equivalent to the amputation of a limb the son whom the mother had promised to care for. The maintenance of such diversity, which realises itself in the existence of all crops, is important so as not to impede the conditions for completeness/unimpairedness. A disregard for the son's instructions would generate unsustainability and eventually cause a general decrease in fertility and yield. The monotony generated by losing diversity would also eventually lead to a decrease of happiness since it is a state that is considered linked to the availability of abundance in kind and number.

Those cultivated crops that are not mentioned in the myth have been introduced by either the Iranxe or the missionaries. These include rice, banana, oranges, lemons, mango, papaya, guava, sugar cane and some types of maize. While some crops such as sugar cane and rice were easily incorporated, others failed to have a good return because they involved a different kind of agricultural

¹⁹⁶ The only one my husband was not able to see was arrowroot. As Sauer (1986:73) notes this plant is cultivated throughout Amazonia not so much for its starchy assets, but far more for its capacity to counteract arrow poison. A change in usage, or reduced usage might thus be responsible for not encountering it easily in a large and diverse garden like that of the Menkü household.
management than that common among the Menkū, and consequently their cultivation has been dropped over time. This is exemplified especially by the fruit trees such as orange and lemon which are dependent upon correct pruning in order to give plenty of fruit. Pruning is, however, unknown to the Menkū, so that at the time I was there there were hardly any citrus fruits available.¹⁹⁷

Depending on the relevance for the production of real food, the agricultural management of these crops is accompanied or not by collective ritualised activities. In that respect, the Yetá accompanied the planting of sugar cane which is nowadays the principal ingredient for the drink (chicha), while it was not taken for the sowing of rice.

5.3 Concluding remarks
In the course of this chapter it has become clear in how far the interaction with the non-human world is imbued with a gender complementarity. The relationship between non-humans of a kind such as the master-of-the-natural-life-forces, and the mistress-of-the-savannah is characterised by this complementarity. As well as that, it reveals itself in the nature of other spirits when they exist as husband and wife, as for instance Māmsi and Wānali. The male connotated fathers-of-the-forest are themselves exposed to the mediating capacities of the mothers-of-the-water-element who interconnect the realm of the asocial (the forest) with the realm of human sociality (the settlement). Cross-sex complementarity in the interaction with the non-human world is, however, even more explicit when dealing with the dead. The

¹⁹⁷ The incorporation of food crops is thus a very good example for understanding Menkū pragmatic patterns in their incorporation of Western goods and the knowledge related to them. Those crops that need a similar attention and have a usage common to traditional crops are taken in easily, while others that involve the application of traditionally unknown measures (and represent different tastes) develop with more difficulty. In contrast, mango trees that grow easily, do not need pruning and are less afflicted by pests, have been included in the diet more quickly.
relationship with the ancestors is preconditioned upon the cooperation between the married couple on various levels. I have argued that the ritual of the Yetá itself overcomes the divide between the genders (and thus unites them). Yet, more important is the association of the gendered living humans with the different aspects of the interaction with the world of non-humans. While it is in the power of a man to confront and withstand the masters of the elements and animals as he encounters them in the forest, he is also able to render useful a living animal by hunting and killing it as food for people once processed. An initiated man is furthermore enough distanced from the powers of transformation (in his body) that he can imbue himself with transformative powers from the outside. A man can clear the garden, and his playing can allow the ancestors to embody themselves in the sounds produced by him. A man is ‘strong’ enough to know this secret. Meanwhile, in the interaction with the non-human world, women are revealed as the mediators between the different realms of beings. As Meneses and Lima (1974:70) have argued, the Menkū universe of intentionalities can be divided into five groups which are women, men, souls of deceased, animals and spirits (masters of the elements and animals). When envisioning each of these five groups as a circle, the circle representing women is in the middle and partly overlaps with all others, since it is the women who maintain - or have maintained in the mythic past - a productive relationship with all different intentionalities. For, in Menkū myths women are the main procreators of the world through their sexual relationship with the once-human animal world. Their interaction with this realm has, in many cases, brought about the animals as they see them today. At the same time, women are at the gateway between eternal life and this-worldly existence. While a big-bellied human being stood at the exit of the rock from which the Menkū emerged at the end of primordial times, it is the women’s task in the ritual of the Yetá to

199 See myth of origin in annex.
converse with the souls of the deceased. Lastly, being the most vulnerable to the masters' advances, they are at the same time the only humans who can engage in relationships with them. A graph following Meneses and Lima (1974:70) shall illustrate the central role of the female gender.
The relationship of the Menkū to the non-human world in the production of real food raises the question of what is it to be human at all. Human is to be not non-human, thus not mastering the elements, nor being an animal, asocial or dead. Viveiros de Castro (1998) has shown the degree to which either of these forms of intentionality ascribe themselves (in myth) 'culture' on the basis of seeing (being a subject), and of seeing themselves as humans (being an object). According to Viveiros de Castro (1998:472), each of these non-human beings has a perspective on the basis of which it establishes its humanity. At the same time, the difference constitutes itself in the body which is created in productive social relations. Extending Viveiros de Castro's argument to the positive construction of humanity, I would like to argue that it is the potential for the generation of sociality which finally identifies the humanity of human beings. Let us now turn to how this creation of real humans is brought about in Menkū social living.
Chapter 6

Acquiring gendered productivity

In this last part of the thesis I intend to show how the creation of real people, that is living human beings, is achieved through the gendered complementarity of the sexes. I will start by exploring the acquisition of productive skills as it realises itself in the socialisation during the course of life, emphasising the important features of each of its periods as they are defined by the ability to engage in the gendered activities of production and reproduction. The subsequent chapter will consider the way people establish links among each other by means of kinship and naming, and show in how far the state of the ideal human condition is reflected in these. The last chapter aims to explore the potential for living well, and the way in which this is dependent upon the existence of the complementary cooperation of the sexes as it manifests itself most clearly in the married couple.

6.0 Menkü Life Cycle

This description of the Menkü life cycle emphasises the different stages a person passes while on earth. Starting with the practices surrounding childbirth, I will describe some characteristic features of Menkü childhood. This will lead to a portrayal of the Menkü initiation ritual for boys and girls respectively. Following this will be an elaboration of the condition of marriage, which, I
would like to suggest, represents the fulfilment of the ideal human condition while living the earthly existence. In marriage the complementarity of the genders manifests itself fully, since it is here that man and woman have to cooperate in order to be able to realise their chores related to production and reproduction. I shall conclude this chapter by dealing with illness, old age and death.

While marking the beginning and end of a human life on earth, birth and death at the same time represent a person’s transition through qualitatively different forms of existence. Upon birth, a person enters the realm of humanity where the threats posed by the spirits can be brought under control by humans for the sake of the living. In turn, death is the expression of a human’s obedience to the call of the spiritual world. As such, birth and death reflect key moments in the change of the way human beings relate to the spiritual world, and the latter’s degree of control over the former. While living on earth different spirits constantly want to prey on humans, turning life into a battle of withstanding the spirits’ seductive forces. During life the human being has to be strengthened and empowered in order to be able to counter the spirits’ greed. Weakness is a condition in which the spirit has gained or is able to gain firmer control of the human life up to the point that it can prey on it successfully - that is, kill to devour it. A human being in this state of weakness has deviated from an ideal which can be described as the human being attaining the height of productive and reproductive capacities and realising these. Consequently, birth, childhood, illness, senility and death, but also menstruation, are times in which this ideal condition is not yet, or no longer, attained. It is then that vulnerability to the spirits’ interests is very high. Taking this into consideration I would like to suggest that the best way to understand this structuring of life is to view it as a mode of gaining knowledge about the optimum

\[99\] See chapter 5, above.
attainment of the ideal condition. The various stages of the life cycle marked by certain rituals endow the human being with this knowledge. Once incorporated, and expressed by acting according to ‘rules’ defining Menkū social organisation and productive activities, this knowledge diminishes the spirits’ access to a human life and guards a person from the spirits’ predatory advances.

In other words, human life is the space during which a person has to learn to control and manipulate the spirits’ access to the human community. Moreover, it is the time in which the human being not only has to master the relationship with the world of the spirits but also learn to control interaction with all animated species in the surroundings. As we have seen in the previous chapter, apart from benevolent and malevolent spirits these consist of animals and the souls of deceased ancestors, both of which used to be human beings at one point in either the primordial (animals) or recent (souls of the deceased) past.

6.1 Theories of procreation

Until now it has been impossible for me to gather any theories of procreation held among the Menkū, nor were the missionaries able to collect any such data among the Iranxe or Menkū. What has been established, however, is the uniqueness of a person’s life on earth; and while they maintain an elaborate concept of the afterlife, to which I will come back at the end of this section, information about procreation is sparse. Menkū practice allows us to gather that there is a profound difference between male and female substances. It is possible for a (preferably) unmarried man to help

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205 While the Menkū did not disclose information about the process of procreation to me during my stay, the inability of the missionaries to gather such data during their prolonged stay with the Iranxe and the Menkū might also be due to the strong emphasis Christianity and its proselytisers put on death, resurrection and afterlife while having only limited elaborations of procreation.
another man in the procreation of offspring by having intercourse with the latter’s wife.\textsuperscript{201} The community is aware of the ‘help’ being given, though would never comment about it openly. To do so would result in embarrassing the actual husband, as his procreative powers would be questioned. Rather, the child would be treated as if it was the actual offspring of the mother’s husband. Once the options for the child’s marriage partners were discussed this reality could potentially but not necessarily, emerge.\textsuperscript{202} The substitution of a man’s semen is, however, as we shall see in the next section, not equalled by the possibility of the exchange of a mother’s milk.

6.2 Pregnancy

Once a woman shows she is pregnant, she informs the father of his coming fatherhood.\textsuperscript{203} This is of specific importance since the Menkū assume a linkage between parents and fetus which exceeds the biological notion of Western medicine. The fetus, its growth, and later its behaviour, are directly affected by the conduct of the parents. Symbolising the entire process of reproduction, the growing fetus has to be assiduously safeguarded by the parents. During pregnancy, and especially shortly before childbirth, the parents have to refrain from hard work, and they should have no sexual intercourse during this time since, otherwise, the baby would grow too big and not be born.\textsuperscript{204} They also have to refrain

\textsuperscript{201} Regarding the provision of semen, I could imagine that this practice was strengthened by the threat of extinction, that the group had experienced for several decades. Any alliance that fit the requirements of the kinship system was exploited when needed, and accepted by the community when affirming the particular relationship and affiliation of the particular child in daily life. See also following chapter, section 7.1.2.

\textsuperscript{202} Ikibu is an example of giving such help to other men. See section 7.1.2.1, below.

\textsuperscript{203} I am not aware to what degree this also applies to those that have ‘helped’ a pregnant woman’s husband.

\textsuperscript{204} It is possible, though not confirmed, that this would generate too much semen in a woman’s womb. The Menkū contrast here with other groups which stress the importance of much intercourse during pregnancy, and with different men. For example for the Bororo see Crocker, 1979.
from consuming certain foods and game, and the father should not participate in the clearing of a garden or hunt certain animals such as the tapir, anteater or jaguar. I would like to suggest that all these prohibited activities affect the fetus since they are productive activities in themselves. Parallel to the creation of a person during pregnancy, these productive activities are forms of transformation and domestication which are finally geared towards the growth and strengthening of the human society. By directing the productive capacities to these, the father would have fewer forces available to guide towards the growth of his child.

As a preparation for a good life, a pregnant mother will pray for the child’s wellbeing.

'Shortly, another child will augment the group. Early one morning, it is still dark and silent in the sleeping settlement, one can hear, suddenly, her voice. It seems to be a Menkū prayer for the child that is about to be born. A long litany, half crying, half wheezing, repeating indefatigably the same phrase. Pledging, tirelessly, that the child may be ‘happy, blissful, strong’. This pledge is renewed some 40 to 50 times. Following on to this, Riaki starts a ritual weeping, so that the ancestors accompany and protect the life of her child.' (Amarante, 1983:28.)

6.3 The Birth
The birth of a child is a time of great vulnerability not only for the infant but also for its parents and other children, especially the uninitiated. This vulnerability is expressed very clearly in myths exposing the dangers associated with a woman giving birth in the

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205 The Bororo associate the forces involved in all processes of growth to birth in a similar way by relating them both to the spirit principle of ‘bope’. See Crocker, 1979:256.
206 The fetus’ participation and exposure to the parent’s activities is furthermore confirmed in the Menkū claim that it can hear everything which is being said while in the mother’s belly. See also Holanda Pereira, 1985:63.
207 My translation.
absence of her husband,\textsuperscript{208} as well as with the interest masters of the forest have in newborns.\textsuperscript{209}

Up to parturition the woman continues with her normal chores. She goes to the garden, prepares food, bathes and washes the clothes, takes care of the younger offspring, the youngest of whom is breast-fed up to the moment contractions start and the imminent birth announces itself. By then the woman will have made the first separate hammock for the youngster who has to make space for the baby to share the mother's hammock. Meanwhile the husband, with birth approaching, is prohibited from carrying out certain activities. Being considered 'hard' and exhausting, these concern the realm of production. In particular, they refer to hunting and clearing a garden. I suggest to link the taboo on a man's engagement in these activities during the time of his wife's progressed gestation, as well as to a certain degree during her menstruation, to the strong and powerful processes of transformation and creation the couple is exposed to with the approaching birth of their child. Both forest and animals are rendered useful for the human community through the transformative activities of hunting and clearing. What had pertained to the domain of the masters of the forest is through a man's 'hard' work transformed, humanised, and rendered accessible to the human community. Meanwhile, a child's birth can be understood as an important part of the process through which a human being is rendered accessible to the community of socially living human beings. As such, the conjugal participation in conception, gestation and giving birth is itself a process of transformation. Negligence on the part of a father, for example going outside 'smelling of his wife who is about to have a child', would attract the spirits. They would then try to catch him and

\textsuperscript{208} 'The birth of a child,' in Holanda Pereira, 1985:99.
\textsuperscript{209} 'The death of the wife of a father of the forest', in Holanda Pereira, 1985:115.
bring about his death in order to eat him and his soul.

Let me now describe the birth of Shisekaisii which I was able to witness in 1994.

‘At the time when Riaki was to give birth she put her hammock in the furthest corner, next to that of her husband Tsuyabu. This meant that the hammock of Jouki, Tsuyabu’s second wife and younger sister of Riaki, was separated from her husband’s by two spaces. Up to two days before the birth, Riaki carried heavy things and participated in all household activities. Tsuyabu stayed around the house once Riaki started to feel pains. To prepare the space, he had cleared the whole house, scraped off the soil under her hammock and covered the part where his and her hammock were with virgin soil. This he had obtained by digging a deep hole in the vicinity of the house. The floor was hardened by stamping, and children were held back from playing there. Close to the hammock Riaki had dug a small hole about three feet deep.

During the night of the birth, Riaki spent hours squatting on the floor, leaning onto the hammock behind her which was tightened by her arms holding on to it. She was facing the wall away from the onlookers. Tsuyabu was the whole time positioned behind her. His hands massaged her belly and back. He used a herbal infusion to ameliorate the birth process. While everybody came to see how she was doing and the women would attend the whole process, nobody would come close to the birthing couple. Occasionally a fresh infusion would be brought and left on the floor close by. Having lots of pain Riaki actually expressed it acoustically, which was a sign that it must have been very painful since the normal reaction to pain is laughter or silence. Finally the baby-girl was born. Riaki did not receive her with her hands but let her slide onto the floor. She did not touch it in order to avoid having too much contact with her own blood. The baby was left on the floor until the placenta came out. Kataki handed her son Tsuyabu a fine cotton thread which he tied around it. Once it stopped pulsating it was cut with a little piece of buriti that
somebody had fetched, breaking it off a basket for that purpose. Once the placenta had come out Riaki pushed it together with the umbilical cord into the hole. In order not to touch it she used some cardboard. I was told that the hole had to be very deep. The placenta, cord and blood was gathered in it and well covered with soil which was then pounded. This is to avoid an animal (spirit) digging out the placenta and cord which would cause the death of the child.

Once everything was in the hole Riaki took up the baby and bathed it with the infusion that had been prepared and left near to her by a woman. The baby was put in the hammock on a piece of cloth. Tsuyabu got some more clean soil to cover the remaining bits of blood. She laid down with the baby to start breast-feeding it. The rags she lay upon were removed after some time, being stained with blood. People were called as soon as the child was born, but nobody could come close to mother or baby. The father prevented children especially from coming too close. Only the mother could touch the baby. Once she settled with her newborn and everything was cleaned away by her husband, he laid down in his hammock beside her. They were left alone since now the days of the couvade had begun. From then on the house was kept quiet, the doors that are usually open welcoming visitors held partly closed. The father was to rest for about ten days while the mother started to perform light household chores some days after birth. Until then their kin were providing food and firewood for them.

After the birth the precautionary behaviour by the couple has to be maintained. This manifests itself firstly in the couvade itself, as well as in the realm of post-couvade food consumption and engagement in productive activities. Parents of newborns are not supposed to eat meat of the white lipped peccary, nor of the

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210 Normally the Menků use a type of bamboo (*chuschea ramosissima*) for this purpose.

211 The practice of the couvade is widespread among Amazonia. See for instance Århem, 1981; Basso, 1973; Butt Colson, 1975; Da Matta, 1982; Grenand, 1984; Guss, 1989; Harner, 1972; Menget, 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1971; Rival, 1998; Rivière, 1974; Seeger, 1981; Wagley, 1977. Rather than only afflicting the mother, the ‘coming’ of a child imposes a vulnerability on the couple, thus stressing the tight substantial connection between consanguines (father/mother and their child) as well as the marital union itself.
peccary, black spider monkey, armadillo, traira fish, a characinid freshwater fish, coati, a type of monkey (bugio), tapir and guan bird.\textsuperscript{212} If they eat the meat of the white lipped peccary, peccary, or black spider monkey, this will lead to a twin birth the following pregnancy; if they eat meat of the armadillo, the child will get the fever typical of this animal; the meat of the jaô, a voracious freshwater fish, will provoke the child to cry a lot and not sleep, since that is what the jaô does; eating the meat of the tapir might cause the parents to break their back or the leg or lose sight and die. However, they can eat the meat of the tinamou bird, monkey, cichlidae fish, zananguenza, pacu, and lambari. When a child is a little older they are allowed to eat jacu and a type of pigeon (columbideo).

For up to two weeks after the birth the mother is not supposed to prepare chicha, the traditional drink, and cassava bread since otherwise the child might die. Other women prepare these for her. In turn, as Pereira (1985:100) recorded for the Iranxe, the father is prohibited from pounding fish poison, cutting the wood of certain trees or collecting maggots from the woods, since, in the place where they live, water gathers and rots, and rotting water is bad for the child.

In order to mark the end of the post-natal resting period, Pereira (ibid.) furthermore noted that the father collects leaves of the tree of the vochisia family (pau-de-tucano, vochisia tucanorum), which are very smelly and are said to resemble an old woman, under the hammock of the baby. These are heated up nearly to the point of burning, producing a lot of smoke. Several times the smoking leaves are held under the parents' hammocks surrounding father, mother and newborn baby with smoke. Then the father

\textsuperscript{212} See zoological names where known in annex.
washes his wife with an infusion made of other leaves. Finally they paint themselves with urucum before going out of the house and introducing themselves back into the community. The ideal human condition is regained.213

Menkū women control the spacing of their children’s birth with the help of medicinal plants gathered in the forest,214 thus making them responsible for their own pregnancies.215 It is the women who possess and control the knowledge about the needed medicines. They allow about three years between one child and the next. This is related to the time needed for mother and child to recuperate and to develop a certain independence from each other. Once the child has grown out of being a toddler, stays away from the mother in order to play with others, and is able to feed itself the mother usually tries to get pregnant again. The women have one medicine for postponing conception, while they use another to stop conception altogether, sterilising the woman. I was told that Kataki had by accident taken the wrong medicine after the birth of her only son Tsuyabu which prevented her from having any more children. Pereira (1974:100) writes that the Iranxe also had the means to influence the sex of the child to be born. When a woman gives birth only to girls, she will drink the infusion of a certain large leaf, if a succession of boys, the infusion of another, but small leaf. For it is the ideal to give birth to a relatively equal number of boys and girls, the relevance of which fully emerges when considering the definition of ideal marriage partners.216

213 Since I left shortly after Shisekaisii’s birth, I did not witness the marking of the end of the resting period. I thus rely here on Holanda Pereira who described this for the Iranxe. In the communal diary, the missionaries mention infusions, baths, smoke and body paint, though they do not go in any detail about the procedure.
214 This practice is common in Amazonia; see for example Viveiros de Castro (1992:185).
215 See also Overing (1986) for women’s authority over their own pregnancies.
216 See chapter 7.
6.4 Childhood

Staying among the Menkū, I was always impressed with the position children have in the community and the joyful relationship that is maintained with them. This was even more noticeable having been there with my own children who allowed me to experience this quality of the Menkū in yet another way. Indeed, the Menkū children are the reason for joy per se, in that they are the expression of the realisation of the ideal human condition. Furthermore, they are a sign of the productivity and functioning of the group which, given its particularly traumatic past, has managed to overcome the threat of its extinction. This positive attitude to children expresses itself most vividly in the relationship between parents and their children.

For the Menkū the bond between parents and child is qualitatively different from all other relationships in the community, for they assume a connection of substance between them which supersedes Western notions of biological affiliation. A connection is thus not only revealed on the basis of consanguinity, but also expressed in the subjective and affective experience of the child. Physical parental action has a direct effect upon a child, while this cannot be said in the same way for the inverse. While such connection already revealed itself during pregnancy, in the precautionary behaviour expected from parents, this special link is exemplified further during a person’s childhood. In this respect, Tsuyabu refrained from killing a jaguar that his father-in-law had wounded since, otherwise, his child would suffer illness. Senzo once stepped on a nail, shortly after which his little baby daughter began to cry. He explained that this was so because she felt pain from him having hurt himself. I would like to suggest that the Menkū child is understood to experience the consequences of its parents’ actions on a physical and emotional level, to the degree
that it can even affect the child’s life itself. Or, what happens to a child is interpreted as resulting from parental action, attention or negligence.

This relationship of shared affective substance between parents and their children is confirmed in the relatively long period of breast-feeding, and in the physical proximity maintained with babies and small children from birth onwards. The baby accompanies the mother wherever she goes and whatever she does. It is carried in a sling that was woven by the mother before the birth. The sharing of a substantial linkage between parents and child could not in the past, be extended to other adult members, even to kin as close as a mother’s sister. If a mother died her unweaned baby had to be killed and buried with her. No other lactating woman, not even a mother’s sister who in kinship terms is also known as the mother, was permitted to function as a surrogate. However, in recent times this has changed. The first expression of this could be witnessed when Engasi died. She was mother to two bigger children and to a then three months old baby girl. Engasi and her sister Iwaya were married to Senzo. Iwaya had many children herself of which the youngest was still breast-feeding. For the Menkū the nurturing of two same-age children is problematic and they used to commit infanticide when faced with a twin birth. So the community decided to give Engasi’s baby to the care of another sister, Kezusi, who could not bear any children herself. While Kezusi was very happy to be entrusted with this

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217 The Menkū could not understand how I would leave my one-and-a-half year old daughter sleeping alone in the hammock while I went to the river to have a bath. For them I should have awakened her and taken her with me while for me her sleep after a bad night was more important than her being in my immediate proximity.

218 The Menkū use cotton thread which is woven on a simple loom into a closed loop of about 5 in. width. The length is fitted to the size of the woman, allowing the child to rest on the mother’s hip.

219 This contrasts sharply with some other Amazonian groups, see for instance Viveiros de Castro on the Arawaté (1992:185), who support raising a baby whose mother has died.
task, the small community on the other hand avoided having to mourn another death. This rather new practice, which has not been repeated since Engasi's death, does, I believe not contest the unique bond a mother has with her child expressed in the traditional way of dealing with such a situation. Given the (traditional) irreplaceability of the mother, I would like to suggest to view the period of lactation as a continuation of the connection that is established between mother and child from the moment of procreation onwards. As a child would have to die in the case of its mother's death during pregnancy, so a child's life would have to be ended were the mother unable to breast-feed.

A child's well-being is reflected in its health, beauty, and a slight plumpness. The parents receive it with warmth and delight it by sometimes bringing home a small pet, such as a baby monkey, or making little toys for it. A child is carefully watched by the parents to detect any deviation from this ideal; this could manifest itself, for example, in a lack of appetite, sleeplessness, excessive crying, paleness and listlessness. Such deviation causes concern among the parents and the wider community since it is associated with the spirits taking hold of the baby. When Shisaii, just able to walk, disappeared once from the settlement and the Menkū, in fear, finally found her wandering in the forest alone, they accused a spirit of the forest, of having enticed her to come to it for the latter to kill and eat her. Another example for this understanding is a child that is thin even though it is eating enough. It is believed to be under the spell of Mamptsi. This spirit has two mouths, one of which is located in place of a hand at the end of his very long arm.

While the child is eating, the spirit reaches from a hidden place

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220 Such change, I believe, is to be explained out of the historical experience of the Menkū. On the other hand, however, this development has also to be seen in connection with an increased awareness of other ways of dealing with babies, occasioned mainly by being exposed to the missionaries and the population of Brasnorte, both of which favour a disconnection between mother and child when the mother's life is threatened.

221 See also Holanda Pereira, 1985:115.
with his arm to the plate and eats the child’s food.

Consequently, the very moment a child starts crying the alert parents lovingly console it as a matter of urgency; inattention in this evokes the disapproval of both family members and the wider community. In the rare cases that a mother gets impatient there will always be the father or other close kin to take the child and cheer it up until it is better again. Rather than getting upset about the child who cries for hours, the community would censure the mother for not being able to give the child what it needed. It supports the mother in order to guarantee the well-being of the child.

Over the years the child gains more independence. Once weaned, the children usually stay together with their friends of the same age-group. The boys often go off on forays outside the settlement to hunt small birds or collect wild fruits, while the girls tend to stay around in the settlement. The children’s independence from their parents is further mediated by the initiation rituals, coming to a climax once the child is recognised as a knowledgeable adult with independent control over their own productive and reproductive abilities. Until this time the community does not expect the young person to participate in any such economic activities, however, efforts are appreciated by everyone. The children live and learn by imitating the adults in their play. The adults enjoy making them small versions of the utensils they themselves use, while as the children get older they start doing it themselves. In this way they have learned most of the productive activities in childhood, including basketry, processing cotton into threads and hammocks, preparing food and some of the forestal remedies, and so on. They have gained profound knowledge of their environment, trained their capacities of
observing nature and different animal habitats, and are able to identify most of the animal and plant species of their surroundings.

However, in their play the children sometimes also show, what I considered, an irresponsible way of dealing with the resources of the community; for instance, damaging a banana tree in such a way that its whole crop was wasted for consumption. While I noticed myself getting upset about this and judging the children on the basis of their intentional misbehaviour (such as wasting the bananas that I had looked forward to getting a share of...), the Menkú would just smile. The women would react in the same way when a child tipped over a bowl of carefully processed small beads. Rather than reprimanding the child, the adults would greet the result with a smile. For them, the waste incurred by the child is based on its ignorance. Instead of redressing the order they laugh about the deviation from the ideal that the child has created. While the playing of the child is part of its preparation for life, it only is expected to act responsibly when turning into an adult.

This transformation is started with the initiation of boys and girls while it realises itself completely in the moment the young adult decides to marry. Marriage permits a person to direct their productive and reproductive capacities to the attainment of the ideal condition. Until then no demand is made on the young person. However, help in the domestic sphere is appreciated which ensures that one often sees girls especially helping their mothers with food production, while older boys often accompany their fathers hunting or fishing. In the following section I shall look in more detail at the process of attaining adulthood by describing the rituals of initiation for the different sexes and the engendering that follow.

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The ignorance and thus unaccountability of children is a very common notion in Amazonia. For the Piaroa see Overing, 1988; and Gow (1991), for the Piro. For an overview of cross-cultural attitudes on children, see Jahoda and Lewis (1988).
6.5 Preparing for adulthood - the initiation of boys and girls

Whilst a person is familiarised with all material aspects of production during childhood, no insight is given into the spiritual conditions underlying production and reproduction. The initiation of both boys and girls confers this knowledge upon them. It is then that a person is believed able to master the knowledge which will empower it to manage the impact of supernatural beings on the central aspects of human society. The spirits are directly linked to the production of food and people. As well as this they dominate the forest and sometimes roam in the gardens or wander about in the settlement. Unless human beings acknowledge their presence and appease them by acting correctly, they can endanger human life.

During the initiation the young person is introduced to the workings of the spirits and learns how to carry out the role that his or her sex confers, and how to act during the ritual. Given the importance of acquiring the skills that define the human condition, it is understandable why the announcement of a child's initiation is met with so much excitement and happiness, especially on the part of its parents. It is a signal to the community of the youngster's readiness to take up the responsibilities of adulthood which only realise themselves fully once the young person marries. Furthermore, initiation redefines the group with which a person socialises. While during childhood the person was predominantly attached to their parents they now enter a realm of untied adolescents who are drawn to stay with their same-sex and same-age friends. Involving themselves in the productive activities of the parent with whom they share the same sex is not done on the basis of the parent-child linkage but on the basis of sharing the same sex. Especially for boys the strong connection to the mother
is dissolved with the ritual. For girls this is not so obvious since they continue to help the mother in the productive activities as before and remain close to her during their whole life due to the uxorilocal residence pattern practised by the Menkū. There is no obligation for the adolescent to help in production; however, their support is appreciated.

6.5.1 The initiation of boys

The initiation focusses on the boy's introduction to the secret of the Yetá. It reveals the mystery of the incorporation of the spirits in the Yetá which the uninitiated child is not supposed to have known or seen until then. Apart from that, the boy is taught how to mediate the spirits' voices in their communication with humanity. Furthermore, he is introduced to the way society is dependent upon the spirits and how these have to be included in productive activities in order to ensure abundance.

Considering that the ritual is nowadays conducted at a younger age, it seems appropriate to assume a weakening of the significance of the ritual in the creation of adulthood as, now, age is the factor deciding in the last instance a man's capacities to produce. Normally, the ritual is performed for a group of youngsters, however it can also be staged when there is only one boy of initiation age. After contact with the Iranxe the latter brought their boys to be initiated together with those of the Menkū. As no initiation was conducted during my stay among the Menkū I shall refer to the missionaries' communal diary: 223

Amarante: [14.2.1983] Iwaya asked me whether I had understood

223 While the missionary Amarante was able to participate with the women, Lisbôa accompanied the men. Since, for this ritual both sides are important, I have included them here in the way they appear in the diary. However in my above translation I have omitted some parts which are unconnected to the event. I have maintained the use of past and present tense as it is used by the writers.
what the men were saying. Early tomorrow morning, the men would go out with the Yetá, the most important sacred voice of the mythic ancestors, to fetch maize, and Waturu would be initiated. Being the mother of Waturu she was very happy and explained that now he was a grown-up. Tomorrow he will go with the men, he will get to know the Yetá, therefore the father himself will be the one who will give chicha to him. She will not be able to give it to him, since he will stay there in the house of the Yetá and Karagabu and Ikibu will look after him. Afterwards he will stay there for the night with these two boys who had already undergone initiation before. We fell asleep with the good news.

[15.2.1983] The men took the chicha to the Yetá before 6.30 a.m. Then the men left. Waturu came to get his boots: he is all painted with annatto and seems curious and afraid at the same time.224 Senzo, his father, came to talk to me, very happy that now his son would get to know the Yetá. Iwaya painted herself, and me too. The women went to fetch sugar cane and we spent from 9 a.m. to noon at the mill making sugar cane juice for the chicha. We stayed together in the big house. The women preferred not to spend too much time away from the house, fearing that the Yetá would suddenly appear. We talked. Iwaya said that in the morning Waturu had been afraid, crying a bit. The women taught me how to respond when all talk together during the arrival of the Yetá. They arrived at about 2.30 p.m. and, in spite of coverings at the door, women and children peeped freely through the holes. Yauka [alias Lisbõa, the male missionary] tells:

Lisbõa: Arriving at the maize garden, accompanied by the Yetá, the
men go to the very the end of the garden and return from there, playing the Yetá and stopping in front of Waturu, who is sitting on a fallen tree trunk, beside his father, Senzo, who embraces him. Afterwards, Zalaku, Zalakussi, Yoshiku, Tsuyabu, Ikibu, Tsuno and Wasurebu, everyone at a time, talk to the boy, explaining him. The boy’s father spoke first. Waturu maintained a serious expression. Zalaku talked most and insisted that the boy should not tell anything to the women and young girls. After this they played a little bit more the Yetá and went to collect the maize. Coming back to the settlement, Waturu went to the house of the Yetá, without being seen by the women and girls, and there he stayed laying in the hammock. Much chicha was offered to the Yetá.

Amarante: At 5.30 p.m. the Yetá comes out. They say that it comes out early so that Waturu can see it well. During the whole night there was a lot of participation in the ritual and ritual weeping came from Iwaya and her mother, Shiseki.

[16.2.1983] The day starts nice, continuing yesterday’s heat. The women grate cassava. Later, some women mill sugar cane and Iwaya asks us to help her. The Yetá comes out at 7.30 p.m..

[17.2.1983] The Yetá is withdrawn at 5.30 a.m.. In the afternoon, Iwaya explains that the men are very tired of dancing for two consecutive nights and, therefore, the Yetá will not come out. They will only play a bit there in the house of the Yetá for Waturu to see. I went to fetch cassava in Iwaya’s garden.

[18.2.1983] Iwaya calls for people to help her mill sugar cane.

<sup>225</sup> According to Pereira (1974:37) the place where they show the Yetá to the boy has to be ‘clean’, that is cleared virgin soil. The maize garden offers itself therefore as it is the first crop planted in a newly cleared patch of forest. This location is furthermore significant as the first planting and harvest of maize is always done in connection with the Yetá. Apart from that, maize is a key ingredient for the traditional drink without which the ritual of the sacred Yetá could not take place. I have no data about the significance of virgin soil, but I believe its importance is linked to the fact that it has not been used and thereby exposed to potent human transformative powers before. As we saw above, also for child birth the soil under the hammock onto which the baby is born, is covered with ‘fresh’ soil, thus reducing the danger of subjecting the newborn to powers the soil is imbued with by the potentially destructive activities of spirits, ancestors or humans.
Chicha is offered to the Yetá. The Yetá comes out. It is the fourth day of the initiation.

[19.2.1983] Very beautiful Yetá performance in the night with long discourses at dawn and ritual weeping of Engasi, Iwaya's sister and second wife of Senzo. In the afternoon Waturu comes out with Karagabu, but only crossing the terrain. The women insist again (all these days of the Yetá they talked about it) that I have to respond together with them, and that they will teach me the responses to the Yetá in the night.

[20.2.1983] Later in the afternoon Waturu arrives! Practically six days of seclusion. Today he went out with the father and the other men and they went quite far into the forest, where there was no water and they had taken no food. They saw armadillos, monkeys and other game which they followed. Waturu tells of every truck that they passed when walking close to the federal road. He is very tired.

The initiation ends with the reintroduction of the initiate into the community. In former times, the young man would be held in seclusion for one cycle of the moon during which time he was continuously looked after and taught about how to live with the ancestral spirits and the way they manifest themselves in the earthly realm. However, as early as 1979 the missionaries recorded only a week's seclusion of the initiate.\(^\text{226}\) Upon the end of the period in the house of the Yetá the father takes the initiate back to the parental house where he stays one more day in the hammock. During this time he is not supposed to talk to anybody, not even to his mother. If he needs anything he has to ask his father for it with a very low voice. After this day the boy's association with the group of men able to produce and reproduce is confirmed a last

\(^{226}\) Given the small size of the group it might be probable that this shortening of the time of seclusion was related to the scarcity of initiated men able to carry out this intensive accompaniment of the initiate while, at the same time, having to provide for the community.
time by accompanying them on the hunt and during the celebration of the Yetá. From now on he is not to play or walk together with girls or uninitiated boys. As well as this contact with the mother and all other women is avoided. The mother cannot feed her son any more, which is exemplified by the chicha that has to be given to the son by the father. Nor can she or any other woman talk to him when he crosses the central square. This is a metaphoric expression of the boy’s transient separation from the female realm. The youngster enters a transitory state of limbo without responsibilities. It is a state of lethargy in which ultimately two important features of (future) good living are suspended: Access to sex and a woman’s food. As such, adolescence represents more freedom compared to married men in so far as there are no obligations especially for young males, while it represents less freedom in so far as the young man is unable to use his own and a wife’s procreative and productive powers. The rights to a woman’s food, care and communication that he had with his mother will only be regained in a transformed way once the young man has grown up and marries. Until then he eats in his parent’s or his older sister’s house, although his parent’s prime concern now turns away from him and concentrates on the feeding and procreation of his younger siblings.227

The break from the female realm brought about by the ritual is replaced by turning the initiate into a potential sexual partner. The adolescent girls and married women who used to relate to him as a child, belonging to the same age group, now avoid open interaction. Having reached the age of marriageability, the young man is attracted to them in search of food, and sex. This applies especially to those unmarried young women which belong to the category of marriageable girls, as they are his potential spouses.

227 Crocker (1979:270) states for the Bororo a similar pattern of bachelors, children, and at times old people, eating in the house of the closest female consanguineal kin.
and excludes his sisters. As such, the ritual creates the preconditions for new affinal relations in the community.

The uxorilocal residence pattern supports the twofold development of breaking the linkage especially with the mother while procuring affiliation with potential spouses and their kin. During the ritual this is expressed in a metaphoric way. When the initiate is to be prepared for the ritual he distances himself from the mother by saying that he has to go now, but that he will come back. He leaves her and the house, participating in the ritual of the Yetá thenceforth from the other side. The outside is at the same time the space of the ‘other’.

Once initiated, the young man displays his newly acquired adulthood by having his nose and ears pierced; he can now be adorned with earrings, necklaces, and feather gear worn at the nose, and fingerings.

Earrings and necklaces are made of a loop of tucum thread (astrocarium vulgar) on which beads of shell from a small coconut are threaded. For the beads, the women begin by smashing the small dried coconut fruits. The little pieces are pierced nowadays with a needle that is attached to a straight stick and twisted between the hands. Then a pointed metal rod is inserted into the hole, and with a bush knife the edges of the small piece are cut off until it is round. Once enough beads have been produced in this lengthy process, they are threaded on the tucum string. Small sticks are inserted into the ground at a distance which corresponds to the length of the untied necklace. The women grab a handful of stones, wet them, and move their hand along the string, thus smoothing the beads with the

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228 In fact, even though I had children I was told by the women to avoid walking in the forest or going to Brasnorte with bachelors. I will elaborate the notion of marriageability in the following chapter.
stones. Once they are all beautifully evened, they are oiled to allows them acquiring a beautiful brilliance.\textsuperscript{229}

The nose panache is mainly worn at times of celebration and ritual. Small toucan feathers are tied to a small bamboo shoot until they form a tuft. When reaching puberty, the father or an older man sends the boy to take a bath so that the cartilage in his nose soften. The man pierces the boy’s cartilage with the thorn of the tucum tree and puts a small piece of wood tightly through the hole so that it does not close and it becomes enlarged. Once the first piece of wood gets soft and old the father or older man replaces it with a slightly thicker one until the hole is big enough to have the nose panache put in.

Before becoming acquainted with shorts, young men started to wear a loincloth upon initiation, that was made out of a rectangular piece of woven cotton cloth fastened onto a waist lace.

\textbf{6.5.2 The initiation of girls}

As may have become clear above, the boy’s initiation is quite a public affair, involving not only all the initiated men during the exposure of the boy to the Yetá, but also all the initiated women when staging the ritual of the Yetá. Meanwhile the girl’s initiation is a more private affair, excluding the same-sex and cross-sex members of the community that have undergone initiation and leaving the sole care of the initiate to the mother herself. It does not centre around the ritual of the Yetá but is, as in many other Amazonian societies, linked to the beginning of the procreative phase of a woman’s life, marked by the first menstruation. As such, it is connected to the highly ambivalent substance of blood, which,\textsuperscript{229} It is up to the men to make rings, the fabrication of which was introduced by the Iranxe in 1974. Both rings and necklaces are nowadays sold for the generation of some income.
so the myth says, spirits like the smell of. The attraction of the spirits symbolises on another level the life threatening danger with which the menstrual/female blood is especially imbued. This is reminiscent of a woman’s avoidance of childbirth blood, as shown above.

In parallel to the location of the boys’ initiation in the garden and in the house of the sacred Yetá - the two inter linked spaces of the male transformative activities - the initiation of girls takes place at the primary locus of a woman’s transformative activities, in the house. With the announcement of the daughter’s first menses, the mother takes the girl’s hammock and ties it in a corner of the house where the girl is to stay lying down for the duration of bleeding. The Menkú confirmed that in former times they built a special house for the initiation of the girls in which they would stay during the time of seclusion. Today they try to compromise by putting the girl in the darkest corner of the house that is furthest away from possible interaction and participation in community life. As in the case of the boys nobody should talk to the girl and if she has to ask for something she does it in a low voice to her mother.

During her seclusion the girl is allowed to eat cassava bread, red groundnuts, broad beans, drink honey mixed with water, and avoid most meats. The mother places the food quietly at the bottom of her hammock and converses with her. She is introduced to the features of womanhood, especially those linked to reproduction and the responsibilities of marriage. She is taught the taboos she has to observe as a woman, when menstruating in the future, in pregnancy, childbirth, and during the time, when she can bear

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See for instance the myth of ‘the girl and the wolf’ in Holanda Pereira, 1985:215.
Leaving her seclusion, the girl is ready to engage in the productive activities of the community. Even though there is no obligation to do so, she continues to help her mother with domestic chores. Usually very soon after the initiation the girl is courted by unmarried men. Since being seen together they would feel shame they tease each other out of sight of the community. ‘Finding’ each other is a very individual, private affair that resounds strongly with the high valuation of personal autonomy. Eventually, however, the parents and the community notice any apparent pregnancy. The end of the state of limbo that they have entered with their initiation dawns. It is finalised with the confirmation of fatherhood by the father tying his hammock next to that of his prospective wife.

In fact, there is a ritualised game of mutual teasing between the sexes which is fuelled by marital and general flirtatious desires. It is usually started by adolescents, though in the course of the game all age groups are drawn in. At the time when ‘karapicho,’ a type of burdock ripens, girls gather handfuls in hiding. Suddenly they run to where a group of young men sits and throw the burdock into the hair. While running away, the men prepare their retaliation by pulling the little sticky balls out of their hair and gathering more. A silence precedes their revenge which ends up in a joyful scuffling of groups of people ‘attacking’ each other. Once all material is used up, both parties recede to gather more. Suddenly, one can see a group of children copying the adults, as well as older people getting involved in the game. Attacking groups suddenly disappear into a house, only to emerge

\[231\] During my stay at the settlement Zosaki had her first menses, however, I was unable to get a more detailed account of the teachings of the mother. According to the diaries, also the missionaries had never managed to obtain more data, apart from noting that the initiation was taking place.
from them later with empty hands. Lots of laughter is generated in the varying defeats and victories, until eventually the game dies down to sometimes be picked up again the next day. 232

6.6 Attaining adulthood - marriage and the management of production and reproduction

Apart from the parents' expression of support or dislike for their child's choice, they are unable to have any further influence upon the decision of their child and the prospective partner. This is especially so when both marriage partners are old enough to express their intentions freely. In such a case a young man wanting to marry would indicate his wishes to his own family as well as to the father of the desired girl. As Pereira (1974:84) reports for the Iranxe, the father would then consult his daughter, wife, and other relatives. If all concur, the father communicates his family's consent to his prospective son-in-law, upon which the latter starts to fish and hunt and collect honey for his future wife. The girl, in turn, signals her interest in the marriage by providing her future spouse with cassava bread and chicha which she brings to his house.

Meanwhile, a young child can be promised by the parents to a potential future spouse or to prospective parents-in-law. I was told that, when Katakisi, the oldest daughter of Tsuyabu was born, she was at once promised to Shunju, the youngest son of Shiseki. When she was grown up, however, she married Karagabu, the oldest son of Shiseki's daughter. There have been several cases in which the girl, having just been initiated, is still very young and reacts to the looming actualisation of the promise with uncertainty. Here it is the parents who overrule the child's reaction by explaining her reaction not as an expression of dislike but as being linked to her

232 The game is not mentioned by Pereira for the Iranxe, nor do the missionaries take note of it.
young age. Among the Menkū there were more cases of marriages where the girl was very young, with the prospective husband much older, rather than the reverse. During such a long wait, the betrothed would look after his future wife and try to express his care when possible. Pereira (1974:84) mentions that there were even cases of men raising a girl in order to marry her afterwards. The inverse is uncommon.

Apart from promising a child as a spouse, it can also be offered. This was the case of Hokusi who was offered to the missionary Lisbōa by her parents. His repeated withdrawal of his acceptance saddened the parents as, so they said, a girl that is rejected several times will not marry in the future. (In the end, however, they did marry and have two children.)

A couple indicate the finalisation of their marriage by the man tying his hammock close to that of his future wife, ending a longer or shorter period of courting. The fact is acknowledged by the community with contentment. While no other ceremony surrounds this act, the happiness of the community expressed itself in some cases by the staging a Yetā ritual or the dance of the katêtiri.

The couple now represents a new unit in the predominantly endogamous community. By having married, the man and woman have attained the ideal human condition they have been supposed to be striving for since birth. Similar to most of the spirits who only

233 However, this does not necessarily imply that the man is of an ascendent generation in relation to the girl. It can be, as in the case of Riaki and Tsuyabu, that the woman is of an ascendent generation, though the husband older in years.
234 To give an example, this was so for Kezusi when being married to Zalaku, and for Atarikii when being married to Zalakussi.
235 Cases of men rearing young girls for later marriage are not unusual for Amazonia, see for example Rivière (1969:161), who furthermore states that among the Trio the inverse is also uncommon.
exist in the duality of man and woman, an initiated woman or man who does not marry - provided there are suitable marriage partners - would be considered an anomaly. The human experience of the married couple is furthermore the basis for the classification of the universe. This perception of duality being the proper form of existence is reflected in Menkū numerology which only consists of the numbers one, two and many. Anything above two is not further differentiated.

As a couple, a man and woman enter into the circle of sociality which is based on sharing and the creation of its precondition, i.e. production. Being married, they master together the skills and transformative forces involved in the production of food and people. This enables them to give and receive from other households as equal participants. Until that time they could only benefit from the outcome of their parent's production and from sharing with other households.

The unity of the duality of husband and wife is transcended by the couple's procreative activities. By giving birth to children the couple participates in yet another form in the generation of communality. Apart from abundant food, many children guarantee the survival of the human community. It is the abundance of both which the couple has to ensure and which only the the spouses cooperating and complementing each other are able to produce. The riches of both are the foundation of all happiness and signal a community's well-being.

236 Thus Menkū evaluation of the married couple stresses the marital togetherness rather than marriage as a relationship with (as for the Araweté otherworldly) affines. See Viveiros de Castro (1992:218) but also Descola (1996) whose data parallels that of Viveiros de Castro in relation to the evaluation of marriage.

237 This is - among many others - very similar to Airo Pai (Belaunde, 1992) and Pemon (Thomas, 1982) notions of conjugality.

238 Also Gow (1991) and McCallum (1989) have pointed to the relevance of these two aspects of married life.
The union of husband and wife in marriage produces a unity from a formerly dual experience. They not only depend on each other's capacities to produce, conferred onto them by their sex, but are also affected by each other's states of being. This is especially evident in a man's cautious behaviour when his wife is menstruating, pregnant, or rearing young children. Whereas previously a young man had been free to do what he liked he now has to observe particular rules in order not to endanger the outcome of his own and his wife's productive activities. By disregarding those he would not only damage the outcomes of the conjugal unity but also the community as a whole. To a lesser extent, the marital bond resounds in the caring attitude of the spouses towards each other. There is a concern for the other's well-being which expresses itself most clearly in providing for each other, as for instance by collecting firewood for the wife before going off on a collective hunt, and sending game to the settlements while on the hunt.\textsuperscript{239} The illness of a partner causes concern and the spouse seeks to bring about quick improvement.

Being so highly valued and taking a central position in the production of community, a break-up of a marital unit causes concern. While the odd fight between spouses might happen, this rarely leads to a split. Rather, a lot is done by the parents and the community to ensure a reconciliation of those involved. If the marriage partners are irreconcilable, one of them, usually the man, will leave the settlement. This presents difficulties, especially for the parental household, since now the male responsibilities have all to be carried out by the father of the divorced daughter.\textsuperscript{240} It is noteworthy that those marriages that did split all involved Iranxe

\textsuperscript{239} Even though the father is away to hunt appreciated game, his absence is lamented back at the settlement.

\textsuperscript{240} See Rosengren (1987) for a similar account on the Matsiguenka.
Some years after contact, Shunju (Menkū) married Kalaki (Iranxe) with whom he had four children. After having spent several years living among the Menkū, she insisted that they move to the Iranxe settlement at the river Cravari. Shunju agreed, much to the disappointment of the Menkū who wanted the family to stay. Things were not going very well between the couple and eventually Shunju returned to the Menkū on his own. He still hopes to marry again, however, he has not done so. This was first due to a lack of suitable girls and, once they had grown up, it was due to them preferring to marry a younger man. The community supported the various girls in question, especially since Waturu, Karagabu and Shuo'u had not had a wife before and should have a chance now. Shunju’s eldest son Nozu, from his marriage with Kalaki, married Iwaya’s daughter Shisaii. He wanted her to live in the Cravari as well, even though that contradicts Menkū uxorilocal residence patterns. She agreed for some time only to be fetched by her parents a few years later because she was known to be beaten up by him severely.¹²⁴¹

Neither the missionaries nor myself were able to account for any split apart from those two marriages mentioned above. I would argue that apart from the Menkū stress on conjugal harmony the high valuation of the marital bond among them can also be related to their traumatic past. While the experiences the group has gone through have generated increased solidarity among its members, anybody who would have wanted to split would have had no place to go. Leaving the group would have equalled an attempted suicide and signified the loss of a procreator vital for the regrowth of the group. While fission is devalued due to its effect on the community, the latter deals differently with extra-marital affairs. They are not approved of and anger the spouse. The cases mentioned above in which a man ‘helped’ another man to make the latter’s wife pregnant, are dealt with differently since they not only guarantee

¹²⁴¹ Personal communication with Amarante.
the actual husband's potential to become a father but also ensure the growth of the community.

6.7 Old age
When a person's reproductive potential is exhausted, they begin to enter a new life-stage. Caring for a large household gives way to looking merely after the needs of the spouse and participating in the gendered activities of production. In the same way as the older person is not expected to help the daughter in looking after her children, the free roaming adolescents are not obliged to support the elders. Often I have found myself helping the old couples of Katakai and Wasurebu or Zalakussi and Zosaki when they were at the sugar cane mill, since none of the younger people felt obliged to do so. My pity for them, probably resulting from a different attitude to old age conveyed to me in my upbringing, was strengthened by the fact that the mill is technically and strengthwise difficult to operate by only two people.

Even though a household, the older couple is not included in the cycles of sharing in the same way as those with children. In return, the smaller outcome of the couple's productive activities which are related to the decrease in physical strength and changed needs are also not shared out in the same way. The households with which the most intimate relationships are maintained are those of the couple's children, specifically those of daughters. Thus the old Iranxe couple, Zosaki and Zalakussi, often were left out since they had no direct relatives in the settlement, exemplifying the need for endogamous conviviality.\textsuperscript{242}

The decrease in the couple's social involvement accompanying old age is complemented by an increase in skills and knowledge. This knowledge relates especially to knowledge of the spiritual and...
ancestral world and their manipulation during rituals. Since there are no shamans or curers among the Menkū, it is especially the responsibility of the elders to take up this position and ensure the spirits’ benevolence towards the human community. As such they have an important function in the preparation of young adults for the responsibilities they have to take up with adulthood. Their more profound knowledge of reality is furthermore reflected in a better use of resources. For instance, comparing the gardens and the ways these were managed, it was very obvious that the older Menkū used many more practices enhancing biodiversity and pest management. However, while a person becomes more knowledgeable with old age, senility represents a deviation from the ideal human condition. This is reflected in the myths in the negative connotations of ugliness and loss of physical strength ascribed to old age. In spite of such apparent negative evaluation of the elderly, this human condition is nevertheless accepted because of its irreversibility. In his analysis of the myth of the origin of the moon (Pereira 1974:82) Meneses and Lima (1974:29) argues that old age and the alternation of generations is a necessity for the maintenance of the order of the world. If the dead could resuscitate and the old people could rejuvenate, there would be no place for the young people. He compares this to the

243 My husband Tadeu, who is an agricultural engineer and spent some time together with me in the field, came to this conclusion after extensively accompanying the Menkū men to their gardens and being shown the plants and measures they were taking in order to ensure a good crop.

244 In the myth of the new sun (‘O Sol Novo’. In: Holanda Pereira 1985:45) the wives of the old sun want to find a younger husband because the old one eats a lot, does not share and cannot hunt much anymore; The old man cannot hunt quick enough to feed the three orphans who came to clear his garden upon his request (‘Os três irmãos orfãos’, in: ibid.:127). The rugged skin of Mampitsi’s - another mistress of the forest breast is refused by the baby (‘A morte da mulher do pai-do-mato’, in: ibid.:115) The old woman wants to offer her young daughters to the bat to go in to the forest to fetch ants instead of her. Since he refuses she has to go with him. She suspected he wanted to have intercourse with her, which shamed her due to her age. Her daughters would have been suitable, however, he wanted to invert the order. As a consequence she tears off a piece of her vagina and sticks it to the bat’s nose, marking him forever in a most visible way for his trespasses, while she, out of shame over her daughter’s discovery turned into a toad (‘A velha virou sapo’, in: ibid.:199)
disturbance that would be brought about in the social order by incest and the lack of exchanging marriage partners among different families. He envisions these two existential factors of the maintenance of society as a woven cloth in which the axis of generations forms the vertical thread, guaranteeing the diachronic succession of society in time. Complementing this is the horizontal thread which is represented by the axis of family units guaranteeing synchronic alliances in space. While the former is advocated by the irreversibility of old age and sanctioned by death, the latter is assured by the sacrosanctness of mothers, sisters and daughters, authenticated by the taboo of incest.

6.8 Death
As much as old age is a necessity for the continuity of society, the death of a person enriches the ancestral world which, in the final instance, protects that of the humans on earth. While representing an abrupt ending for those the dead leave behind, the Menkū understand death as a moment of translocation and metamorphosis. The dead person leaves his or her body behind in order for the soul to travel to the realm of the souls.

Goldman states that the Cubeo have no great interest in speculating openly about the life of the spirits and souls of the dead, since, except for the Ancients, they have no formal relationship with them. The point is to break the relationship with the dead in spite of the nostalgia that defines the memory of shared moments (1979:261.) Given the scarcity of data relating to Menkū conceptions of afterlife, a similar context seems to suggest itself. As for the Cubeo, Menkū conceptions of afterlife suggest a lack in ingredients that are associated with vital intensity, which realises itself fully only in production and reproduction. Like

\[245\] The same applies to the Araweté for whom only the kinship relations between the dead and the living are pertinent. (Viveiros de Castro, 1992:216.)
among the Piaroa, in death an eternal youthful state is reached which is paradoxically characterised by a loss of all (re-) productive capacities. (Overing, 1993)²⁴⁶ 'Real food' as prepared by living human beings is thus unavailable for souls of the deceased. Craving it the souls descend to fetch it, albeit unsuccessfully. In turn, the souls of the dead are unable to feed the humans when visiting the abode of the former, since what looks on first sight like food to the visitors is only excrement. Having no earthly resources, and no productive powers to exert on their immaterial environment, the souls can only - self-sufficiently and auto-cannibalistically - ingest what comes out of them.²⁴⁷ Parallel to not engaging in productive activities, the souls of the deceased do not possess the capabilities of reproduction, although they keep their gendered nature. Arrival at the place of the souls which is presided by Nahi is by death on earth. Furthermore, the activities of nurturing, education, and socialisation are absent at Nahi's place. Instead, the bath with annatto transforms everybody arriving there at once into a person of the (ideal) age characteristic of the producing and reproducing adult on earth. The souls of the deceased are described as bathing, playing and eating excrement.²⁴⁸ At night time they do not sleep but some of them transform into snakes. Lacking those activities that define the earthly condition, life in the celestial abode is stripped of sense and sociality, the generation of which is intimately linked to productive and reproductive activities that are generally performed in cooperation with others. Viveiros de Castro (1992:216) defined this state as

²⁴⁶ See also Belaunde, 1992 for the AiroPai.
²⁴⁷ See Viveiros de Castro's (1992:216) for the notion of 'auto-cannibalism' characteristic to the other-worldly existence of the dead, and Overing, 1993.
²⁴⁸ The soul's existence is thus defined by a paradox. While all have the physical youth characteristic of a producing and reproducing adult, there is no need to engage in these activities. The 'creation' of people able to produce and reproduce, which constitutes the main reason of earthly existence is taken over by a simple bath. Likewise, the Piaroa conceive of the fornication with a sibling as sterile. Such relationship cannot be a source of sociality.
characterised by a ‘blissful indifferent identity’.²⁴⁹

Apart from the physical similarity the souls of the deceased have with the producing and reproducing living adults, they share with them the generation of the sounds associated with the Yetá. As we saw above,²⁵⁰ it is these sounds which are the mediation between the living and the dead. Through them the members of these two spheres can communicate, quenching the mutual yearning and longing of dead and living for another. As long as this yearning is channelled by the performance in the ritual, and the souls of the ancestors are fed during the ritual, the living can continue to live well. Protection of human society comes from the archetypal spirits of the souls of the ancestors as they manifest themselves in the various ways. As the souls of the dead are said to have staged a discourse in which they remembered their life on earth, the living do the same when individually staging a ritual of weeping.²⁵¹ Independent from staging these rituals that invite and enable the presence of the ancestors, individual souls of the deceased can express their longing for togetherness by visiting the living in the form of a tame animal. A pretext for ‘coming down’ can be the desire for foraging earthly food.²⁵² Being unchannelled, such visits often represent a danger since they lastly aim at enticing a living to come along to the abode of the souls of the dead.²⁵³ When afflicted by such a soul, specialist help is needed in order to free the afflicted person from the attraction to the realm

²⁴⁹ Such a notion is widespread in Amazonia and elsewhere. For Amazonia see for instance Viveiros de Castro (1992) for the Araweté; Maybury Lewis (1974) for the Shavante; Carneiro da Cunha (1981), for the Kraho; C. Hugh Jones (1979) for the Tukano; Overing (1984) for the Piaroa.
²⁵⁰ See chapter 5 on the complex of the Yetá, above.
²⁵¹ See chapter 3, above.
²⁵² Similar to the Cubeo, among whom the shaman can hear and see the souls of the deceased. See Goldman, (1963)1979:259.
²⁵³ Goldman (op.cit.:260) notes that the dead can constitute a nuisance, since shortly after death their soul comes back to the house hoping to entice a sibmate to go with him. See also Gow, 1991.
of the dead, and thus from death itself.\textsuperscript{254}

\section*{6.8.1 Seeing the souls of the dead}

The ability to 'visit' the place of the souls, and to discern their presence or involvement in earthly incidents, is characteristic of the wise man, one who can see.\textsuperscript{255} As Goldman (1979) and Hugh Jones (1979) pointed out for groups of the northwest Amazon, this capacity is intimately linked to shamanistic capacities. The Menkū have, however, no explicit form of shamanism. Asked whether they did have shamans before, they seemed to say that the role of the shaman and curer had been incorporated into that of the chief. In so far as the chief's house was, and still is, the closest to the house of the Yetā, this could be partially true. Yet I believe, if that was the case it must have been a historical development caused by the extermination of shamans earlier this century or even before when Suyá tribes still conducted head hunting raids on Menkū/Iranxe settlements.\textsuperscript{256} With the disappearance of shamans, also their shamanistic knowledge became unavailable. If both former and present chiefs, Tsuno and Wasurebu, did have some shamanistic cognizance, it was not sufficient to deal with all problematic cases during the last decades. Such perception seems to be supported by the fact that in some cases the Menkū have called a Nambikwara shaman to detect the whereabouts of disturbing souls and spirits. Using a Nambikwara ritual, the called shaman came each time with his immediate family and resided for some days among the Menkū. Against a lot of payment in the form of harvest produce, tools, hammocks and artifacts he successfully pulled out...

\textsuperscript{254} Gow mentions the danger of nostalgia which is to be explained out of this fact.

\textsuperscript{255} In the myths, knowledgeable wise people are always male. There abilities seem to stretch further than just the interaction with souls of the dead, since is also a myth about the capacity to see and hear what is happening at a distant place on earth, see Holanda Pereira, 1985:159; and another one about the ability of a knowledgeable man to communicate with the spirits of the forest and ensure their support for his endeavours, see op.cit.:191.

\textsuperscript{256} See chapter 2, above.
different items from the body of the afflicted person who had been bitten by a snake and fallen ill.257

6.8.2 Nahi, the host of the realm of the dead
A Menkū woman once told the missionary Amarante that when a Menkū arrives at the house of Nahi, Nahi receives, embraces, really embraces strongly and says to that person, 'Now you will stay here, you can stay, you can live here'. Thus, the tender welcoming is one of the key features of Nahi.258 (Amarante, 1983:10) In an Iranxe myth, Nahi, and his assistant Ijnuli, are described as being good. We are told this by a deer, who, given the food prohibitions imposed on the consumption of deer meat for the Iranxe, is closely related to old age.259 It was also the body of a deer in which the soul of an old woman used to go down to the earth to collect beans. This association of the deer with the cognizance of the realm of the souls of the dead can, I suggest, be explained out of the fact that it is the elderly who know these things as they are older, and thus more knowledgeable and closest to death and afterlife.

In contrast to the souls of the deceased, Nahi is the only one in the celestial abode able to offer real food to the visitors, and share it well with them.260 He is also the only one able to discern between visitors and permanent residents of his place, thus paralleling shamanistic capacities. These two aspects imbue him with the ability to receive people when these come to him. The spirit Nahi has been compared to God who receives the souls in his realm.261 His benevolence and generosity illustrate the ideal human behaviour. He is welcoming even though, according to the myth, it is not he who calls the people to come. As Nahi says, the reason for

257 See missionaries' diary.
258 See also subsequent chapter.
259 Only old people can eat deer meat among the Iranxe, while this meat is not eaten by Menkū.
260 I will return to the importance of good sharing for human sociality in chapter 8.
their coming is associated with the soiling activities of the tapir - who, in another myth, emerged from the incestuous desires of three brothers. Death, then, is caused by asocial behaviour, and it is the task of Nahi’s assistant, Ijnuli, to call the souls of the living to come and ascend to the place of Nahi. Apart from Nahi’s social abilities, the celestial life of the souls of the dead lack all the aspects which guarantee sociality on earth. As such the Menkū perception of the realm of the souls of the dead relates to a contrastive mode of non-existence.

6.8.3 Ajnan, consumer of dead bodies
While the soul ascends to the place of Nahi, the dead body attracts the spirit Ajnan who lives off devouring cadavers. However, as he can also eat those who are still alive, the death of a person is feared due to the danger of him eating any of the living. The missionary Moura who worked in Utiariti with the Iranxe related the dramatic scenes after the death of one of them to this fear of potentially being devoured alive by Ajnan (1960:11.) He refers here in specific to the men who, with their bow and arrow, go to the outside of the house of the deceased where they shout to the spirits. This lasts for several hours when the shouting is slowly replaced by a ritualised weeping. While coming to terms with the loss, individual Menkū will stage such a ritualised invocation of the dead at any moment they remember the dead. This can be years later.262

6.8.4 Burial
The body of the dead is examined for traces of the cause of death. Amarante recalls:

[31.10.1992] ‘Once they had lowered Engasi’s body in the hammock to the floor, the red marks were evident. There was only shouting. But the

262 See chapter 3 on ritual weeping, above.
red marks are certainly signs of the infusion she had received, the marks on the back came of all the effort of the agony she went through yesterday. Only that - and this brought about the general panic - Shiseki [her mother] turned her to the side where she found a large red triangular mark. It had the colour of blood, bright red. All shouted at the same time, a weeping of the general panic, a fear without name that took hold of the Menkú. It really was a spirit who killed her, the triangular mark was the sign of the poisoned arrow. Then we got to know that some four days earlier Engasi went to have a bath close to the tank and brush wood. She came back with a fright, telling that she had suddenly felt something biting her at the side of her back. She tried to find the chicken that she thought had caused it but could not locate it. Nobody mentioned this all the last days when she received the infusion. All look at the mark, nobody touches it, they decide not to bathe her and lift the body in the hammock into the coffin that they had made from some planks. They cover her with her blanket and start to put all her belongings in the coffin.

Once a person has died the body is wrapped in their hammock. Traditionally this was then wrapped in the bark of the piuva-roxa tree. With a rope of vine the wrapping was then tightened at the height of the head and the feet. Nowadays instead of collecting the bark they make a coffin, the use of which has been introduced by Iranxe, who themselves learned it from the missionaries while at Utiariti. A deep hole is dug where the deceased used to have their hammock. All the belongings are gathered and put into the hole as well. Everything is covered with soil and the house is left. The family members of the deceased move out. Another house can only be built on the same spot once the old house has collapsed. With the prolonged residence in a particular place and the more stable construction of a house, this custom has changed in such a way that

263 The mark that they found was elsewhere associated with the agency of a particular master of the forest. See Holanda Pereira, 1985.

264 The burial of the dead in the house where the deceased used to dwell is a common feature in Amazonia. See for instance Goldman ([1963]1979:186) and C. Hugh-Jones (1979:108).
they have nowadays a special house where they bury the dead. It is a building without walls, accessible to everybody and kept clean and nice by the eldest, Tsuno.
Establishing links between people: Menkū kinship and naming

The Menkū reveal two modes of establishing links between people. While their kinship system allows them to explain and interpret existing relationships, they use personal names in order to foster a relationship between two people who would not necessarily have a direct connection with each other. The non-existence of a system of teknonymy, that differs from the kinship terminology used for commonplace address between people, reduces the scope of manipulating links between two or more people to these two modes of establishing relationships. Each of the two modes incurs different sets of obligations. While the kinship system has a more collective quality to it, in that everybody has to comply with its parameters, the conventions influencing the naming of a newborn child are much freer, imbuing it with a more individual character. Indeed, it might be inappropriate to speak of a 'system' of naming, as we shall see below.

7.1 Notions of endogamy

In the course of this chapter it will become clear that both the rather simple Menkū prescriptive kinship terminology, as well as patterns of naming, show a preference for endogamy. Criticising Lévi-Strauss' confusing distinction between 'true' and 'functional' endogamy, Overing (1973; and 1975) has differentiated three separate analytical categories when applying the notion of endogamy to the study of marriage patterns. Her distinctions will prove helpful to clarify Menkū notions of endogamy that influence their marriage practices. Overing identifies:
1) 'group' endogamy: the obligation to marry within an objectively defined group.

2.) 'genealogical' endogamy: the obligation to choose as spouse an individual who is related to ego in some particular way.

3.) 'alliance' endogamy (or positive marriage rule): marriage which reaffirms a former alliance.' (1975:196)

For the Piaroa, the first type of the ideal to 'marry close' (i.e. a 'tuku chuwaruwang') is to be related to the preference to marry within one's kindred-based local group. The second is met by the preference to marry MBCh/FZCh, or to marry within one's immediate kindred; while the third preference is expressed in the Piaroa ideal 'to replicate the marriage of one's parent(s), or that of any other member of one's nuclear family, that is, to participate in a particular marriage exchange over time' (1973:567;1975:196). In the data that I am going to present I am going to argue along similar lines for the Menkū. Even though I have not been able to gather a Menkū expression which would be synonymous for 'marrying close', certain factors suggest that the Menkū do have a strong preference for endogamy which expresses itself in different factors that coincide with the distinctions suggested by Overing above. Firstly, after having exploited some marriage opportunities with incoming outsiders during the first two decades after contact, the Menkū data presents us with a renewed preference for marriage within their own and only settlement. Secondly, there is a preference for a woman to marry a man whom her father classifies as 'atynā' (son-in-law). Ideally, this person comes from one's immediate kindred. In fact, it is the patrilateral cross-cousin, or FZS which is preferred over MBS. As we will see below, this preference of FZS over MBS expresses itself in the linguistic
differentiation between the matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin from the perspective of the father. Thus, there is a deviation from the structural isomorphism of a man marrying his MBD and a woman marrying her FZS, characteristic of a traditional dravidian system. For the Menkū it seems valid to talk of a patrilateral orientation within the endogamous preference. Thirdly, the Menkū favour an existing affinal relationship to be replicated; or a marriage relationship to take place with a person that is a distant affine or an outsider who is considered as an affine by the parents of the person he intends to marry.

After having described the idiosyncratic features of the Menkū system of kinship classification I shall in a subsequent section show how these different preferences are stressed while downplaying others in particular circumstances. In a similar way to the Piaroa the Menkū appeal to one or another aspect of endogamy in order to accommodate factors challenging the 'system' - such as demography, political interests, lack of suitable marriage partners, and lastly personal autonomy - while at the same time fostering the growth of the group. The abundance of people as much as the plentiful availability of food not only is enjoyable, but is a necessity which reveals itself as the principle and driving force underlying Menkū patterns of creative manipulation of their notions of endogamy. It will become clear that the definition of an affine is altered in such a way that the principle of affinity outrules the Menkū preference either for the patrilateral side, or for the spouses pertaining to the same generation, or for the actual first grade cross-cousin relationship, or for the sexual opposition of the linking elements. In spite of these manifold expressions of creativity and pragmatism, there remains a positive marriage rule which says that a Menkū should marry somebody who is to be classified as an affine. How can we define this reduced notion of
affinity then?

### 7.2 Affinity

For Lowland Amazonia the most basic expression of affinity realises itself in the in-law relationship between two people of the same sex (brother and brother-in-law / sister and sister-in-law). It is this relationship which has come to be seen as a pivotal analytical concept in the investigation and understanding of many Amazonian classificatory systems of relatedness. The dialectic pair of affine and kin has overruled the notion of consanguinity, a differentiation which was first fully elaborated in the 'Dravidian' controversy' (Overing, 1975:128). In his comparative analysis of the 'Amazonian Draviniate' Viveiros de Castro (1993:165) furthermore points to the analytical expressivity that the notion of affinity has for Amazonia. It expresses itself in the widespread applicability of this notion, which is albeit imbued with much variation. Viveiros de Castro describes Lowland Amazonian groups to be placable in a continuum that reaches from those groups that distinguish between real and virtual affines, to those which are purely bisectional, to yet others who show a complete terminological conjunction of terms of affinity without any consanguineal denotation.

The last of the three points of the continuum shows most clearly that a notion of the cognatic kindred cannot be excluded completely from investigations of systems of kinship classification in Amazonia - this even more so since a relationship between a brother and brother-in-law is ultimately preconditioned on the mediation of a third person which is of opposite sex. Such a mediator holds a relationship of marriage with one, while standing

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265 See Overing (1984:154fn.18): 'Affine links are traced not through cross-sex sibling links but through same-sex affines; the former can just as well be seen, then, as epiphenomenal to the latter.'
in a relationship of consanguinity with the other. Without this double link, affinity between people of the same sex would be inconceivable. The creation of a group of affines within an (ideally) in-marrying group needs this double linkage not only for generating a sibling-in-law, but also - and that is more important I gather - for the generation of an in-law offspring who stands in a marriageable category to the rest. It is in respect to this fact that Lounsbury (1968: fn48) outlined the necessity to take account of the sexes of all intervening links when analysing 'Dravidian' type systems of classification. In line with his argument a MB is an affine, a MZ is a kinswoman, FZ is an affine, while FB is a kinsman.

The data to be presented about the Menkū supports this by suggesting that every time sexual difference is emphasised especially in the medial generations, aspects concerning the definition of the preferred marriage are revealed. By this means 'ideal' affinity can be defined as that which is constituted out of the sexual opposition on three levels which include both affinal and consanguineal ties:

Daughter -> Father -> Father's Sister -> Son

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daughter</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Father's Sister</th>
<th>Son</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kivi</td>
<td>femole</td>
<td>MCI/e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ollik</td>
<td>molec</td>
<td>ilce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>femole</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>kin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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or - though not the preferred option, at least for the Menkū, to constitute ideal affinity -:

Son -> Mother -> Mother's Brother -> Daughter

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Mother's Brother</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kivi</td>
<td>femole</td>
<td>molec</td>
<td>MCI/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kivi</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>ilc</td>
<td>ic-te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The second option of reckoning affinity is less preferred by the Menkû since they favour to start from a woman’s standpoint. The son of a woman’s father’s sister is the ideal affinal relationship between a husband and wife. As we will see below, when it comes to describing the manipulation of the preference, the most crucial factor, for the Menkû, constituting the prescriptive category of affinity is, however, the opposite-sex link between the father and his sister. Depending, however, on the (genealogical) distance between the marriage partners the existence of an actual linkage involving a sibling pair of opposite sex at one point in time fades into irrelevance. I argue for the Menkû that existential otherness which expresses itself ultimately in the opposition between the sexes (of the opposite-sex sibling pair) is thus exteriorised to otherness which realises itself on a level of inside and outside, belonging and non-belonging. In the latter case, affines are then those that have no genealogical relatable cognation in the settlement, or come from without the settlement, and thus from without the endogamous unit of an ‘objectively’ defined group.

As the description of Menkû kinship terminology below will show, the Menkû system resounds with various aspects constituting the continuum established by Viveiros de Castro, above. Lacking the terminological distinction between real and virtual affines, it represents an oscillation between the two latter aspects of the continuum, by favouring two-sectional reckoning, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, showing signs of dissolving the differentiation between kin and affines in the denotation of suitable marriage partners.

Due to my present inability to give authoritative literal
translations of kinship terms I am not able to say with certainty whether a Menkū uses consanguineal or purely affinal notions to define his relationship to members of a category of marriageable people. In short, as Overing (1984:141) put it, whether a woman marries the son of her father’s sister or of her father’s brother-in-law. In the same way as the Menkū kinship terminology stresses difference between affines while at the same time conflating aspects constituting affinity in the generation of Ego, both is possible. This ambivalence reveals itself firstly in the fact that ‘naripnā’ was at one point translated as husband266 while during my investigations it was used by married women to denote men who had a relationship of brother-in-law (i.e. marriageability) to them. As we shall see below in more detail the brother-in-law to a woman is the potential husband. Secondly, Menkū terminology has a very interesting linguistic twist which identifies potential spouses by a man referring to both his daughter and son-in-law as ‘atynā’. Sexual opposition between daughter and father, father and sister (mother of son-in-law), and the mother of the son-in-law and the son-in-law, which was above outlined as one important mediating factor in the establishment of the affinal relationship, is conflated into one term that overrules difference (sexual and filial), and thus mask affinity in much a same way as the Piaroa do when referring to everybody belonging to the ‘itso’de’ with the term ‘chuwaruwang’ (kins(wo)-man). The data presented below will make clear that such ambivalence allows for manipulation of the determination of who belongs to a category of marriageable persons and who does not, thus giving room for the group’s needs and individual preferences of the persons involved.

266 See Montserrat Fonini, 1993:9.
7.3 Menkū kinship

I begin this section by describing the classificatory system of Menkū kinship, and continue in a second part to elaborate on the different ways it was manipulated in order to accommodate the needs of the group.

7.3.1 The Menkū classificatory kinship system

The Menkū maintain a basically Dravidian kinship system. Overing (1971, 1973 and 1975) showed the applicability of Dumont's description of a south Indian kinship system for a group of the Amazonian Lowlands. In line with her, Viveiros de Castro (1993) has found its underlying concept useful for a comparison of Amazonian groups, even though the latter show an enormous variation as to its application. In fact, Dravidian structures appear in societies without a rule of descent, in patrilaterally oriented groups of different kinds, in uxorilocal and virilocal societies, as well as in small and very big groups. In the same way the Menkū kinship system can be described as Dravidian, irrespective of its internal variations which I will elaborate further down.

Apart from some differentiation in G0 and G-1, the Menkū system is straightforward 'Dravidian' with a classification of relations according to generation, distinctions by age, sex, and the recognition of only two kinds of relatives in the three medial generations. As a more detailed description of the generation of Ego and Ego's children will show, the system includes a positive marriage rule with a preference by female Ego for the son of the patrilateral brother-in-law, or her patrilateral cross-cousin. As mentioned above, this preference is marked linguistically. A male's matrilateral preference for MBD is not marked as clearly, and thus I argue it is not as prevalent even though it represents a possible union.
7.3.1.1 Grandparents and grandchildren

The Menkü kinship system encompasses five generations which are that of Ego’s grandparents and parents, Ego, Ego’s children and grandchildren. The first and fifth generations (G2 and G-2) are terminologically rather undifferentiated: All members belonging to the generation of Ego’s grandparents are referred to by two terms: ‘mákna’ for father’s father and mother’s father, and ‘pätunä’ for father’s mother and mother’s mother. This is also the case for Ego’s grandchildren: FSS, FDS, MSS, MDS are called sétynä, and FDD, FSD, MDD, MSD are called sétuknä. Thus the Menkü treat these two generations according to the classic ‘Dravidian-Tamil’ mode of neutralising the contrast between consanguine and affine.

This neutralisation or homogenisation, however, applies not only to the difference between affines and kin but also to different types of affines within G+2. The unidirectional preference for female Ego to marry the child of her father’s sister (which is also that of her father’s brother-in-law, insofar as the father’s brother-in-law is the husband of his sister) exerts the need to distinguish between those affines female Ego’s brother can marry and those female Ego herself can marry. Accordingly, on the basis of their gender, brother and sister have completely different ways of finding their partner. While female Ego has to turn to her patrilateral agnates, male Ego has to turn to his matrilateral agnates. As marriageability on the basis of particular affinal relations is defined by means of Ego’s parents generation, it is not important for female Ego herself to be aware of the relations of affinity holding in their parent’s (= Ego’s grandparents) generation.

However, in the case of the woman Jouki (person no. 65 on kinship chart) another category of people is included in the generation of grandchildren. Specifically, this concerns the children of female ego’s (Jouki’s) brother’s daughter. Jouki refers to the children of her brother’s daughter in the same way as she refers to her own children. Her BDS is called junä, while her BDD is called átynä. Up to now I have not found an explanation or a repetition of this case.
Thus, possible differences of affinity in Ego's grandparental generation do not affect Ego, and are therefore terminologically not distinguished. The reduction of the definition of affinity to the three medial generations suggests then that the Menkū stress the importance of regaining an indifference to the distinction between kin and affines as quickly as possible. Consequently, they do not assimilate categories of affinity of medial generations, nor show complex alternating equations and/or linear bipartitioning of the Kariera type.268

In regard to the generation of the grandchildren, the neutralising aspect is furthermore supported by the fact that sėtyna/sėtukna is partly constituted of the prefix '-se' which is, according to Montserrat a derivative suffix which signifies 'scattered', 'dispersed'. 269 Such connotation stresses the geographic aspect that exists in the relationship between Ego and the grandchildren, rather than emphasising the belonging to a category of marriageability. Being scattered and dispersed at the same time indicates that grandchildren have different fates in terms of their residence. Some live here, some live there, some live somewhere else. While the uxorilocal residence pattern already separates daughters remaining in the parental house from sons who leave it for different houses, more dispersion is happening on the level of grandchildren. Taking into consideration Ego's classificatory siblings and the conflation of affinity and kin in G-2, anybody that can be classified as belonging to G-2 or lower are all Ego's grandchildren. The fact that they are referred to as dispersed not only indicates to their geographic whereabouts, but also alludes to the multiplicative aspect each descending generation is imbued with. Grandchildren are those that are scattered everywhere, while

269 Personal communication Amarante, 1997.
The allusion to residence reminds us of the Piaroa trait of taking the house, or ‘itso’de’, as a point of reference in the definition of cognatically based kin-links between people. When considering Ego’s marriage partners, as I will show below, such allusion suggests itself also with the Menkū, although I have no basis yet to confirm this assumption linguistically.

The neutralisation of a terminological differentiation in the generation of grandchildren and grandparents is, furthermore, to be explained with regard to the relevance these generations have for providing Ego with suitable marriage partners. I would like to argue that for the Menkū, the members of these two generations are part of a category of people from which Ego is not to procure marriage partners. The fact that they are differentiated according to sex and to generational belonging, rather than in regard to affinity, signifies that it is those two aspects which are of importance for Ego, however for other reasons than marriage. The classification according to gender allows Ego to identify those with whom to share the gendered activities of Menkū culture and with whom not. While the generations of G+2 and G-2 share both these features, they are differentiated from each other. The daughter of male and female Ego’s child is called ‘sētuknā’, while the son of male and female Ego’s child is referred to as ‘sētynā’. I shall argue that this differentiation is of importance in defining the social relations Ego is expected to maintain with the members of these two generations. The social relationship Ego maintains with those belonging to the generation of grandparents is different from those that are sustained with those considered grandchildren. The difference is based in the transmission of knowledge, which is always passed from members of ascendant generations to those of descendent generations. Knowledge is shared with an attitude of
respect that is characteristic of all relationships between a younger and an older person. At this point it will have become clear that I believe the kinship system to be relevant not just for defining marriage partners and as a system of alliance. Rather, I argue that the kinship system is equally an indicator of both gendered relationships and of those what I will refer to as relationships of social responsibility and respect.

7.3.1.2 Parents and parents-in-law
While we found a tendency of homogenisation to be present in the G2 generation, the generation of Ego’s parents shows distinctions between affines and kin. Ego distinguishes only between her/his parents and his/her potential or actual in-laws. In line with the ‘Dravidian’ type of kinship system, mother’s sisters (MZ) are referred to in the same way as Ego’s mother. Ego relates to their offspring, which are also his/her parallel cousins as his siblings. The same applies to father’s brother (FB) and his children. In contrast to this, the respective cross-sex siblings of Ego’s parents are considered to be his/her potential or actual parents-in-law. Male and female Ego relate to the members of the ascending generation in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>jà</th>
<th>mju’u</th>
<th>koknä</th>
<th>naknä</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>father-in-law</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father’s brother</td>
<td>mother’s sister</td>
<td>father’s brother</td>
<td>mother’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>father’s sister’s husband</td>
<td>mother’s brother’s wife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the Menkù show a preference for a unilateral direction in the movement of marriage partners, their
terminological classification of affines is similar to a system of 'symmetric exchange' where no differentiation is incurred by the gender of Ego. In such a symmetric system, father's sister is categorically speaking the mother-in-law of both male and female Ego, while mother's brother is the categorical father-in-law. There is no differentiation made between the female or male perspective nor between potentiality or actuality. As especially Rivière (1969) and Overing (1975) have shown, the emphasis lies on the distinction of people who are categorically linked to Ego and his siblings involving an opposite-sex siblingship in the generation of Ego's parents and those who are not. While the former belong to the category of in-laws, the latter are considered kin. As mentioned above, however, it might be viable, following Overing (1984), to consider the parent's opposite-sex siblings only in terms of their affinity, thus calling the father's sister the wife of father's brother-in-law, and mother's brother the husband of mother's sister-in-law. Doing so, we would be able to account for the reduction of different types of people to one category, rather than accounting for Ego's gender or the laterality of the link under consideration. On this basis, the different types of parents-in-law emerging from a matrilateral preference for the movement of male marriage partners can be subsumed under one category. Mother's brother, and the husband of father's sister - who ideally do not coincide since male Ego moves to marry a daughter of mother's brother - are both classified as father-in-law. In turn, father's sister and the wife of mother's brother - who also ideally do not coincide since female Ego ideally marries a son of father's sister (and not a son of mother's brother's wife) - are both referred to as mother's-in-law. The subsumption is possible on the basis of their affinal nature, downplaying the unilateral preference which only

270 The notion of 'exchange' coined by Lévi-Strauss (1969) involved in the conception of societies showing 'Dravidian type' systems of classifications has been shown to be problematic for the Amazonian context. See Overing (1984).
comes to full expression in the generation of G-1, while already announcing itself indirectly in Ego’s generation, to which we shall turn now.

7.3.1.3 Siblings and Cousins
Departing from this rather simple terminology, the generation of Ego and that of Ego’s children show more complexity. The classification of those who share the same generation as Ego involves a differentiation of gender, a more differentiated determination of who is kin and who is an affine, and a distinction of age. Siblings are distinguished between older and younger, relative to Ego. Ego’s position within the rank of his siblings is thereby indicated. However, Ego differentiates only his older siblings according to their sex. Both male and female Ego refer to their older sister as ‘kákjanā’, while calling their older brother ‘jaknā’. In contrast, both younger brother and younger sister are called ‘pyhnā’, thus neutralising the differentiation or similarity of gender in relation to Ego while maintaining the fact that they are siblings, and concurrently belong to the same generation. In line with the ‘Dravidian’ type kinship system they do the same with their parallel cousins, that is the children of their mother’s sister and their father’s brother.

The sexual undifferentiation of younger siblings versus older siblings can, as I will suggest below, only be understood if it is related to the acquisition of marriage partners for Ego. On the basis of these data I argue that for this generation - at least with respect to marriage - it is not important for Ego to mark one’s own sex when relating to his siblings. As we will see below, only when relating to the next generation the sex of Ego has to be set in relationship to that of siblings, as it is only then that the

\[\text{271 in this the Menkù resemble the Piaroa, as well as the Nambikwara.}\]
existence of an opposite-sex-linkage can come to expression, or that cross- and parallel cousins of Ego’s children can be defined. The need to give reference of the opposite sex linkage which exists to those members of Ego’s generation with whom an affinal relationship exists (on the basis of a (categorical or actual) opposite sex siblingship in the parental generation) is expressed in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>male Ego</th>
<th>mainā</th>
<th>kunanā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father’s sister’s daughter</td>
<td>father’s sister’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father’s brother-in-law’s daughter</td>
<td>father’s brother-in-law’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother’s brother’s daughter</td>
<td>mother’s brother’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother’s sister-in-law’s daughter</td>
<td>mother’s sister-in-law’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘sister-in-law (potential) wife’</td>
<td>brother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distant female (actual or categorical) relatives</td>
<td>distant male (actual or categorical) relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>female Ego</th>
<th>kahānā</th>
<th>naripnā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father’s sister’s daughter</td>
<td>father’s sister’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father’s brother-in-law’s daughter</td>
<td>father’s brother-in-law’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother’s brother’s daughter</td>
<td>mother’s brother’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother’s sister-in-law’s daughter</td>
<td>mother’s sister-in-law’s son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister-in-law</td>
<td>brother-in-law (potential)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distant female (actual or categorical) relatives</td>
<td>husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distant male (actual or categorical) relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that we find four categories of people among

Usualy a ‘Dravidian’ type system does not identify opposite-sex in-laws in Ego’s generation. When I asked them, the Menkū referred differently to their wife and other opposite-sex in-laws. However, any opposite-sex in-law is a potential marriage partner, and every wife is an actual or categorical sister-in-law seen from the same-generational male point of view.
those to whom Ego is related by an opposite-sex siblingship
(father's and mother's opposite-sex siblingships) - or by a relation
of affinity\textsuperscript{273} - in the parental generation. Concurrently Ego's sex is
of importance when defining Ego's relationship to a person
belonging to one of the four categories. Male Ego calls affinally
related women (= potential wives) of his generation by one term,
while males related to him in the same way (= in-laws) by another.
The same applies for female Ego.

I suggest that this differentiation gives expression to more
than just the fact that a cross-cousin relationship is involved.
For, father's sister's children and mother's brother's children are
in the same way cross-cousins for both male and female Ego.
When, however, one considers the terminology as one defining
actual or potential marriage-partners (and siblings-in-law), such
differentiation is necessary. For such a definition we need to know
whether Ego shares the same sex with his cross-cousin or not. I
suggest that the Menkú stress here a potential for marriage, rather
than the mere fact that two people are cross-cousins.

Overing (1975:129) has noted the same for the Piaroa: In
Ego's generation the sex of Ego must be stipulated for most of the
terms. Not recognising such differentiation (as Overing (ibid.) has
argued for Wilbert's data (1963:53)) actually leads to a loss of the
genealogical referents of the spouse. Only when the distinction of
categories according to Ego's sex is done can the description of the
system conform to the indigenous view that the basic opposition
established in the terminology is one between 'kin' and 'affines',
and not between cross relatives and parallel relatives.
Accordingly, I suggest that in a similar way to the Piaroa the
Menkú stress the marriage of the child of parents' affines, rather

\textsuperscript{273} Affinity, as said above being for now defined by either an opposite-sex-siblingship,
or by a same-sex in-law relationship in the parental generation.
than a cross-cousin. Rivière (1969:62,68,88) has opted for understanding Trio marriage by referring to the latter parameter in spite of defining the Trio system as a two-section system based on the opposite-sex linkage in the parental generation.²⁷⁴

Yet, such denomination still remains 'symmetrical': For male Ego those classified as sisters-in-law are his potential spouses, while for female Ego those classified by her as brother-in-law are her potential husbands.

The classificatory symmetry in Ego's generation is only challenged by the indication of Ego's age in relation to siblings. While we are given no indication of a lateral preference in Ego's generation, this specification of relative age is exploited for the purpose of a closer definition of preference when it comes to Ego's children. As mentioned above, Ego has to take recourse to his parents to find a suitable marriage partner. In the same way, Ego is responsible to identify spouses for his children. We will see below how far the specification of age then becomes relevant and characterises the unilateral preference existent in the Menkù classificatory marriage system.

Leaving aside the categories, and turning potentiality into actuality by Ego marrying a person belonging to the category of his or her opposite-sex affines of the same generation, the way Ego refers to that person changes. Although still applicable from a categorical point of view, the affinal reference is given up, and both male and female Ego refer to their spouse as 'ytamâ'. The more complex terminology that revealed itself when relating to potential spouses or potential siblings-in-laws gives way upon marriage to this uniform reference. We shall see that a similar

²⁷⁴ See also Basso (1973) who found that the Kalapalo also stress the consanguineal aspect of these relationships more than the affinal.
thing happens in the following generation when Ego identifies the ideal marriage partners for his children.

The terminological classification of potential marriage partners seen - as I will argue below - from the perspective of the female spouse's father, as well as actual marriage partners (who, upon their marriage rectify any potential ill fit category by placing the respective spouse and his kin into the marriageable category) seen from their own perspective, reveals that the marriage brings about a new terminological status. This status is characterised by being different from all others in that it is based upon a superseding of difference. Sexual, filial and affinal distinctions are eradicated when referring to the actual or potential marital couple, seen from the two most crucial points of view - from that of who defines the couple (the wife's father) and from that of those who enact it (the husband and wife). It seems to me that in as much as any sexual differentiation in the medial generations can be said to have a decisive influence in the reckoning of preferred marital relationships in regard to Ego's children, the terminological system as a whole seems to climax in the marking of actual or potential marriage partners. One could conclude - using a functional language - that by overcoming differentiation this type of kinship classification comes to its fulfilment. While differentiation is necessary for proper mixing of members pertaining to distinct categories, such need to distinguish ceases with the proper mixture (marriage) being in place. Only with the generation of children - which is itself preconditioned on properly married parents in order to avoid incest - and the establishment of their ideal marriage partners, such a system is reiterated. It seems to me then, that all other reference to people using kinship terms (as in the case of the Menkū who do not have a system of teknonymy that is different from the kinship terminology) is
secondary to the former 'function'. Or, the constant awareness of the proper relationships between people is so important that it has to be continually reiterated by referring to others according to its terms in the course of daily interaction.

This focus is, I believe to be understood in the context of the Menkū valuation of the couple as a social unit of production and reproduction. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the loyalty of the spouses is strongly valued, while the breaking of the marital bond is devaluated. What is emphasised then is not the combination of two people of opposite sex, affinal categories or filiation, but the merging of the two into something qualitatively different that is considered by both as a newly acquired wholeness. Society as a universe of affines and kin comes with each marital union to a fulfilment of overcoming difference, while at the same time starting anew by bringing people belonging to different categories into an affinal relationship with each other, and generating offspring which will take up and renew these categories. Considering the generation of children and children-in-law we will be able to see how this is effected in the generation of G-1.

7.3.1.4 Children and Children-in-law
Ego's cross-cousins and potential-in-laws represent the category of people from which Ego is supposed to procure his/her marriage partner. However, the perspective of Ego is not enough for identifying the right spouse. While there is a separation of Ego's generation into those with whom a sibling relationship is maintained and those with whom it is not, the definition of Ego's marriage partner involves Ego's parents' generation. In order to exemplify this I shall now turn to Ego and his children since the same applies when Ego's children are looking for their appropriate marriage partner.
The terminology Ego uses to define his/her children and relates to the offspring of his opposite-sex siblings is crucial in order to understand the ideal marriage pattern the Menkụ system suggests. While the children of Ego's same-sex siblings are treated the same as Ego's own children, the marriage partners for his children are to be found among the offspring of Ego's cross-sex siblings. People of Ego's generation that are neither siblings nor parallel cousins are, in general, treated as in-laws. Here again it does not matter whether a person is the actual or only a potential sibling-in-law. What is important is the categorical relationship which exists between Ego and this person.

As much as it is important to have a clear distinction between the different types of relationship between Ego and his potential or actual in-laws, it is equally necessary to distinguish the children of Ego and his same-sex siblings from those of Ego's opposite-sex siblings, since it is from among the latter that Ego will find the appropriate marriage partner for his or her children. The marriage partners for Ego's children again at the same time identify those with whom Ego can potentially have an in-law relationship. We can distinguish:

**male Ego:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ona</th>
<th>atynă</th>
<th>atynă</th>
<th>atuknă</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>sister's son</td>
<td>sister's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother's son</td>
<td>brother's daughter</td>
<td>son-in-law</td>
<td>daughter-in-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
female Ego:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>junā</th>
<th>átyānā</th>
<th>mátynā</th>
<th>mátuknā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>brother's son</td>
<td>brother's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister's son</td>
<td>sister's daughter</td>
<td>son-in-law</td>
<td>daughter-in-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terminology reveals a clearly ‘Dravidian’ type classification, except for the difference in classification of Ego's son depending on Ego's sex, and the conflation of male Ego's daughter and his sister's son by referring to both by 'atynā'. While the daughter is called by both, male and female Ego as 'atynā', male Ego refers to his son as 'onā' while female Ego calls her son junā. The nieces and nephews of Ego are differentiated according to Ego's sex. Male Ego refers to him as atynā, which is the same term male and female Ego respectively use to designate their daughter. In contrast, the daughter of male Ego's sister is called atuknā. Female Ego refers to her brother's children by adding the prefix m- to the terms used by male Ego. Consequently, her brother's son is called matynā, while her brother's daughter is called mátuknā.

I shall suggest that the key to the Menkū kinship system lies in this designation of the son of male Ego's sister. By referring with the same term to two categories of people, that belong to the same generation but are of opposite sex and different affiliation, the initial confusion is solved when identifying these two as the ideal marriage partners. The difference in sex is superseded by the emphasis of belonging. It is the belonging together of two parts - potential husband and potential wife that are incomplete when remaining separate. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, it is only upon marriage that a person requires full personhood. In the
same way the Menkū numeric system only differentiates between one, two and many. One and two are the archetypal numbers which reflect human existence. A human being is either one, that is alone, unmarried or widowed, or two, which is married with a spouse. A man and a woman can only fulfil the ideal of the human condition when united in marriage. And ideally, they can do this even more so when standing in the right affinal relationship to each other.

From the data gathered it seems appropriate to state that the ideal marriage partners are identified from the perspective of a girl’s father. Only in the relationship terminology used by him are we confronted with the identification of the two categories of people by one name, whereby the distinction between kin and affine is conflated. It seems therefore that a girl’s potential spouse is identified through her father (and a boy’s potential spouse through his mother’s brother). The son of father’s sister is the preferred marriage partner for his daughter. The reverse does not work in the same way because there is no overlapping in the use of the terminology from the perspective of the mother. While she refers to her daughter in the same way as her husband, atynā, the mother calls her brother’s son mátynā. One could argue that the difference between atynā and mátynā is slight; however, I believe it to be substantial enough to reject it as a means of identifying the appropriate marriage partner for a girl from the perspective of the girl’s mother. Comparing different kinship terms, we can see that where the prefix ‘m-’ appears, it denotes a female perspective. We could thus argue that rather than rejecting the mother’s perspective for defining the preferred marriage partner for her daughter, the mother is not the preferred person to do so because (a) she shares the same sex with her daughter, (b) she has no means to distinguish the relative age of her husband’s siblings in

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\[\text{Thus differing here from the Piaroa who can identify their ideal marriage partner by appealing to both, father and mother’s cognatic affines.}\]
relationship to him. As we saw above, such distinction is stressed, for it indicates a possibility to identify the affines from which Ego’s child is supposed to procure a marriage partner. A marriage partner defined from the mother’s point of view will therefore not be wrong from a categorical (and prescriptive) point of view, since all children of mother’s affines are also affines to her daughter, but they will not automatically conform to the preference, and the notion of ‘ideal affinity’ I described above.

The terminological difference is even more obvious when looking at the possibility of defining the marriage partner of a boy through his father. He refers to his son as ona while calling his sister’s daughter átukná. In turn, female Ego refers to her son as juná while she calls her brother’s daughter mátukná. We can conclude that while a girl has to have her marriage partner identified through her father, a boy has to have his ideal spouse identified through his mother’s brother. A boy is thus matrilaterally oriented and preferably marries his MBD, while a girl is patrilaterally oriented, in order to find her partner among father’s sister’s sons.

Considering the ability of Ego to define his relative age to his siblings (and only to his siblings), the marriage partner of Ego’s

276 For her son, the ideal marriage partner is defined by the mother’s brother. While the terminology suggests such differentiation, it seems that at least nowadays a mother has as much influence to express her consent than the father. See also chapter 8, below where it is the mother who expresses most clearly her feeling of shame for her daughter being rejected by a potential spouse.

277 Kataki (45) objected to the marriage of Katakisi (89), her son’s daughter, with Karagabu (125) because the need for on opposite sex-linkage between (grand)parents and children was not respected on both sides. Apart from representing a type of avuncular marriage, which is - terminologically speaking - not marked as a preferred option, Katakisi was the (grand-) daughter of Kataki, who was the sister of Karagabu’s father, Senzo (72). Ideally, Senzo would find a marriage partner for his daughters (and not for his sons) among the male children of his sister Kataki. Nevertheless the marriage took place, thus revealing the openness for compromises when necessary. See further description of such compromises in section 7.3.2, below. For the notion of what I call ‘ideal affinity’, see section 7.2, above.
child is more probable to meet the preferential ideal when it is reckoned from the point of view of the father (rather than the mother since she has to reckon through her brother). In consequence, a chain of marriage alliances emerges which is based on the preference of a girl to marry her father’s sister’s son (FZS). The emerging cross-cousin marriage pattern allows only for a one-sided movement of marriage partners. As Maybury-Lewis (1965:224), in line with Lévi-Strauss ([1949] 1969) argued, the asymmetric exchange structure given by the circular pattern of ‘exchanging’ marriage partners is connected to the use of prescriptive terminologies. However, instead of talking about the transference of girls, I would describe the Menkū marriage pattern as based on a transference of boys. This seems appropriate not only on the basis of the terminological issues raised above but also on the basis of the uxorilocal residence pattern. In marriage the girl stays with her father (and mother) while the boy has to leave his parental home in order to live together with his spouse. It is the latter who is transferred (or better, who transfers himself to the house of his spouse). We can sketch the pattern of alliances based on the kinship terminology as follows:

![Graph of the identification of ideal marriage partners](image)

Graph of the identification of ideal marriage partners, with the arrows originating at the person from whose perspective those that the arrow points to are designated by the same term.

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278 Although I have never witnessed parents discussing openly about the best spouse for their child, I believe that both mother and father have a say especially when the marriage of distant or formerly unrelated persons are in question. See below for the manipulation of the system.
Taking the importance of the girl's father's point of view into consideration one could argue that there is a tendency of the father controlling his daughter's alliances. However, I would reject such suggestion since a relationship of control does not seem applicable to the Menkū management of marriage and its preparation.²⁷⁹ It might be more appropriate to speak of the father as the mediator to the outside, in that the right marriage partners are defined on the basis of his kin relationships. Though one has to differentiate this mere function that is based on his position within the kin-relationships from a father's role in actively influencing the choice of a marriage partner. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter I would argue that a father as much as a mother has a say about their children's marriage partners, but the ultimate choice remains by the child itself to decide which marriage partner it will take.

Dealing with an asymmetric movement of marriage partners (men), the question arises whether there is a means to indicate the direction of the movement. It seems to me that one such means might be found in the fact that Ego distinguishes between his older and younger siblings. As we have seen the older siblings are differentiated by sex while the younger ones are not. Menkū practice shows that older men usually marry younger women. I would like to argue that ideally the male children of male Ego's older opposite-sex siblings (Ego's sisters) are to marry Ego's daughters. As we have seen above, it is those two that are considered áty nā by Ego. Ego's son, however, is to find his marriage partner among the children of Ego's younger opposite sex siblings. The latter are undifferentiated according to their sex and all referred to as pyhnā because they have no relevance for Ego's definition of his son's marriage partner since male Ego is

²⁷⁹ See previous chapter on marriage and the importance of all partners involved.
referred to as pyhnā because they have no relevance for Ego's definition of his son's marriage partner since male Ego is (terminologically speaking) not 'responsible' for identifying his son's marriage partner. Ego's wife's younger brother is responsible for this, since from his perspective his sister's son and his own daughter are again considered ātynā. The following structure emerges:

![Family Tree Diagram]

Ego's reference to his older and younger siblings. Note the irrelevance of gender of EGO and his younger siblings when relating to the latter.

Parallels have been established between a unilateral movement of spouses and more egalitarian (closed circle within which spouses move) or hierarchically based (open ended groups, forming strata or moieties) social structures. I hesitate to argue for one or the other in this case, since not only are we dealing in the case of the Menkū with a transference of men rather than women, but any compliance with a circular pattern in practice is not easily recognised since the group under question here is so small. Marriage according to preference that would have led to such a circular pattern had to succumb to practicality, which was at most moments of this century driven by the need to ensure the
who one can marry, which was difficult to follow given the scarcity or nonexistence of appropriate marriage partners, the Menkü have started to put more emphasis on whom they cannot marry. This has been done to such an extent that the kinship terminology is based on prescription with a preferential aspect to it, whereas the marriage practice is nowadays more guided by the mere prescription to marry somebody with whom a relationship of affinity exists. 'Ideal' affinity as defined above in terms of a sexual opposition on three levels, is at times reduced to being constituted out of a sexual opposition only on the level of a sibling-pair and their respective marriages which construct the actual 'in-law'. While a person’s entire kinship universe is still divided into marriageable and non-marriageable categories, the Menkü have shown more flexibility in defining whom somebody could marry within that larger category of marriageable persons. In line with the ‘Dravidian’ type kinship classification, there is a taboo for a person to marry his or her parallel cousin of either father or mother’s side. The negative definition allows for different options to emerge and the Menkü have taken advantage of them all: Firstly, the extension of marriageability to other generations; secondly, the inclusion of children of anybody classified by the parents as affine, including cross-cousins of either mother or father’s side; and thirdly, the marriage of formally unrelated persons, the latter category of which was later furthermore extended to include non-indigenous peoples. I shall give examples of these in the following section.

7.3.2 Dealing with change: Alterations to the kinship system
As an outline of Menkü past, and especially of the beginning of this century has shown, the Menkü had to deal with a lot of change
especially in their demography and group constitution. Accordingly, a manipulation of their type of kinship classification has not so much been based on political considerations, as Overing (1971, 1973, 1975) has described for the Piaroa in connection with a need to maintain or increase the size of one's group of cognatically related kin (chuwaruwang) represented in the house (itoso'de). The concern underlying Menkū patterns of compromising preferential aspects of their prescriptive system can be described as ensuring the survival of the group and an increase (or at least maintenance) of total numbers. The system was thus put under extreme pressure, when the group only counted nine people in the 1950s. However pressure was still to be felt four decades later when I was in the field and young Menkū still had to wait for the appropriate marriage partner to be born. The situation of scarcity of marriage partners was worsened by the fact that (a) one woman (Kataki) had accidentally sterilised herself after having only one child (Tsuyabu) whose offspring now has to serve as marriage partners for a number of families stemming from Shiseki; (b) the latter (Shiseki) gave birth to seven daughters and only two sons, with these boys ranking only seventh and ninth in the sibling order; (c) 'default' marriages with two in-marrying Iranxe whose marriages promised to generate offspring (and thus new marriage partners), which however failed to happen because (1) Zalaku (Iranxe) was unable to have children, and (2) Shunju's wife Kalaki (Iranxe) did not favour her four children to marry among the Menkū; (d) another woman has a physical handicap making it difficult for her to have any other children apart from the two she gave birth to already, thus finishing her procreative potential. Apart from that she has had these children with the missionary Lisbōa who, by now, would have been unavailable for her due to his personal

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261 Henry ([1941]1964) has described a similar situation for the Kaingang who made use of all possibilities, including polyandry, in order to accommodate the extreme post-contact reduction in number.

262 Nevertheless at least her oldest son Nozu married a Menkū woman (Shisaii).
circumstances.

The various modes by which the Menkū have altered their kinship system in order to allow for more unions than those that offered themselves when strictly complying to the preferences, can be exemplified best when considering the group as it found itself after the various decimations it had experienced during the century. As a starting point I shall outline the kinship relations existing among the nine survivors in the 1950s, the smallest number of people of which the Menkū have consisted.

Based on what I was able to gather up to now, the survivors of the various massacres consisted of a pair of brothers, Soiyu (26) and Talebu (52); a brother and sister pair, Senzo (72) and Kataki (45); and another brother and sister pair, Tsuno (32) and Iwaya (27). Tsuno (32) was first married to Shui (33), and later also to another Kataki (38). His sister Iwaya (27) was married to Soiyu (26). Apart from that, there was Hikau (44) who was married to Kataki (45).

![Graph of interrelationship of survivors in the 1950s.](image)

According to the Menkū the two brothers, Soiyu (26) and
Talebu (52), had no first or second grade relationship with any of the other persons. This was the same for Senzo (72) and Kataki (45) as well as for Tsuno (32) and Iwaya (27). The two marriages of Tsuno (32), that of Kataki (45) and Hikau (44), and Iwaya (27) and Soiyu (26) were to generate the offspring that today constitute the Menkū. Talebu (52) and Senzo (72) had to wait for their appropriate marriage partners to grow up or even to be born. I do not have any exact dates regarding the second marriage of Tsuno (32) with Kataki (38). Based on the age of Shunju (56), the only child they had together, the marriage must have taken place in the 1950s.

7.3.2.1 Extension of marriageability to other generations

Cross-gene rational marriages, also referred to as 'oblique' or avuncular unions have been recorded for other Amazonian groups. For some, such potential unions are terminologically marked, and express an avuncular preference which can, as Viveiros de Castro (1993:160) argued, contaminate different generational levels. This is for example the case among the Trio, Zoró, Cinta-Larga (Tapayuna), and Parakaná. For other groups they are not specially marked as a preference, while they are practised for strategic reasons as among the Nambikwara (Lévi-Strauss, 1968:171), Piaroa, and also the Menkū. The emphasis being on strategic practice rather than terminologically marked preference calls the basic principles that have to be observed when marrying back to attention. Preference gives way to prescription, which ultimately demands marrying an affine. The affinal relationship remains the most important positive marriage rule to be observed. This being so, it is understandable that not only avuncular marriages can take place - that is, a jump of one generation -, but also those between an affinally related grand-uncle and his grand-niece - jumping two

See Viveiros de Castro ibid.
generations. In order to describe Menkū strategies I shall first look at those cases in which two generations have been conflated, and then turn my attention to avuncular unions proper.

In the Menkū classificatory marriage system we are dealing with five generations which are terminologically differentiated. It has been argued above that the generation of Ego+2 is not terminologically differentiated because Ego is not supposed to acquire his/her marriage partner from there. However, the Menkū give evidence of several instances in which this rule has been ignored. The fact that a person belonged to a category of people with whom a potential in-law relationship can exist has in those cases been exploited to serve as a basis for a marital alliance.\(^{284}\) The case in which two generations have been jumped include the marriage of Ikibu (129) with Kishisi (130): Ikibu was the youngest of three brothers and two sisters. While the late Netu (47), one of his brothers who seems to have had a slight mental handicap, never wanted to marry, there was no partner left for Ikibu to marry. He had relationships with most of the women with whom a marriage would have been appropriate, but all of them were already married. He was accused of having a relationship with Shiseki (53) who was first married to the brother of Ikibu’s father then to Ikibu’s brother Yoshiku (54). He ‘helped’ both wives of Zalaku (68), Kishi (69) and Kezusi (70), who are daughters of Shiseki, to get pregnant.\(^{285}\) While he twice succeeded with Kishi, Kezusi was not able to bear a child. He then had a relationship with Atarikii (82), sister of Kishi and Kezusi, who also had a child by him. This child was at the time of Atarikii’s marriage to the Iranxe Masakho (81)

\(^{284}\) In fact, only one out of 19 existing marriages of the Menkū comply to the marriage between átynās reckoned from a genealogical point of view.

\(^{285}\) Only unmarried (categorical) brothers are able to do such services. He procreated three children in such extra-marital relationships. Whether solicited or later declared as such is not of importance for the Menkū. The birth of children is what matters.
adopted by the latter. Having exploited most possibilities, he finally had to wait for Shiseki’s grand-daughter, Kishisi (130), to grow up. By now Ikibu has four children with her:

Graph of Ikibu (129) and his wife Kishisi (130), and his other relationships involving three different generations (G 0: 53; G-1: 69, 70, 71, 73, 82; G-2: 128, 130).

The example of Ikibu gives evidence of the strategy that when no appropriate marriage partner is found in the generation of Ego, other options in other generations are created. The crucial factor then is not that the spouses share the same generation but that their predecessors are at one point linked by a cross-sex siblingship. For all of Ikibu’s relationships the decisive factor was the siblingship of his mother Iwaya (27) and her brother Tsuno (32). It thus was a proper matrilateral (or father’s affines) choice which involved an opposite-sex linkage between son and mother, mother and mother’s brother, and mother’s brother and mother’s
brother's daughter. The fact that it was not his actual cross-cousin he married but the daughter's daughter of his actual cross-cousin did not affect this, what I have above called, ideal affinal relationship. Similar to the Nambikwara, the same thing can happen in the case of marrying a formerly unrelated person who is classified as if standing in this relationship with the person in question. I shall return to this below. For now I shall only mention those cases which represent a union of a much older person with a much younger spouse. These are the marriage of Kishi and Kezusi with Zalaku (68, Iranxe), the union of Atarikii (82) with Masakho (81, Iranxe), and the marriage between the missionary Thomaz de Aquino Lisbôa (127, Brazilian) with Hokusi (128). As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, in these cases it is always the men who are older and who actually are marrying women who have just become marriageable after their initiation. Taking their actual age in consideration, they are classified as older in relationship to their chosen spouse by defining them as siblings (-in-law) of those who belong to the G+2 of the chosen girl.

Rather than omitting two generations, it is however more common to have a marriage of Ego with a partner of the first ascending or descending generation. Here again the cross-sex siblingship between predecessors is used to justify the union. Overing (1984) has described unions between a man and his sister's daughter as a man giving his daughter to his brother-in-law. Given the importance of the cross-sex linkage and the inability to trace it with all brothers-in-law, since the term designating a brother-in-law is used bilaterally as well as for distant relatives and outsiders, I favour the emphasis on the cross-sex linkage for now. Examples of such unions are Soiyu's marriage with Shiseki,

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More research has to be done into the literal translations of the terminology which might indicate the emphasis of the consanguineal link over the affinal, or the other way around.
Shiseki (53), Senzo (72) with Iwaya (73), and Tsuyabu (64) with Riaki (63) and Jouki (65). It is noteworthy that the last example is a case in which the women, though younger than their spouse, belong to the first ascending generation of Tsuyabu (64). They are the sisters of the second husband of Tsuyabu's mother Katak (45).  

Graph of Tsuyabu's (64) marriage to Riaki (63) and Jouki (65).

Another example of this pattern is that of Katakisi (89), the oldest daughter of Tsuyabu and Riaki. Several years after Shunju's (56) marriage broke down and he was again living a solitary life among the Menkū, the Menkū considered Shunju marrying Katakisi. At the time, Katakisi was still very young and had not yet undergone initiation. However, she was the oldest girl available of the appropriate category. Even though Shunju and she were not referred to as atynā by either Shunju or Katakisi's father and

287 Thus in the case of Tsuyabu and his two wives there is a recognition of the rule that a man marries a younger wife in so far as age is concerned. In so far as, however, the generations are considered which he and his two wives belong to respectively, this marriage does not conform to the rule, since his younger wives actually belong to the generation preceeding his own.
therefore did not fulfil the rule of male matrilateral marriage (or father's affine's daughter) elaborated above, they belonged to the right category of persons. The appropriateness defined itself on the basis of the cross-sex sibling relationship that existed between Shunju's father Tsuno (32) and Katakisi's grandmother Iwaya (27). Katakisi's parents did not support the union because she, so they said, had been promised to Shuo'u (89), the youngest son of Shunju's sister Shiseki (53) when he had just been born. Shuo'u belonged to the same generation as Katakisi. In the end, however, she married Karagabu, the oldest son of Shiseki's daughter. As in the case of Ikibu (129), all three potential spouses qualified as such on the basis of their correct gender links, even though they belonged to three different generations.²⁸⁸

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²⁸⁸ See again Lounsbury's argument differentiating 'Iroquois' systems from 'Dravidian' type terminologies by the fact that for the latter every gender linkage counts, while for the former only the initial and last. To account for the Menki's preference to have spouses united by three opposing gender links, I talked of 'ideal affinity'. See section 7.2, above.
7.3.2.2 The marriage of formerly unrelated persons

In order to exploit the procreative potential of all its members the Menkü opened up to allow for marriages with formerly unrelated persons. I consider formerly unrelated persons as those that have had no genealogical ties with the group. We can, however, subdivide this further into Iranxe and Brazilians, that is, the missionary Lisbôa. Of the 19 marriages that those living among the Menkü have been or are involved in, five are constituted of men marrying-in from the outside (4 Iranxe and 1 Brazilian), while only two Iranian women married into the group (of which the union between Shunju (56) and Kalaki (57, Iranxe) has been resolved a long time ago).

While the Iranxe are referred to as relatives, they are considered distant. No actual marital union had been effected between Menkü and Iranxe or between their respective ancestors since the separation of the two groups at the beginning of the century.\textsuperscript{269} Taking into account Tsuno's mentioning of members of one group visiting other groups, it is well to be imagined that marriage among distant relatives was practised. According to the terminology, kin or affines are not distinguished according to distance. Viveiros de Castro (1993:169) has argued that distinctions between close and distant kin are characteristic of societies where residence predominates over descendence, the spatial proximity over the temporal continuity, the lateral ramification of kindreds over the vertical continuity of genealogies. This tendency can go so far that members of the same generations are consanguinised, as among the Pemon (Thomas 1982) or the Kalapalo (Basso 1973). For the Menkú a stress on residence seems to be possible when considering the geographical connotation inherent in the terms for grandchildren, as those who are scattered and dispersed. Concurrently, it might be that atynã is

\textsuperscript{269} See chapter 2.
designating those persons who are (actually or potentially) not scattered, but very close, actually co-residing on the basis of the uxorilocal residence pattern. Uxorilocality or uxorilocal proximity would be identified by those that constitute the household into which the female spouse was born. She remains and is joined by her father's atynā, or son-in-law. The difference of perspective of mother and father is expressed by the mother's use of a prefix ‘-m’ when designating her son-in-law. When focussing on atynā as having a residential connotation such differentiation does not weigh so heavy as in the case of defining a daughters marriage partner from the father's rather than the mother's perspective, as I argued above.

Independent of a probable residential connotation, residence does not overrule affinity among the Menkū, as Overing has described for the Piaroa and their concept of cognatically based kindred groups (itso'de). The affinal relationship is maintained whether co-residing or not, and perpetuated in time. Using Overing's distinction of different types of endogamy I would therefore argue that the Menkū adhere in this respect to an 'alliance' endogamy principle (1975:196).

When incorporating outsiders into their group, the kin, affinal, and generational ties are established depending on how they marry into the group. The in-comer thus becomes related to the kin of the spouse as an affine, while to her affines as kin. The spouse's position within the system firstly defines the relationship of the in-comer to his spouse's direct family of siblings and parents. In defining in turn their linkage to the incoming person, the others might either refer to the in-comer using their relationship to the in-comer's direct in-laws, or, however, establish a relationship of kin or affine independently
from that. More freedom for the latter remains for those that do
not have any more children at an age suitable for intermarriage
with the in-comer or his virtual offspring.

Differentiating only along binary lines between in-laws and
those kin with whom a relationship would be considered incestuous
- or in other words between those whose predecessors are at one
point in time linked through a cross-sex siblingship and those
whose predecessors are at one point in time linked through a same-
sex siblingship - the incoming person could only belong either to
one or the other side. Consequently, wanting to marry a particular
person turned the in-comer into a relative of that person’s already
existing potential in-laws. This practice of the Menkų which is a
common habit also among other groups can therefore be seen as a
confirmation of Needham’s (1962) argument that elementary
kinship systems are not just unusually strong preferences for
marrying specific close relatives, but prescriptive marriage
systems, or global systems of classification, whereby prescriptive
relationship terminologies divide up a person’s entire kinship
universe into marriageable and non-marriageable categories.
According to him the marriageable category may include cross-
cousins but is not limited to them. As Overing (1975) and Lévi-
Strauss (1968) have pointed out for the Amazonian context, the
marriage of a previously unrelated person incurs the categorisation
of the spouse and in-laws as if s/he had belonged to the
marriageable category all along. Maybury-Lewis (1965) was the
first to conclude that every marriage in a prescriptive system thus
conforms to that prescription by definition, at least in retrospect.
To violate a prescription is to violate a system of classificatory
meaning; it is “hard to think”, and for many people actually
unthinkable.

290 See for instance Lévi-Strauss on the Nambikwara, Overing (1975) on the Piaroa, as
well as Viveiros de Castro (1993) for a more general comparison of different cases.
Among the Menkū there are several cases of in-marrying outsiders. Most of the latter were Iranxe who wanted to come and live with the Menkū. The marriage with a Menkū allowed the incomers on the one hand to live well\textsuperscript{231}, while ensuring for the Menkū an enlargement of their group which would exploit all the procreative potential that existed. Apart from Netu (47), all those able to marry were married. Zalaku (68) was the first Iranxe to be offered a wife, Kishi (69), and shortly afterwards a second one, her sister Kezusi (70). He was followed by Shunju (56) who married Kalaki (57), an Iranxe woman. After him, Atarikii (82), the younger sister of Kishi and Kezusi was married to Masakho (81). Two other children of Shiseki (53), Shakubu (85) and Shui (87), married an Iranxe cross-sex sibling pair, Kitsudi (84) and Yotenbu (86).\textsuperscript{292} A further marriage with an offspring of Shunju’s Iranxe-Menkū union is that of Nozu (132) with Iwaya’s (73) daughter Shisaii (131).

While the first ones are cases of simple classification, the latter is a case of reclassification which is more ambivalent, since a more distant kinship link exists. I will take as an example for reclassification the marriage of Shisaii and Nozu, seen from the perspective of Jouki (63). A graph will show the way the three people are related to each other:

Following on the next page the graph of the different kinship links Jouki uses to define her relationship with both Shisaii and Nozu.

\textsuperscript{231} I explore the notion of living well in the subsequent chapter.

\textsuperscript{292} I shall come back to their case further down.
Jouki (65) considers Shisaii (131) to be her daughter on the basis of Jouki's father (26) and Shisaii's mother's (officially reckoned) father (52) being brothers. Jouki is a categorical sister of Shisaii's mother, Iwaya (73). In turn, Iwaya's children are considered Jouki's children. However, Jouki could have also reckoned the relationship differently since Shisaii's grandmother, Shiseki (53), married Jouki's brother Yoshiku (54) and is actually said to have had Iwaya by her other brother, Wasurebu (46). Accordingly, Iwaya's children could also be considered potential children-in-law by Jouki. Meanwhile she considers Nozu (132) as a son for the following reason: As Nozu's father, Shunju (56), is

Nobody talks about this openly. Only when it came to me asking whom Iwaya's other daughter could and could not marry, they reacted with shame, which afterwards was explained (by Amarante) by the identity of Iwaya's biological father. Wasurebu is her biological father, while Shinushi and Talebu are her categorical fathers (as they were both husbands of her mother). On an everyday basis, Iwaya together with her sisters Kishi, Kezusi, Engasi, Atarikii and Shakubu are reckoned as Talebu's children (actual biological brother of Jouki's father).
Jouki’s first cross-cousin (related through Jouki’s mother (27) who is the sister of Shunju’s father (32)), and thereby belongs to the category of actual or potential affines, his wife Kalaki (56) must stand in a categorical sibling relationship with Jouki. Shunju is part of Jouki’s generation, therefore his wife should be too. If she is her categorical sister, Jouki must consider her children as her own. We end up with the ambivalent and somewhat contradictory statement that Jouki refers to both husband and wife (Nozu and Shisaii) as her children. Such a contradiction can only be explained by an inconsistent way of tracing the kinship links, which is at the same time accompanied by a stress of kin over affinal relations.

While Jouki once uses the connection to the family of Shiseki (53) emphasising the link through her father (26), the second time she uses the link through her mother (27). As much as affinity of two people can only be established when they are both of the same sex, the use of the kinship terminology only remains ‘logical’ and coherent if, as in this case, Jouki, the same linkage was used to trace her relationship to both Shisaii and Nozu. While inconsistent practice blurs the actual link, it on the other hand allows for a more creative and useful way to deal with the integration of formerly unrelated persons. Lastly, everything is possible except the marriage of one’s direct kin, that is mother, father, sister, brother, one’s children and those of one’s same-sex sibling. Much will be done to maintain the distinction between these from all others, while more flexibility is possible with the latter.

Those that are not related become so upon marriage into the group. Therefore, when Lisbõa (127), one of the missionaries, married a Menkõ woman (128), he was classified as marriageable for this girl, by classifying him and his family as a potential in-law of Hokusi’s family. By being a potential in-law to his future wife he turned automatically into a kin of the other potential in-
laws of Hokusi's family.

7.3.2.3 Altering indirect to direct exchange
Among the Menkū there has been no case of altering the preferential unilateral movement of spouses to one involving bilateral movement of two brother and sister pairs. However, there has been a case which could been interpreted as such which involved a pair of Iranxe opposite sex siblings, Kitsudi (84) and Yotenbu (86). While Kitsudi married Shakubu (85), a few years later her brother Yotenbu married Shakubu’s sister Shui (87). I believe that if Kitsudi and Yotenbu’s parents had had an actual close kin-relationship with any of the Menkū such a double marriage involving cross-sex sibling pairs between two families would have been avoided. Since they were unrelated, Menkū and Iranxe showed more flexibility, especially since at the time there was to be no marriage partner available for many years for Shakubu.

The data presented so far thus reveals that it is crucial to look at marriage prescriptions from both the male and the female point of view. Only then a differentiation between the marriage with the MBD and the FZD can be achieved. For the Menkū this difference realises itself most clearly in the tying of the male matrilateral marriage to a system that stresses the transference of males.

7.4 Names
As mentioned above, the Menkū apply names as another means to establish links between people. While kinship links people on the basis of their birth and marriage to others, names create bonds of respect and responsibility between two people who share the same name. In this section I hope to be able to give an insight into Menkū naming practice, although the conclusions I draw from my data
have to remain preliminary since I was not able to confirm all of them with the Menkū themselves. I shall start by outlining the two myths that relate to the origin of names by which human beings refer to another person. This will lead to the description of naming patterns that have emerged among the present-day Menkū. Lastly, I will outline the social responsibilities that the sharing of the same name incurs onto the name sharers.

7.4.1 The origin of names
For the Menkū, animals serve as the providers of names while there is no instance of the name of a spirit being given to humans. Viveiros de Castro (1992:153) showed this to be quite a common feature of some Amazonian groups. Among the Aché, children are named according to an animal that the mother consumed during pregnancy (Clastres, 1972:338-39). As soon as a pregnant woman enters into labour among the Siriono, the father has to go hunting, and it is the animal he kills which determines the child’s name (Holmberg, [1950]1969:195-6). Meanwhile, the Wayapi generally bear animal names, conferred according to the psychical and physionomical resemblances between the animal and the child (Grenand, 1980:41).

When analysing the two Menkū/Iranxe myths294 in regard to the quality of Menkū names and naming practices, several characteristics emerge. The search for names among fish and bees is associated with men. Men find them by turning to a part of the animal world which is dissociated from the very male activity of hunting.295 Both fish and honey, the bee’s product, are gathered rather than hunted, which would involve the use of bow and

294 See Holanda Pereira (1985) for ‘The names and the fish’ (:57), and ‘The names and the bees’ (:64).
295 Viveiros de Castro (1992:153) points out the reliance on the extra social as a source or criterion for names among the Tupi Guarani.
The traditional fishing technique used by the Menkú either consists of catching fish by hand, or with small nets, or by using fish poison on a small scale in small rivers and streams, where the fish are collected (gathered) once the fish poison takes effect and kills the fish. In both cases, the animals who offer their names are animals or products whose flesh are consumed by the Menkú. The utterance of names is linked to the differentiation of the animal kingdom into diverse types of animals. This appropriation of their mythical names transforms the animal people into real animals. The appropriation consists of receiving a name from the animals by asking for the name and being told it, appropriating it (taking it with), which is expressed in a metaphorical form of the bee's products that are carried in the basket, and giving it to a new-born infant by the humans who look for the name. The transference of the name from the animal world to the human world results in the differentiation of animals from humans. What used to be part of a shared social universe is upon a loss of names transformed into pure animality. The first myth has not expressed this reversion to the same degree since the reader is not informed about what happened to the fish after they uttered their names. In contrast to the second myth, the couple took away with them only one name, that of the first fish for their first born son. However, by the fish mentioning their names these have come to the awareness of the humans. We do not know whether they keep them in their memory for future children or not. What we know is that all the names that are mentioned are used by the Menkú as names for people today.

It is interesting to note that the Mebengokre also link their names to the fish. Lea (1992:135) writes that in mythological times, Mebengokre 'beautiful' names originated when a shaman went off to live with the fish, from where he brought back a number of names.

This is also confirmed by Lea (1992:152) for the Mebengokre among whom the mythological names for the fish tend to coincide with the names for each species or one of its characteristics (which may amount to the same thing).
Taking the above into consideration, names emerge as having a substantial character, which indicates that the one carrying it is imbued with social skills. When in the second myth the man acted against the advice of the chief of the bee-people, by putting the basket down to the ground, he acted according to the laws of the human being. The basket was too heavy for a human being to carry for such a long way. By distancing himself from the laws of the animal world, and acting according to the abilities of a human being, the irreversible division of the world into animals and human beings is effected. These myths then, as many others in the collection, recall the events that caused the primordial split which represents the beginning of the world as we find it today: Names cannot be reverted to the animal world, animals cannot be turned into animal-people or into human beings anymore. The development is one-directional and confirms the unchangeable nature of the way we find the world today. An exception to this is the activity of malevolent spirits when wanting to prey on human society. Spirits can imbue animals with a certain intentionality by disguising themselves as an animal which allows them to prey on humans. However, for this purpose spirits use other types of animals than bees and fish. They prefer to embody themselves in those animals that are hunted and which are predators that are feared for their ability to kill humans. This intentionality, however, can not be compared to that which animals were said to have in primordial times. I argue that, in primordial times, the social skills and intentional usage of them by animals was represented by them carrying names. Meanwhile, the embodiment of spirits in animals does not imbue the animal with social skills characteristic of human society. Rather, when a Menkù comes across a dangerous animal or certain sounds, he identifies them with the malevolent desires of a greedy spirit. The identification of the spirit is expressed by calling his or her name. Here the utterance of the
name of the spirit evokes the amoral order which controls the intentionality of the spirits. The names of spirits therefore have a contrary character to those of humans; both, however, are mediated by the world of animals, which lacks human sociality once the primordial split took place.

7.4.2 Naming practices

In his cross-cultural study of personal naming practices, Alford (1988) distinguishes four aspects of ‘naming’, the first of which is the initial naming process, usually taking place at birth, and sometimes having a provisional or private character. This category would cover what Lévi-Strauss calls the ‘umbilical name’. A second aspect is the way in which personal names individualise and classify people, matching the child’s sex, birth rank or clan. Tooker and Conklin (1984) have been able to show that clan membership among certain Amazonian groups is based on a stock of shared names. This is confirmed by Lea (1992) who describes the complex structures of naming that are associated with house and clan membership among the Mebengokre (Kayapó) and reintroduces another facet of descent based on naming practices in Amazonia. Thirdly, there are changes of name such as nicknames or new names given after birth or during the main transitions in the life cycle, or after an exploit such as killing somebody of an enemy group (Viveiros de Castro, 1992:152; Menget 1977 for the Txicão). Among some groups a name given at birth is altered at a person’s initiation, while among others, such as the Araweté names change at a man’s marriage or at the moment a woman has given birth to her first child (Viveiros de Castro, 1992:143). A last aspect of naming according to Alford is the avoidance of a person’s name. The Yanomami banish the names of the dead from their onomastic repertoire and have a tendency to refuse the utterance of their own name out of fear of evoking one’s own death (Lizot, 1973; Clastres
& Lizot, 1978: 114-16). This is also valid for the Piaroa (Overing, 1975). Viveiros de Castro adds yet another one which was reported for the Tupi Guarani, which was the giving of one's own name to an esteemed friend (Evreux, 1929 [1615]:244).

Using Alford's (1988) classification of names the Menkū naming pattern would be best described by his first category. In contrast to, for instance, the Mebengokre among whom the majority of people had between six and fifteen names (Lea (1992:134), the Menkū receive only one name at birth which they carry throughout their whole life. For them, names are not linked to a person's developmental or procreative cycle. Rather, they are linked to the social skills a person becomes imbued with by the fact of his or her human nature. The fact that a baby only 'knows little' does not affect the child's humanity as such. I suggest that Menkū names refer to this humanity and do not distinguish the degree to which this humanness has been realised throughout life.

During my stay among the Menkū I was not able to gather any clear information about the criteria which influence the choice of names and who is involved in this choice. My own impression and that of the missionaries is that at least today naming is a more or less random process. While in the myth naming is described as a male responsibility, today it seems to involve the mother and older kin of either the mother and father, as much as the father of the child. At the birth of Riaki's baby girl that I described in the previous chapter, it took the parents several days to know and announce the name to the community. Until then, they said, they were still thinking and looking for it. Often the parents of the newborn baby turn to their parents, or these come forward with suggestions. The voice of the elders would always be given special

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298 I have not heard them using nicknames, nor have the missionaries reported anything alike.
consideration. Tsuno especially gives his indication of names that he would like to see being used again. At times a name is reintroduced that has not been present among the group since contact.

Taking into consideration the genealogical data that encompass the generation of the grandparents of the oldest living Menkū, Tsuno, and excluding the Iranxe that married into the group, there are 56 names in circulation among 102 people. Although 43 of these have died, I include them to understand better the naming practices among the Menkū. I am aware of the fact that the analysis that I can arrive at is limited by the fact that I am looking at a very small group. While I do not want to make any generalisations about Menkū naming practices, I do want to make some suggestions of patterns that seem to emerge even among such a small number of people and families.

34 of the 56 names in circulation are male names which are shared among 56 men, while 22 are female names that are shared among 46 women. There is more diversification of names among men while there is a greater tendency to recycle names among women. Naming, then, involves the use of names that are carried by close relatives as well as of those that are more distant. I assume that those names that only appear once in the genealogical data I collected are not invented but have been used in generations prior to those I could collect. The rather high reoccurrence of names seems to me to indicate a stress on (onomastic) endogamy. Names are regarded as valuable properties of the group. In the myths above we saw that the taking away of the name resulted in the animal people losing their human nature and transforming into animals that have no social skills. In consequence, the Menkū disapproved of those missionaries who had received names from the Menkū, and I shall come back on the effect of death on naming practices further down.
after some time left and did not come back to live with them anymore. When I came to the settlement they rejected giving a name to me, anticipating that I would also leave after some time. Names therefore have to stay in the group. Those who carry them have to live with the Menkū. As much as names are not to be taken away, there is no drive to 'capture' names from others, as, for instance, among the Araweté where names of enemies are appropriated by killing the person who carries them (Viveiros de Castro, 1992:152). When Lisbōa, one of the missionaries, had children with Hokusi, they were both to carry Menkū names. There was no interest in using names belonging to Lisbōa’s stock thereof. In this way the Menkū seem to reflect some characteristics of the northern Gē whose circulation of names is guided by a principle of conserving the repertoire, little open to innovation and referring mainly to mythology (Viveiros de Castro, 1992:155).

On the basis of the above, I argue that Menkū names belong to a stock of names that are remembered especially by elders who are also asked for suggestions when a child is just born. The fact that others are involved in the suggestion of names is reflected in both myths by the prospective parent having to turn to somebody else in order to get ideas for names. For each child there seem to be many possibilities with regard to which name it could have, and it remains the choice of the parents to define which of the suggested names it is to be given. While there are many possibilities I believe that there are, however, also certain patterns which do emerge. I

300 However the Menkū diverge from northern Gē naming patterns in so far as they do not value the transmission of names among the living as essential. The transmission of names does not generate the basis for a whole set of ceremonial relations, rights and obligations. While there are rights and obligations among name-sharers these are not played out to such a degree that they would structure the social life of the group as a whole. Menkū names seem to act more as a means of individualisation rather than as a classificatory instrument. See Lave (1979); Seeger (1981:136-46); Mellatti (1979:48); Carneiro da Cunha (1978:77ff.); Verswijver (1983-84); Ladeira (1982) and Lea (1986). For the Piaroa the name is the name of the soul that grows with the child and thus is very individual matter. Whereas the name is inherited, the soul is not. See Overing, 1975.
shall try to outline these now.

When analysing the names that have been given one notices that, as in the myth of the fish, a child cannot receive the name of either of his parents. However, we find lots of examples of children receiving the name of the siblings of the parents, as well as of both grandparents. Among 66 considered cases, 31 have their names from those two categories, 24 have names that do not occur at another place in the collected genealogies, while 9 involve a jump of three or more generations. While a child should not receive his or her name from their actual parents there is no objection to receiving the name from his classificatory parents, that is, of mother's sister or father's brother. When, however, a man is actually married to two sisters, as in the case of Senzo who was married to Iwaya and her deceased sister Engasi, the children of either cannot be named after either wife of the father. This might indicate that the names are in a certain way linked to a household. Names then should not occur twice among those living in the same household. In this case a household is not to be confused with a house, since several nuclear families can share one house. The parent's name can only be used again by their grandchildren.

A couple's older children are given names that either belong to the category of parents's siblings or their grandparents. Among the 66 considered, we find 7 children named after their MB, 3 after FZ, 4 after MZ, 1 after FB, 2 after FM, 5 after FF, 7 after MM, 1 after MF, 3 after FFF. Subsequent children are given names from generations further than these two.

Although, as I said above, I am aware of the limitations of the data, I suggest that Menkụ naming pattern indicates a preference for strengthening the links between those kin groups a
child is to orientate itself to during life. This seems to be most obvious when considering the much higher occurrence of naming a boy after his mother's brother than the naming of a girl after her father's sister. As I pointed out in the previous section on kinship, it is from the perspective of mother's brother that the ideal marriage partner for a woman's son is identified. Naming a boy after his mother's brother establishes a special link between the two, the quality of which I shall describe below. Meanwhile the name of a girl is preferably chosen out of her kin group. The most common name-sharers of girls are their parent's mothers (MM and FM) and their mother's sisters (MZ). There are also cases of a girl being named after her MMMM or her MMFM. It is less common to give the name of father's sister to a girl, since, I would argue, a girl is not to establish special links with her due to the uxorilocal residence pattern. Names that belong to generations further away are used, though are less common than among boys. I explain this difference out of the need of the boy to associate with his potential affines, since he has to leave the parental household upon his marriage. While the girl is to stay within, the boy has to open himself to the other, which are his affines. Recycling the names of close kin appears equivalent to representing a certain safety, while reintroducing names that have not been used a long time seems to involve the reappropriation of a name and its human qualities. This endonymical tendency stresses a reconfirmation of bonds within the kindred group. However, I would argue that the recycling of names is not understood as a recycling of souls. The name individualises the person while linking him or her to closer or more distant relatives respectively.  

A precondition for this interpretation, which still needs further confirmation by more fieldwork, is an understanding of the

301 Christine Hugh Jones (1979) describes the notion of the recycling of souls for the Barasana.
name as not only being imbued with the moral personae of the group, but also with the individual qualities of the person with whom one shares one's names. When such people are already dead, the reuse of a name evokes memories of the deceased. If a person with whom a child shares the use of a name is still living, a relationship of care and respect is generated that is enacted outside the nurturant relationship of parent and child. It is to the latter case that I shall turn my attention now.

7.4.3 Sharing a name

When a child receives the name that is also carried by somebody else, a special relationship between the two is established, the realisation of which has to be enacted throughout the name-sharer's life-time. The bond that is created between two people in this way imbues both with obligations of respect and care. This applies especially to two people belonging to different generations and age-groups. The difference in age allows for the complementary obligations of care and respect to be realisable. Among the present Menkū there are, for instance, three men called Waturu. All of them belong to different generations.

Rather than being a relationship of learning and teaching, the obligations that name-sharers have to each other are better characterised as a nurturing of respect. The older person of the two has to occasionally give little presents to the younger one. Amarante, who received the name Engasi from the Menkū, recalls that Jouki, the mother of little Engasi, always expected the missionary to bring a small present for her daughter when she came back from a trip. Omitting to do so causes offence on the part of the parents. At this point nothing is expected back of the child. I do not know whether the younger person has to signify its participation in the relationship in any other way then respect. The
liaison between name-sharers then has a slight character of a ceremonial relationship. I have no data, however, indicating to what degree this relationship influences the structure of participation in a ritual or other ceremonial activities.

As indicated above, I believe that name-sharing is connected to the group with whom the younger person, once married, is to reside. I assume that the younger person, especially in the case of men, is through this relationship already in a certain way prepared for the respect and support he later has to express towards his father-in-law. The bride service that a young man has to do for his parents-in-law can, perhaps, be understood as a realisation of the bond that was indicated as a potentiality by the young man sharing the name with his mother’s brother. However, there are several cases in which a boy is named after his father’s father and a girl after her father’s mother; thus, the strengthening of the affinal and kin-linkage cannot be the only aspect of the name-sharing. I therefore suggest that it confirms and strengthens a person’s belonging to a gendered group and at the same time establishes bonds between different generations. Even though the results that have been presented in this section have a more or less preliminary character the data are, I believe, revelatory of the strong value the Menkū place on the endogamic relationship and group cohesion. While marriage alliances create a more horizontal cohesion, a vertical cohesion through time seems to be fostered by the names and the way these are shared among people of the same sex but differing generations. Referring once more to Overing’s (1975:196) differentiation of notions of endogamy, Menkū marriage patterns seem to follow - as mentioned above - a preference for ‘alliance endogamy’, whereas Menkū naming patterns suggest the underlying ideal of group endogamy. I believe that in the same way that a Piaroa manipulates his ties with others by appealing once to one
type, and in another instance to another strategy, the Menkù have a similar potential in their systems of kinship classification and naming. However, as the group has been comparatively small for the most part of the century, the manipulation has taken place on the realm of mere existentiality. Here the Menkù evidence a pragmatism comparable to that manifested by the Kaingang (Henry ([1941] 1964) which concentrates on the insurance of the group's survival in the light of extreme pressure. The group size kept manipulations of the system for political purposes based on the 'competition' between different chiefs - as has, for instance, been demonstrated for the Piaroa - in the background. One could, however, argue, that in so far as the leader of an itso'de and also of an itso'fha is interested in the increase of his (political) power by constantly trying to attract new people, a similarity underlies both by being geared towards the increase of the kindred.

Having described the preference for endogamy in regard to kinship and naming, I shall in the following chapter proceed to give a more vivid understanding of the values underlying Menkù social organisation as a whole. This will reveal why people would want to live together - since it is only when they do that they can live well.
Chapter 8

Living Well Together - Menkü Social Organisation

During my time among the Menkü I was struck by the high community morale that pervaded their daily life. Using Western terminology of emotional states, I believe Menkü high morale to be best described as a condition of happiness. Such feeling, however, is intrinsically linked to the concept of living together. McCallum (1989), Gow (1991) and Belaunde (1992) have applied a similar model to analyse the social organisation of different Amazonian groups. McCallum (1989:11) uses the term ‘social organisation’ to denote the complex of related practices and processes in which Cashinahua engage as the basis of social life. She understands ‘sociality’ as an aspect of social organisation in that it is a ‘temporary product of morally correct engagement in social relationships’. Sociality refers to ‘explicit emotions that the Cashinahua experience when social, economic and political processes result in high community morale.’ When trying to describe Menkü social organisation, this understanding seems helpful since - following Firth’s (1951) famous contrast between the flux and flow of everyday life with the idea of a more abstract social structure - a social organisation reveals itself largely in the pursuance of daily activities. Meanwhile, sociality then refers to, or includes, the evaluation of the social life on an emotional level. In this chapter I shall apply this notion of sociality to the exploration of the affective aspects of Menkü daily social life.

For the Menkü, to live well together is a characteristic of human life. Communality is opposed to both singularisation and

302 Also the missionaries have innumerable accounts of the happiness with which the Menkü act and react in daily life.
distanciation of people from each other and of things from people. Where a person separates themself from the group and withholds their social, economic and reproductive capacities, sadness is generated both on the side of the individual as much as among the rest of the group. Only communality can provide the conditions for the abundance of people and food, whereas singularisation in the end deprives everybody of the basic conditions of life. Rather than each person looking after their own needs, communality only takes place where there is a process of sharing.

In the previous chapter I explored the ‘sharing’ of people in the form of the asymmetric ‘alliance’ exchange of Menkū endogamic kinship relations on the one hand, as well as of people’s names on the other. Now I shall argue that the sharing of food and of the work that goes into its production is another aspect of the same gesture. Like many other Amazonian groups, the sharing of food among households is one of the most impressive and at the same time most visible expression of the generation of sociality. Apart from generating sociality, however, sharing also constantly creates and re-enacts the social relations specific to the group. As Gow (1991:170) has argued for the Piro, kinship itself is created in the nurturing relationship which is, finally, a relationship of giving and sharing. I will show below that for the Menkū sharing happens in line with certain kinship linkages, however it does not solely constitute them. I suggest understanding kinship and sharing as having a dialectical relationship in which each preconditions the other. Without sharing, no kinship bonds would be confirmed,

303 Belaunde (1992:181) noted that for the AiroPai kin and other social ties are strengthened when food is shared out, but are weakened through theft, which creates enemies.
305 See also Overing 1999 who contrasts the enactment of kinship to the inherited relationship. The notion of enactment is explored further in Overing and Passes (eds.), forthcoming.
while without kinship sharing would have no reason to happen.

In this chapter, then, I shall focus on the three interdependent aspects which generate happiness, understanding the latter as an indicator of the realisation of the ideal social ‘order’. I will start by exploring the concept of togetherness. This will lead to a description of Menkú patterns of sharing, and allow me to elaborate on the notion of abundance. Revealing how far these three aspects - togetherness, sharing and abundance - are interlinked, I will argue that for the Menkú as well as for many Amazonian groups more generally, these principles of sociality are not only inseparable but precondition each other in such a way that they have to be understood as different expressions of the same ‘thing’, or, better, ‘feeling’.

Having outlined the conditions of individual and collective well-being as they are preconditioned upon the complementary cooperation of husband and wife, the last part of this chapter will focus on their disruption and challenge by interpersonal tensions and conflicts. It will become clear that Menkú conflict resolution is tied to the principle of personal autonomy. As such, the two parts of this chapter will give evidence of the fact that the Menkú are yet another exemplification of the two principles of social life that have been associated with Amazonia (see Overing, 1993a). Indeed, without the notion of personal autonomy and collective harmony, Menkú social organisation would be incomprehensible.

8.1 Living together
The missionary Amarante decribed an incident which demonstrates the importance (and relative ease) of maintaining *communitas* among the Menkú.\(^{306}\)

\(^{306}\) Entry to the missionaries' communal diary in 1980, my translation.
'At about noon, lots of shouting in the house, people screaming. It is Shiseki and her husband Shinushi, having a horrible quarrel. Shiseki holds a piece of wood and wants to beat Shinushi. The two attack each other. Netu, Shinushi's brother, is close by, giving the impression of wanting to separate the quarrellers. The rest remain sitting in their hammocks, only watching. Shiseki goes outside, scuffling with her husband. They come back in, she sits down in the hammock, and with a piece of wood hits alternately either at a sack in front of her, at her hammock, or at a beam of the house. Chief Wasurebu approaches them and attempts to talk calmly. Shiseki is still talking, she gesticulates and shouts for a long time. The others comment from the more distant part of the house. Wasurebu shifts now and then to Portuguese, saying, 'aqui morar e trabalhar, morar junto' [here we live and work, living together], and draws a line on the floor, distinguishing the here from the there. Quite some time passed, Shiseki came to Engasi Beth bringing her a piece of chicken; the fight had calmed down.'

Whenever I was among the Menkü I was struck by the general good mood that prevailed. This expressed itself in the animated interactions and constant conversations, in the smiling and laughing that accompanied any kind of work, and in the positive judgment of situations. It was very rare to witness any sadness, bad temper or annoyance. Rather, there seemed to be a constant desire to be together with others and join them in what they were doing. Togetherness and community were revealed as a precondition for feeling well. In fact, life is understood as living together, living is living together (see Wittgenstein, 1953); young children are with their mothers, older children are with their friends, women join other women, husbands might come to sit with them, do something together with other men or follow their own chores by, for instance, going off into the forest. A man might go off hunting on his own, but apart from this it is rare to see anybody working by themselves, isolated and distant from the group. Life takes place within the community, work is done in cooperation
with others.

While togetherness creates happiness, solitude makes life impossible. Life is based on the complementarity of husband and wife as well as on the interaction of the couple and its children with the wider community. A person or a couple fissioning from the group because of discord would always try to associate itself with another group. The decimation of the Menkû down to nine people in the 1950s\textsuperscript{307} therefore challenged their survival not only in physical terms, but also in regard to their need for communality. Indeed, I imagine that this challenge led to an intensification of their emphasis on conjugal and communal togetherness.

However, togetherness with others - humans and non-humans - is a feature of a human being's life on earth as a whole. As I have pointed out above,\textsuperscript{308} a person is embedded in relationships with their human community as much as with their botanical, animal, ancestral and spiritual environments. While the latter differ substantially from the human being, life is only possible when the human being maintains a relationship with them that guarantees their benevolence. Whosoever attends to them, by respecting and treating them well, is attended and protected by them. By observing the 'rules' related to the use of parts of animals as well as their consumption, the place of the animal in the human universe is secured and is guaranteed but upon the threat of personal misfortune for any transgressor. Togetherness with the animal world reveals itself as based on the principle of respect for each other's boundaries, in accord with which the animal world acts as a protector of the human community. For example, a woman, persecuted by her husband, who has been transformed into a spirit, finds protection, support and revenge in an anaconda. The snake

\textsuperscript{307} See chapter 2 on Menkû history.
\textsuperscript{308} See chapter 3, above.
serves her as a bridge to cross the river and furthermore, impales the spirit when he arrives at the river. As thanks the snake contents itself with an arm-band made of the seeds of the pequi-fruit.\textsuperscript{309}

Nature, and especially animals, 'give' themselves to humans when the latter need them. Apart from providing protection, they offer themselves as food when humans are hungry. However, nature's offering is always linked to a loss in the various myths that elaborate on this theme. The epilogue presented in the closing part of the myth, which describes the factors leading to the loss is, according to Meneses and Lima (1974:52) a necessity in order to understand the paradox of denial: while goods are offered by nature, they are nevertheless scarce and have to be obtained by parsimony. Moderation reveals itself as an important aspect of the human condition. If humans act against it, they fundamentally disrespect the order of things and threaten their existence which is based on sharing the available resources in an economical way among those living together.

8.2 The art of sharing

While a respect of nature is a means of guaranteeing its continuous benevolence and self-offering to the human community, togetherness of people is generated and expressed by sharing. Sharing is part of the daily experience of every Menkū. It happens within the nuclear family, and also between all households of the community. Due to its prevalence it is also a highly elaborated theme in the myths.\textsuperscript{310}

The unquestioned need to respect and share with the animals enables the knowledgeable and prudent older brother to enjoy food

\textsuperscript{309} See Pereira 1985:109.

\textsuperscript{310} See for instance 'The people who wanted to eat meat', in Holanda Pereira 1985: 142.
(meat) and protection by the animals, both of which assets can be seen as originating from the same benevolent source, nature, which grants protection and abundance when respected. Moreover, his attitude also gives him the power to redress a disorder brought about by the death of his younger brother. Even if that death was caused by adolescent ignorance and disrespect, it is not acceptable. Humanity has a prior right to live, and is granted the right to learn how to live together. To share properly and live well together is an art that is not given by birth, but that has to be acquired in life. The initiation of boys and girls that was described in a previous chapter, essentially aims at providing the conditions for achieving this art; it was shown that a boy’s initiation is connected to food production, while a girl’s initiation takes place within the female sphere of the household in which the processing, distribution and consumption takes place. Seen in this way, it might be possible to argue that both a respect for nature (in this case the animals) and proper sharing are taught and learned assets. Their acquisition, mediated by initiation that is administered by elders, allows for good living.

In contrast, amorality is variously ascribed: to the husband who does not ‘offer’ his ability to work to his wife\(^{311}\); to the parents who do not share food with their children\(^{312}\); to the woman who fails to share with other women the game or produce that her husband has brought back\(^{313}\); to the chief who does not divide the resources properly which allow for good living\(^{314}\); and, lastly, to the ancestors, who do not grant life on earth to their kinspeople, but rather greed their presence and want them to live with them in

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\(^{311}\) See for example ‘The toad who poisened the woman’, in op.cit.:221.

\(^{312}\) See for example ‘The children of the spider’, in op.cit.:247.

\(^{313}\) See for example ‘The woman and the ant’, in Holanda Pereira, 1985:228.

the world of the souls.\textsuperscript{315}

In general, food is the main item of sharing. However, the food is shared only once it has been processed in some way. Thus the shared product is an expression of conjugal sharing of labour. Being based on conjugalty, it is also only shared with couples as they are the only units that can reciprocate accordingly. Being based on reciprocity, the sharing that takes place between households is different from that which takes place within a household between husband and wife, and between parents and children. I shall start with the latter.

8.2.1 Conjugal sharing
As pointed out above, a person is only a whole person by uniting with their opposite sex (categorical) cross-cousin.\textsuperscript{316} In tying his hammock next to that of his wife, the husband signals his readiness to share himself and his capacities with those of his wife and her parents. The proximity of the two hammocks expresses the beginning of a life-long process of sharing. The unity of husband and wife reveals itself most clearly in the sharing of food and sex with each other. Food, like sex is based on conjugal complementarity, which comes to full completion only in the procreation of children. A couple that does not produce food is as deviant as a couple that does not bring forth children. Such a couple would be considered abnormal, lacking in its sharing with the wider community and so failing to contribute to the common good.

The Amazonian characteristic of associating food and sex has been elaborated by several authors.\textsuperscript{317} In the myths as well as in

\textsuperscript{315} See for example 'A visit to the place of the souls', in op.cit.: 68. Gow (1991:168) points out for the Piro that depriving kin of a share is disapproved of and considered as asocial.

\textsuperscript{316} See also Overing (1999) for the Piaroa.

their talk about sex, the Menkü use words that have connotations of food production and consumption. When using the Portuguese language, the sexual activity is described as 'eating' (comer) and 'mixing' or 'stirring' (mexer). Meanwhile, food that can be consumed is based on the coming together of male and female productive activity. Indeed, both are only productive when united. The food produced by men and women respectively has to be mixed before it can be eaten. As much as people are real people when they are married, food makes a real meal when it consists of meat, cassava bread and chicha. While the production of meat is part of the male domain, cassava bread and chicha are made by women. The mixing of the gendered skills of the male and female domains is furthermore expressed in the fact that to a certain degree the women are responsible for processing meat, while the men prepare the gardens to plant cassava and the other crops.

The sharing of food and sex are themselves preconditioned on sharing each other's work in the production of the house and artifacts. While the building of the house is part of the man's responsibility, the processing of cotton into a hammock is a woman's job. The bow and arrow used by the men to hunt game is made by partly using materials produced by women. The baskets used by both men and women to carry produce or goods are made by men. The making of the traditional grater and the sieves used by women in the processing of cassava involve raw-materials that are provided by men, while they are actually made by women. According to my knowledge there are no outspoken specialists, although there might be somebody better at something than somebody else.

The examples show that production, processing as well as

318 In spite of not being able to confirm this in Menkü language, I do believe that a similar parallel is drawn between the two realms in their own idiom.
319 See chapter 4.
consumption of food are based on an intricate interweaving of the male and the female domains as they manifest themselves in the gendered skills of adulthood. Only this cooperation allows for the nurturing of each other and of one’s children, to which I will turn now.

8.2.2 Sharing between parents and children
As much as nature gives itself to productive adults, enabling them to live well, parents give themselves to their children, enabling them to grow. This unconditioned giving realises itself in the provision of food, care and knowledge. Until children are about to engage in marriage, they receive this parental nurture. Once married, the man gives part of his work to his parents-in-law, either as labour or in form of the product thereof. In contrast, the woman works primarily for her own household, rather than returning received care to her parents. Yet, by living uxorilocally the daughter often will help the mother to carry out domestic chores. Furthermore, the parents receive their share once their children marry. The new household(s) generated through their marriage leads to an increase in the number of households sharing among themselves. Sharing between the households of a couple and their married children takes place not on the basis of having been parents but on the basis of being a productive household. However, as we shall see in the next section, the patterns of inter-household sharing reveal that there is a certain preference for consanguineal kin over households which are mainly constituted of categorical kin and affines.

8.2.3 Sharing between households
The Menkū practise sharing between households on a daily basis. Sharing on this level represents a key factor for group cohesion. It takes place on the levels of production, processing and
consumption. While the sharing of food is the most prevalent daily experience, it is in fact only the result of diverse processes of sharing that are related to its production and processing. It therefore seems adequate to present Menkū patterns of intra-household sharing in a twofold way, concentrating firstly on the sharing of work, and, secondly, on the sharing of food.

8.2.3.1 Sharing work: Work parties

Working together is, as we have heard from chief Wasurebu, synonymous with living together. As such it is accompanied by the same good mood that is characteristic of the receipt and consumption of food. We can distinguish formal and informal ways of bringing about cooperation in work.

8.2.3.1.1 Cooperation based on informality

Informal cooperation among men and among women is the most common and happens on a day-to-day basis in respect to all activities. When, one day, Shunju started to make baskets, he was soon joined by other men. A woman involved in the lengthy process of making necklaces would not be alone very long before being joined by others doing the same thing. Little groups of people sitting in the shadow of houses form. Soon they are surrounded by small children. Stories are told and happenings are commented upon. A social space, in which everybody can join, is created. In the same informal way that it came about, it also dissolves again after some time.

In these gatherings plans are also made for future action. The invitation to join somebody in an activity is quite spontaneous:

'I am woken up by the noise of the truck being prepared for a journey. It is dawn, and yet lots of animated talking, and children running about.
Looking out of my window I see already some empty baskets on the truck. When I went out to ask what was happening, Beth told me that Riaki had invited everybody to her garden to harvest some yam. I had a hard time getting ready before the truck left. Everybody seemed long ready before I finally lifted Charlotta and Catarina on the truck. Rather than commenting on the delay I caused, they smiled and seemed content that I joined them.\footnote{My fieldnotes, May 1996.}

Apart from these common informal events, the cooperation in work is also brought about in a more formal way. Such a formal invitation, as any formal address to the community, is expressed in ritual discourse which I witnessed during my stay.

\subsection*{8.2.3.1.2 The ritual discourse}

The ritual of discourse is an important factor in Menkù social organisation for a married man to express his thoughts that he wants to share with the community.\footnote{Franchetto (1993:95) analyses ceremonial discourses of the Kuikuru of the Upper Xingu, among whom such discourse can only be staged by a chief. Different to other studies of discourses (e.g. Basso, 1973) she manages to use the study of the oral tradition from a linguistical as well as anthropological perspective as a means to obtain informations and interpretations regarding the social organisation, cosmology and indigenous history of a particular group. Chaumeil (1993) appears to apply a similar approach to the Yagua, when analysing the different linguistic and sonoric procedures mobilised in Yagua rituals. Language, which is according to the Yagua a conjunction of opposed linguistic and sonoric prinicples corresponds to Yagua society which encompasses hierarchic and egalitarian modes. I found both approaches very inspiring for future research among the Menkù even though the Menkù complex of ceremonial discourse seems much more informal and a-hierarchical than among the groups studied by these two authors. Similar to the Menkù, the group studied by Chaumeil has an ancestral cult related to sacred wind instrumentss. In his interesting analysis the author includes their sound in the complex of ceremonial language.} While only men are able to stage it, the content often results from the many conversations between him and his spouse. I suggest that they therefore reflect concerns of the couple more than of the speaker alone. It is not only used for the formal invitation to share work, but also to express concerns and worries that affect the whole community. An individual decides spontaneously when to stage a ritual discourse,
and such autonomous decisiveness is respected by all others. The others' recognition is expressed in their participation in the ritual, a first sign of which is the silence in the houses that accompanies the initial stage of the ritual, when the discoursor is out on the central plaza. As it usually takes place in the night, this silence might be caused by most people being asleep. However, as the discourse is voiced in a more intense way over time, the silence in the houses is an actual conscious choice. Once the speaker has voiced his string of thoughts, the men leave their houses one by one to support him. They do so by answering his thoughts and commenting on them. While they may voice other ideas in addition, or raise problems, this is done in a ritualised speech. Even though the participants respond to the speaker in their own way, the communication is not a direct interaction of questions and answers. Rather, the thoughts uttered seem to be depersonalised; they seem to be spoken on behalf of the community, yet from the perspective of an individual, who is at the same time part of the collective. In the same way, while the responses are given by individuals, they resound with the collective as a whole. The recognition of individual thoughts by the community generates a sense of collectivity which, in turn, is the basis for togetherness and communal well-being. The consensus that is reached after many hours of ritual is based on everybody having had a space to voice their position and express their agreement with the proposal or mere thought.\footnote{I have not heard of anybody mentioning disagreement to what is being said. Rather than a discussion, it is a commenting and supporting of what has been voiced by the speaker. In the case somebody really disagrees, he can always resort to the principle of personal autonomy which will allow him to ultimately act according to his own conviction as long as it does not hinder the execution of anybody else's ideas.} I would like to suggest that in so far as each person is a sounding board for the whole community, one can understand this process as a place in which the microcosm of each person converges with the macrocosm of the community as a whole. Being embedded in an allegiance to the prime values and conditions
of social living, it is a strong means of establishing group cohesion.

8.2.3.1.2.1 Zalaku's formal invitation to go on a fishing expedition
The best way to exemplify a formal invitation to share work is, I believe, to give an account of one such event that I was able to witness in June 1996:

'It is still dark. Somebody opens the door of his house. It is Zalaku. Going to the middle of the central square, he starts a discourse. His voice gets more and more intense, he interrupts his speech with powerful screams.'

These were Zalaku's words.\(^{323}\)

'Women go to work, work with cassava. Man go fishing. You can wake up. The children are well. When dying, I don't appear, when I am alive, I appear. Let's wake up and work, let's get up and fish. Now the 'flu has passed and the children are well. We are also [going to be] old, one day we will, like our father and mother, not get up any more.

I live here, now I will go fishing. You can wake up, our mother is there at Cravari. I am here, live here, we can go fishing. We worked [grew] cassava. Now it is ripe, there is a lot. We were ill, now we are cured, now everybody is well. When our mother died we have not forgotten her. We are well, let's get up and work.

Here I live, here are also dead people, I am alive here, I live here, everybody can wake up. Here I live, here are also dead people, I am alive here, I live here, everybody can wake up. Here I live, here are also dead people, I am alive here, I live here, everybody can wake up.

\(^{323}\) Zalaku's wives have translated the taped discourse for me into Portuguese, and I have transcribed the discourse into English. It should be noted that Zalaku is Iranxe and came to live with the Menkū after he helped the missionaries to establish contact with them. See chapter 2, above.
When we fought with the Canoeiro [Rikbaktsa] they attacked us, some time ago. Today we don't fight anymore, and whites also live here and help us. Whites live here and help us. Our family is also well.

We wake up, we live here. When Engasi, sister of Kezusi and Kishi, died, Atarikisi is now our daughter, now she is already big. I woke up, I thought to myself, when I am alive, I live here, have a garden here, have cassava, have sweet potato. We are alive, I did not die yet, I have a garden, sweet potato. We live here, all together. The children are healthy, everybody is well, you can wake up. We are not ill anymore, we got better. Whites live here with us, they help us. Now the Toyota arrived, now the Toyota arrived.

Our parents, when they were alive, they worked there at the Cravari. They woke up, worked. Our parents, when the rains began, worked, planting cassava. Therefore I was thinking to myself, that our parents went to hunt, killing animals. When our parents were alive, when they woke up they went hunting, killing game, they brought it, the women were happy. Now our parents died. They are not there anymore. That's how I remember it. That's how I remember it. After the hunt, we arrived, ate, the women were happy. That's how it was, now our father and mother are dead already.

As I am alive, I sustain the child. My mother and father died some time ago. You can wake up, everything is well, children as well. We also walked with the little animal ('bichinho'). Our fathers worked like that as well. We do our work. Now, when the sister of Kezusi and Kishi died, now her child is well, is big. I also help to care for it. Now her child is well, is big. I also help to care for it.

You can wake up, help to fish together, carrying baskets, take them

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324 As I have pointed out above, at the death of Engasi, the community had decided to give her youngest daughter Kaakishi to the care of her sisters Kezusi and Kishi who are Zalaku's wives. At the time of the discourse the little girl was about four years old.

325 Due to the fund raising activities of one missionary it was possible to acquire a new car for the community which had been brought to the settlement a few days before this discourse took place.

326 Often 'bichinho' is used as a circumscription designating the Yetá. See chapter 5, above.
there to the harbour. Chief, you can wake up. Alone I feel a big lack of the dead; father and mother, sister and my own children died there at the Cravari. I miss them.

You can wake up, people. Let's go fishing. Our friends of Cravari don't come to see us and don't help us. I live here with you, I am alone, living here with you. As I am feeling so, Kezusi is suffering with a cough. I thought that I would lose my wife, but until now she is still well with me. Now they brought the Toyota, our sick people went to Brasnorte to be treated. Now they brought the Toyota, our sick people went to Brasnorte to be treated.

There, where our children died, there is the cemetery, there we lived. Afterwards I left, now I am here, living. Then I went away to here. First I lived over there, now here. When I had no woman here, I was living over there, at Cravari. First I lived over there, now here. When I had no woman here, I was living over there, at Cravari. We danced, our father, mother, grandparents, children. Now I am alone, now I have no companions to play the katériti. In former times, there were many. That's how I remember it. Then, when I was still small, I danced with them, to learn. Now I am old.

People, you can wake up! People, you can wake up. I have two women here. That's why I live here. Chief, you can wake up. We will live here. Wake up, people, the children are well, everything is well. We live here. We live here. Now the 'flu has passed, the 'flu has passed. We work in the garden. The Toyota arrived, so, women, when there is a sick person, we can take her to Brasnorte. The Toyota arrived, so, women, when there is a sick person, we can take her to Brasnorte.

The children are well, I live here, I am now older than when my mother died, and I am missing her a lot. I am now older than when my mother died, and I am missing her a lot. The children are well, my children, also, are well. The children are well, my children are also well. When my father and mother died, I still did their work, planted cassava, sweet potatoes, maize.
Tsuyabu walked to the city to make a reunion. The communities have to work (trabalhar serviço). The men helped us to work. . . '

Following this, Zalaku made a ritual weeping in which he remembered the dead. During his lament he slowly was joined by other men who came onto the central square holding their bow and arrows. They walked, spoke, and together all shouted a kind of refrain after each sentence. They responded to him,

‘Let's wake up, we are well, let's live, children are well. That is how it is, our parents died also, when we were still young, we also helped our parents.’

Tsuyabu, then the chief’s son and acting already in some ways as the chief of the group, took the word:

‘Chieftainess, wake up your children. It is early, I woke up. let's go fishing, hunting, I will help you. It is early. I am also very sad. Also my father and mother died. It is early, in former times we were also many people. It is early, you have thought early. Okay (tá bom), let's live like that, let's live like that [in the sense of, let's do what you suggested].’

Tsuyabu started yelling:

‘Okay, let's live like that, let's live like that. Okay, let's live like that, let's live like that. Everybody is well, the children are well. I walked with him until the car of the whites, until Cuiabá, okay, it is early, let us go fishing. Okay, we will arrive back here, we will eat. Okay, let's live like that, let's wake up, let's live. Okay, it is early. Okay, I arrived now, we walked and walked, now we arrived (Yauka Thomaz and Tsuyabu). Okay, let us fish, work, live well. Okay, let us live, everything is well, it is not for dying. All the old died, I

I will come back to the institution of the chief further down.

‘Walking’ (andar) is used by Tsuyabu as a synonym for moving forward, irrespective of whether it was by foot or by car.
also thought that. Okay, let us live here, let us think. . . ‘

After him, everybody had a turn at talking. More and more the words crossed, until the individual speaker was unrecognisable. It is a strange vociferation, clamorous, extraordinary, expressive at the same time. One gets the impression that nobody listens to anybody else. Everybody exclaims his speech and his call. Finally the utterances merged into an intensive collective exclamation, which consisted of the words,

‘Let’s live and work together!’

For about half an hour we could only hear this utterance. By that time, dawn had begun. The men slowly returned to their houses, where a hustling and bustling had started. Lots of talking, and soon the first men were outside again, with bow and arrow, a basket for their hammocks and a dried dough for cassava bread. A little later the group of men set off to the harbour, leaving women and children behind. They, in turn, got ready with baskets and bush knives and set off to Kezusi and Kishi’s cassava garden. In a short time, every woman had filled several baskets which she carried back to the settlement with the help of her daughters. They dropped them outside their houses. The processing of the tubers into cassava dough began. With their knives, graters and basins, the women sat together in the shadow of Kezusi’s house. It took more than a whole day of animated work until the task was completed. I counted 159 doughs which were delivered to Kezusi. Meanwhile the women set off again to collect sugar-cane. Now it was the time to make chicha. The men were supposed to be back the next day. Each woman returned from Kezusi and Kishi’s garden carrying about forty stalks of sugar-cane, each of a length of about two metres. They were brought to the sugar-cane press. While some women were at the
press, others sat around it, watching and chatting, or pounding maize at home. The lengthy cooking of the sugar-cane juice mixed with the pounded maize was done by each woman individually. The finished product was kept in the houses of those who prepared it, until the men would come back. The anticipation of their return grew with each day. Finally, after four days, a child announced their arrival. There they were, each carrying a heavily loaded basket full of large pieces of meat and grilled fish. One after the other went straight to Zalaku’s house, where the meat was received by Kezusi and Kishi and stored all around the fireplace. The men were exhausted, everybody was very happy.

The men had caught a large number of small and medium-sized fish. Apart from that, Zalaku had hunted a tapir and a monkey. My husband, Tadeu, who was able to accompany the men on the hunting expedition, recalls that during the expedition, everything that was hunted or fished was given to Zalaku. Every evening, the newly caught fish was grilled, while the tapir was divided into pieces by Zalaku and grilled as well. In spite of the abundance of the hunt, the hunters had very little of it while out on the fishing expedition. Almost everything had been kept for consumption together with the wives and children at the settlement.

When the men had arrived, Kezusi and Kishi, the wives of the speech maker Zalaku, distributed some of the cassava doughs to the women, each of whom started to bake 15 to 20 cassava breads which were brought back to Zalaku’s wives. Once they had received all the cassava breads and chicha, the hosts placed all the food on some banana leaves outside on the central square. People started painting themselves with red annatto. Once all the chicha, cassava bread, meat and fish were there, everybody gathered around to admire the abundance that the joint effort of the community had
created. Zalaku began to talk, commenting again about the well-being of everyone. He started to play the katētiri and invited everybody to dance and play with him. Then they stopped and Kezusi and Kishi started sharing out the food. Everybody received a generous portion of all the food and drink. There was an ambience of great pleasure.

8.2.3.1.2.2 Formality as a means for collective involvement

Zalaku's formal invitation to work together is embedded in a wider discourse about living together. An antithesis is established between the living and the dead. Zalaku's assertion of being alive is directly linked to working, and, specifically, to the work connected to the food cycle. This capacity and need to work distinguishes the living from the dead. The abundance at Nāhi's house - the residence of the deceased - which makes food production irrelevant, is opposed to the need for food production on earth. With this kind of work being absent at Nāhi's place, cooperation among people is also not an issue there. It is a characteristic of earthly existence.

As I have argued above, togetherness in general, and specifically in work, generates happiness through cooperation. However, happiness can only be brought about if everybody is well. The well-being and health of the children justifies working and enjoying themselves, and to have as a result of communal work, abundance, which is the precondition for a party. A festival cannot be celebrated when there is no food or health.

Working together is also a means to overcome loneliness. In the case of Zalaku he invites the others to work with him since he feels alone among the Menkū. The loneliness he refers to is caused

330 See chapter 6, above.
by having moved away from the Cravari settlement, where his family members died and are buried.\footnote{The evocation of the dead does not guarantee their presence, since they are most active at the place where they are buried.} Being Iranxe, the fact that he is married helps, and makes life among the Menkû possible. However only the experience of the collectivity will console him, since he remembers a past where his parents worked and partied together with the many others of his settlement. It is they who taught him how to do things, how to live. Their way of living is the way of living which realises itself in working together.

By placing his appeal in a physical (being well) and temporal (between the living and the dead) space, he declares it as a means of realising good living. It is on that basis that each (male, grown-up) individual of the collectivity responds positively to his suggestion. While it is his personal wish to go fishing and obtain lots of food, this is a condition that is favoured by everyone. His evocation of the past is a guarantee for the righteousness of the plan in the present.

Even though the discourse takes place among men, the invitation is geared towards both men and women who are in their productive and reproductive phase. Only if they cooperate - the women work with the cassava while the men are on the fishing expedition - can the result be such that a festival can be conducted. At the same time it is also directed towards the dead, to ensure their participation through protection. By alluding to the things they taught him, to the way they lived and to the fact that they are not forgotten but remembered for all their contributions, their presence in his mind is evoked.

Having voiced his wish for enabling good living through his discourse, the community responds by acting accordingly. Only
when the ideal realises itself in action is the envisioned well-being brought about. The individual voice has to resound in the collective in order to be fully realisable. At the same time, the community depends upon the spontaneity of the individual. Without Zalaku coming forward and inviting collective action, there would be no host for the expedition and no one to coordinate the work of the women in the settlement. An individual has to come forward to take up this position. He can only do so, however, if he is married and therefore has a female counterpart who can share the gendered responsibilities with him. We can see, then, that without there being a wife a formal invitation could not be voiced. Only the couple’s complementarity enables this vital element of communal life, the sharing of large scale work, to be possible.

Communal life is dependent upon such vitalising moments of cooperation, where the morale is high. Since such proposals imply fun and high morale for the whole community, working together is understood as a necessity for communal life, and therefore, for the very possibility of human life. Cooperation in work ultimately generates well-being, since it always centres around the production of food. The joint effort can guarantee abundant food to a much larger degree than any individual undertaking could. While we have seen in this section how the sharing of work contributes to collective well-being, we shall now turn to the sharing of food and see how this can be considered a climaxing moment of living well together.

indeed, a grown-up daughter would not be able to replace the speaker's wife for the provision of female gendered assets, although she would help her mother in coordinating the execution of the party.
8.2.3.2 Sharing of food

On the fifth of May 1996 I made the following entry in my field diary:

'Late one evening, Shinushi knocked at our door. There is an urgency in his knock. He tells us that he hunted a tapir and that in the morning everybody would go to the forest where he killed it. Early next day there was a rustling and bustling in the houses. Everybody got ready to go to the forest. Everybody took a basket, some containing a hammock. The pace was fast. After 45 minutes we arrived at the scene. People were observing the hunted game. Not long after everybody had arrived, Shunju and some other men started to light a bundle of branches with which they singed the skin of the tapir. Shinushi watched them. Then the belly was slit open, and, with Iwaya commenting, the game was divided into parts. Once that was finished, Iwaya took over and collected all the blood. She separated out the liver and cut it into many pieces, giving one to every woman who was heading a household. They divided it further and provided their husbands and children with a share. The small pieces of liver were grilled in the fire that Kezusi had lit for this purpose soon after getting to the place. While most were enjoying their meat, Iwaya set about dividing the game further and allocated a piece to every household. While the head was reserved for the hunter, and given to Shiseki, Shinushi's wife, the heart was given to the chief's wife, Kataki. Iwaya matched the size of a piece with the size of household. Once everybody had received their portion they put it in their baskets. Some had to make new baskets on the spot since their old ones did not serve. People slowly started to get ready for their return. Every household carried their raw meat back to the settlement. Upon arrival, the processing began. The men made makeshift grills. The hours during which the meat was grilling were used by some to prepare chicha. The processing of the food was always accompanied by a smaller or larger group of people who, often

\[333\] I have not seen the Menkú processing blood, nor is blood mentioned in the collection myths. I only witnessed Butashi Iranxe making black pudding, using thee cleaned intestine to boil it in. Since she had been at the mission post of Utiariti, I believe this to be an adoption of Western practices introduced by the missonaries at the post. Consequently, on the above occasion,only the missionaries were given a share, since the Menkú did not want any.
involved in an animated conversation, would do some crafts or just sit there watching. Once meat and chicha were ready, the men took it to the house of the Yetá to offer it to the ancestors. Upon their return, another round of sharing began among the households. This time, not every household would receive from every other. Women were running around from one house to another carrying the separated pieces of meat on a large sieve. Paths crossed. Before this round of sharing ended, I went to the river to have a bath. Atarikii, who could not find me in my house went to look for me in order to give me the piece of meat she had reserved for me. Meanwhile, Iwaya made sure I still had enough dough to make cassava bread. Jouki and Kezusi provided me with some chicha to go with the meal. Within the household a last round of sharing had already long begun. From the moment the meat was cooked, each family member began to enjoy their share. I felt awkward not knowing the rules upon which I could reciprocate the share I received. Interpreting the expression on the women's faces who gave me a share of their share, they did not seem to expect a return. Their happiness seemed to rest in their ability to have something that they could share, rather than being dependent on receiving a piece from me in exchange.'

The account reveals the complexity of intra-household sharing. This complexity is, however, not linked to the size of the hunt. It is a feature of every sharing that takes place. It is not even linked to food alone, although in the sharing of food the pattern involved is expressed most clearly. The above account allows us to distinguish the following steps regarding the sharing.

Firstly, once a man has hunted an animal, he hands it over to a woman who heads a household other than his own. This woman is responsible for the division and subsequent distribution of the meat. She starts by separating out the liver which she divides among all the households present, taking into consideration the size of each household. The division of the rest of the meat is influenced by several considerations. On the one hand it
acknowledges the hunter and the chief, by allocating them parts of the animal that belong to their position and are reserved for them on every occasion big game is killed. On the other hand, it recognises the size of each household individually by giving different sized portions to each. In the above case, Riaki was given one of the biggest shares, a whole leg, since she heads a household with many children. The meat is carried back to the settlement by its recipients. Before each woman who received a part sets off to prepare the meat for further processing, the meat is taken by the men to the house of the Yetā where it is offered and shared with the spirits. Upon the men’s return to their respective households, it is divided further. Some parts are separated out to be shared again with other households. This distribution happens irrespective of the time of day. At times in the night, at times the following morning, everybody receives their piece of monkey, armadillo, wild boar, or other game. Only then the processing and sharing within the family starts. When it is a large share, some of the meat is sometimes dried to be kept for another day. In most occasions, however, all of the meat is consumed very quickly. Days of much meat might follow days of no meat at all. The head which was part of the hunter’s portion is again subject to a round of distribution, while the heart is usually not further distributed by the chief. The following pattern emerges, with each arrow indicating a process of giving of oneself, thus sharing:
When the game is small, it is still shared, though to a lesser degree. Not every household, but only the closer ones, receive some. The hunter hands over the small game to his wife, instead of another woman. As only a large return of the hunt is offered to the Yetá, small catches are kept within the family. However, even then it is still shared with more people than just the family members.

When visiting houses following a big hunt, I sometimes noticed that some people, especially Zosaki and Zalakussi, did not always get a share. These two are quite old Iranxe who came to live with the Menkú some twenty years ago. None of their children, who
were already big and married by the time they came to the Menkū, accompanied them. They had no uxorilocally co-resident daughter to help them look after their needs. Nor did they have a son who married in the group. In line with the kinship practices outlined above, they were nevertheless treated as categorical kin. When it came to sharing, this did not, however, always provide them with a share. This reveals that the Menkū do have a preference for sharing with certain people more than with others. I suggest that they give preference to those households with whom they have a more intimate relationship. In that way, a household’s children will always receive a share, followed by close consanguinal kin and by actual affines. Only in the last instance will those with whom not such intimate relationship exists (as the Iranxe couple Zosaki and Zalakussi) receive a share. We note then, that the patterns of intra-household sharing also stress the endogamic pattern that we have already described for Menkū marriage alliances and naming patterns.  

While following this pattern and thereby reaffirming existing kin and affinal relationships, the practice of sharing can at the same time, as Gow (1991) has argued, be a means to establish people as kin. It is interesting to note that the missionaries and myself were more often included in the circles of sharing than the old Iranxe couple. As with the latter, the Menkū maintain the relation of categorical kinship with the missionaries. I am tempted to argue that the missionaries were so distant that the categorical relationship was not strong enough to explain their inclusion in the sharing. However, I believe that a stronger reason for their inclusion is the participation in daily life and sharing of skills.

This is confirmed also by the Iranxe couple of Butashi and Lawatzu whose two children, Yotenbu and Kitsudi, married Menkū (Shui and Yamâxi). While when they succeeded in a hunt they would always share with the parents and kin of their children-in-law (Shiseki’s family), they would share less with Tsuyabu and his two wives, and even less with the Iranxe couple Zosaki and Zalakussi, both households with which they do not have immediate kin or affinal relations.
(rather than food) that the missionaries were able to provide to the community as a whole. Even though I do not understand Menkü sharing as being conditioned on having received something, which Belaunde (1992:181) following Ingold (1986:233) called 'sharing-in', I believe it is an unconditional giving (sharing-out, where the return is not expected) and, lastly, the capacity to share in itself that is appreciated. Since I had hardly anything to share with the community other than my presence I was given much less compared to the missionaries. However, it seemed also that one's presence was a good that could be shared: when I did not visit anybody, nobody came to visit me in my house.

The emphasis, then, of Menkü sharing lies in giving rather than in receiving. As Belaunde (1992:181) has argued for the AiroPai, the stress is not put on the duty to reciprocate but on the generosity of the giver and the mutuality of the acts of giving. It is a 'free gift' in so far as its giving is not expected. At the same time, giving is a reaffirmation of the principle outlined above that Meneses and Lima (1974:38) derived from the Iranxe myths in regard to the community of nature and human beings: the one who procures will find. In regard to life within the human community, we can state that the one who can share is the happy and moral person. It is that person who is able to generate sociality. While this principle is valid for every person, it crystallises itself in the female head of a household. Amarante observes that,

[in this processing and dividing the food, the woman illuminates herself. This gesture of sharing, that is happening in a continuous process of reciprocity, proper and syntagmatic to the religious experience of the Menkü, the gesture of service, the dividing and sharing, is characteristic of the woman within the community.' (Amarante 1994:13.)]

332 My translation.
Her giving to the community is complemented by the men offering food to the Yetá. It is this double offering which is preconditioned on the complementarity of the male and female domains, which makes good living possible. Without sharing there would be no celebration of festivals, without the latter the protective ancestors and spirits would be deprived of their participation in human life. Without their participation, no game and crops would offer themselves to the people. This, in turn, would equal a human being's loss of the physical, social and religious basis of life.

While sharing is a precondition for living well, it is, furthermore, an expression of the acknowledgement of each other's existence and presence. The Menkū archetype for the recognition and reception of the 'other' can be found in the benevolent spirit couple of Nāhi.336 Amarante (1994:10) argues that tenderness is a characteristic aspect of this spiritual being, which the people, and in a specific way, the Menkū women, testify in their way of being. By her daily sharing of food she not only nurtures the community but continuously acts as the hostess who receives and acknowledges the other. She not only does so in regard to the 'inside', but as the chief's wife, also in relation to the 'outside'. In fact, without her the chief would be unable to welcome outsiders in the right way.337

We can conclude that the sharing of food and the cooperation in work that went into its production are key factors in the generation of communal well-being. Only when cooperation in those two realms is enacted is the good life possible, since only then can

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336 In this Nāhi seems to correspond to Cheleru of the Piaroa who simply wants to give. See Overing, 1989.
337 Unfortunately I have no data relating to the linguistical marking of the chief's wife. A special name for her has not been mentioned to me, nor - as it seems to me - to the missionaries working with the Menkū.
abundance be achieved. I shall now turn to this aspect which I have described as the third factor enhancing a 'high morale' or happiness within the community.

8.3 The notion of abundance
While abundance is a feature ascribed to the place of Nāhi, it was, in mythical times, also a characteristic of life on earth. Abundance was the 'right' of the human being. As mentioned, nature offered itself generously to the needs of the human being. The only return that nature expected from man was to be respected and well treated. Upon the disregard of this basic rule, which in the myth is expressed in the unmasking of the cause of abundance, this prodigious gift is lost. According to Meneses and Lima (op.cit.:50), a law of the human condition emerges: anything excessive and miraculous is precarious. The 'super-abundance' pronounces the loss which is caused not by nature but always by an 'other' who does not permit the neighbour or relative to benefit from the affluence in a limitless way. Either due to curiosity, jealousy or greed, the loss is brought about, and the abundance ceases and is replaced by the scattering of resources and the need for parsimonious action.

Yet, in spite of the interruption of this state of abundance due to anti-social behaviour which, at times, also involved incestuous transgressions, abundance can be achieved when the community lives according to its principles of high morale. While the dynamics of social life that I described above are constituted by the spontaneity and autonomy of each individual, sociality is furthermore 'guaranteed' by the existence of the institution of the chief couple. A description of their main responsibilities, which complement those given in a previous chapter, will give an insight into how earthly abundance can be attained.
8.4 The chief couple

Similar to descriptions of Levi-Strauss' (1967:55) for the Nambikwara and Overing (1989) for the Piaroa, it is the prime duty of the chief to ensure the community's well-being. For the Menkū it is the chief's duty, in the last instance, to ensure abundance where abundance is no longer granted naturally. In the myth of the new sun the chief is represented as the sun. The sun is associated with warmth (welcome and well-being), and light. The main theme elaborated on in that myth is the ability to share properly. As the old sun did not do so, his two wives decided to take a new husband and kill their old one. It is they who taught him how to share well and fulfil all his duties so that the community at large could be happy again:

'The other day, the new sun rose beautifully again. Everybody was happy. The women got the dough of the bitter cassava out of the hole in the ground and made a very big cassava bread. The older woman said to her sister, 'Go and call our oldest brother.' He came and said to the younger sister, 'Now call your husband!' And the younger sister went and said to her husband, 'Your brother-in-law is calling you out there.' The new sun went there, divided the meat and cassava bread for everybody and every person took back a heavily loaded basket to their house. Everybody was happy with the new sun because the old one did not divide and share the meat and cassava bread among all, and only gave the broth of the meat to the hunters. They staged a big party and everybody was happy.'

As much as the sun is connected with the recognition of the other in sharing, light, in another myth, is associated with the space in which social life, here constituted especially in work and productive activities, is possible.339

338 'The New Sun', in Holanda Pereira, 1985:45.
339 'The dawn of day', in op.cit.:55.
The loss and re-encounter of light is connected to the alternating arrival of day and night. While the little boy cried in the darkness and prevented everybody from sleeping, his finding of the sun is celebrated. Sunlight is thus depicted as a life-giving force which allows people to celebrate and be well. The same characteristic applies to the chief whose task it is to represent these aspects on the level of humanity. If he gets old, his capabilities diminish and his social skills cease and he is exchanged for a new one. The old chief does not contest the decision, since he has no means of reacting against it. It is the community with whom he is connected that is responsible and enacts the decision. Once the community (in the myth firstly represented as the old sun’s wives and, secondly, as their brothers, which is equivalent to the community at large) has decided, there is no discussion about it:

‘The brothers of the sun’s wives say to the new sun: ‘Don’t be sad, brother-in-law. It was our sisters themselves who killed their old husband. They are the ones who know. You take the place of the old one. And you, too, will be our chief. The meat that we used to bring to our old chief, we will now bring to you.’

As the light allows for a plentitude of food by enabling economic production (and growth), and abundance of people fed on shares of it, the chief has to ensure such profusion on earth. However, the administration of an earthly abundance of people and food has several aspects. As in the myth, it realises itself first and foremost in the ability to share well. While the chief’s wife does so in regard to the community, the chief is more responsible for the share of primary resources; when the location of the settlement is to be changed, he identifies the ideal new area. He

\[340\] Holanda Pereira (1985:54), my translation.
indicates how to share the land, and before each clearing season allocates plots for new gardens to each family. When prestations are brought by outsiders, it is his responsibility to divide them fairly among the whole community. Any wrongdoing by him is severely disapproved of and leads to his dismissal.

Apart from being responsible for the division of physical resources which allow for economic activities, he also has the duty to ensure everybody's well-being. Every day, either in the morning or afternoon, chief Wasurebu goes around the houses and talks to the men individually, getting to know their ideas and plans for the next day. He thus can sense the mood in the group and act accordingly. It is his duty to coordinate work when necessary and when nobody is hosting a work party. Katakai, his wife, does the same with the women. As such, the chief couple is always informed about everybody's approximate physical and emotional whereabouts. At times of low communal morale, which might be caused by lack of food or by ill health, the chief has to show the community that he is doing something about it. When an illness such as the 'flu broke out in the settlement, Tsuyabu, son of Wasurebu's wife, who is slowly taking over his father's role, could often be seen with a worried face. It is for this reason that he went to several meetings with one of the missionaries to acquire a car for the community. When, in turn, game was short and people were starting to comment about the lack of meat, Wasurebu initiated a collective hunt, if nobody else did so.

341 See similar account for Nambikwara (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) and Piaroa (Overing 1993a:50).
342 This is furthermore expressed in the chief's constant search for new ways and new technologies which could help to ensure economic and physical well-being. The growing of new crops such as sugar cane and rice, the commercialisation of rubber tapping, the systematisation of beekeeping, the establishment of the orchard and care for it, the husbandry of poultry are all activities which were welcomed and started by the chief or his son Tsuyabu. Contact with governmental bodies promising support for indigenous groups is carried out by the son, as all more representative functions with the Portuguese speaking non-indigenous outside.
The chiefly couple is also responsible for calling rituals if they are not happening out of the initiative of other individuals. Zalaku, who was made chief once he married into the group and lived among them for a few years, always complained to me that during his time of being a chief there were many more parties on his decision, and much more fun than nowadays.

The guarantee of fun is equivalent to the prevention or the resolution of conflict when it arises. As we saw in the beginning of this chapter, only chief Wasurebu intervened in the fight between Shinushi and Shiseki in order to re-establish harmony. If a fight between people cannot be resolved by those directly involved it is the sole task of the chief and his wife to procure a solution, and act as peacemakers. This is achieved, as I argued above, by reminding the quarrellers of the human being's raison d'etre, namely living well together. On the basis of the data that were presented above, I suggest understanding the chief and his wife as an exemplification of the ideals of existence in word and deed. Who best realises this task, is chosen or approved by the community in collective meetings of producing adults to be chief. Apart from the generation of a high morale within the group, this characteristic of a chief's couple is also extended to its representative functions. The outsiders are greeted by the couple, the couple receives the presents and is responsible for their fare share-out. Furthermore, the couple has to be informed about any travelling plans (including my own).

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343 See here Overing (Frazer lecture) who has shown a similar task for the chief among the Piaroa.

344 For the Nambikwara (Lévi-Strauss, 1967:53) consent was at the origin of leadership and the only measure of its legitimacy. Goldman, [1963]1979:279-83; and Overing (1989:164) have emphasised for the Cubeo and Piaroa respectively that a group stays together only as long as its members and its leader achieved an maintained geniality of relationships. See also Overing, 1993a:50.
It is interesting to note that since contact the Menkû have had four different men as chief. At the time of contact, Tsuno was chief of the group. He followed his father, since chiefdomship is hereditary as long as the son is able to receive the favour of his community.\textsuperscript{345} Tsuno's wife died, however, in the second year of contact. With her death, he lost the essential component enabling the realisation of all chiefly duties. This coincided with the time Zalaku married into the group. Once Zalaku (Iranxe) came to live with the Menkû, he was then chosen to be their chief. While on the one hand he and his father had been chief before and he was heading an Iranxe settlement, his appointment was, I believe, based on another reasons. Knowing the white men, their language and customs, and the particular missionaries, Zalaku was the most able to lead the Menkû through the initial phase of contact. He could mediate the two extremely different realities, and was able to place his own culture, the history of his own people and of the Menkû as well as the appearance of the missionaries within a coherent framework. He could stand the tensions between the two worlds since, at the time of missionary penetration, his family was one of the three who resisted integration into Utiariti while maintaining contact with it and receiving the relatives back into the territory once the mission post had been closed down. Several years later, when the Menkû had accustomed themselves to the missionary presence and their differences, they felt comfortable enough to discharge Zalaku from his position and install Wasurebu as his follower. This point was reached after a number of open meetings on the central plaza and conversations while working together.

With the increasing need and choice for interaction with the outside, Tsuyabu is increasingly taking up the task of representing

\textsuperscript{345} See also the Cubeo who have a similar procedure of succession. (Goldman, [1963]1979:155).
the Menkú to the non-indigenous world outside the settlement. While until contact, the outside was comprised of meeting with other indigenous groups, nowadays new skills are needed of the chief, and these are best realised by those younger ones who master Portuguese. As the difference between Menkú and Iranxe is becoming more apparent now that the acculturation of the Iranxe has increased substantially, the Menkú prefer to be represented by their own people. At this point they would not opt to choose an Iranxe as their chief anymore, since they are firstly familiar enough with the national society by now, and secondly are proud to state their cultural identity as different and more traditional or true than that of the Iranxe. This change did not affect the respect they have for Zalaku specifically. In spite of not being the formally recognised chief any longer, he still is consulted on all affairs and his advice is widely respected.

In spite of the wife being an important complement to the fulfilment of the chiefly duties, her personality will, I believe, influence the support for a certain man, however, not overrule it. This is supported by the fact that a chief's wife is usually much younger than he and is, to my knowledge, not designated by a special differentiating term. As without his wife a chief could not act (a further reason why Tsuno might have had to withdraw from his function, since his second wife was among the three adults who died of the 'flu shortly after contact) the wives are essential for the realisation of his tasks. Furthermore, a chief is granted more than one wife, thus possibly amplifying their potential. Even though the others may marry two sisters, hardly anyone does so since the number of children thus generated represent a lot of mouths to feed, which is difficult at a time of reduced natural resources and numbers of adult men who can share in the work.
Having described aspects of well-being I shall now proceed to describe instances of conflict that disrupt the collective harmony and the means of its resolution.

8.5 Challenging the ideal: human conflicts
Conflicts are an aspect of being a living human. According to the myth of origin, people lived in a rock in primordial times. Unity, eternity, indifference and lack of differentiation characterised primordial existence in the darkness - and thus indiscernability - of the rock. Attracted by the beauty of a flower that a bird had brought to those dwelling within, people desired to leave the realm of conflictless existence. Disregarding the advice by a knowledgeable elder - who is said to have remained within - about the problems they would face, they emerged from the rock by passing at a big-bellied human being (an allusion to a pregnant woman). Then human beings not only attained the capacity to live socially, and to experience beauty, but they also acquired the potential to argue, fight and die.

8.5.1 Conflicts and their causes
The quest for collective well-being and social harmony is a necessity as long as there is a potential for conflict. Yet, the Menkû relate conflict to unusual natural events such as rainbows, thunders, eclipses, halos, and overcast weather. It is not clear to me whether these phenomena are understood as mere signs of conflict or its cause. One could argue that even though such phenomena belong to reality as a whole, they are relative abnormalities compared to the average daily experience of natural as much as of social phenomena. In being very distinct, they are visible and recognisable. Yet nobody should attend to them unless directly involved.

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345 See also Holanda Pereira, 1985:10.
Conflicts that are indicated in the above way can be of inter-tribal as well as of intra-tribal nature. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, the Menkú have suffered various instances of inter-tribal aggression during this century, in particular by members of Tapayuna (Suyá) and Rikbaktsa. It is not clear what motives they had for attacking the Menkú, other than abducting women and children to enhance their own group, and, potentially to kill the men in order to appropriate their spiritual and soul power.

Quarrels within the group are of a different character. As I have mentioned before, not many quarrels were reported by the missionaries, nor did I witness any during my stay with the Menkú. However, if they did happen they seemed to circle especially around extramarital affairs. Zalakussi saw Ikibu in the hammock with Zosaki. The next day, he himself had an affair with Kataki. A year later, Shunju heard that Zalaku had an affair with Engasi, while in 1982 Kataki is accused of having sexual relations with Tsuno in secret. Wasurebu laments to Amarante that Tsuno 'plays' a lot with Zosaki and Kataki. Shortly afterwards, Tsuno profits from Zalakussi's absence during the day and goes over to Zosaki's house. A few years later, Ikibu was seen lying in the hammock with Shiseki once everybody was supposedly out. This occurred again two years later, when Shiseki's husband was out during the day.

Evaluating the actors of the various instances, it becomes clear that they are all in some way deprived of living according to what I called the ideal condition, that is as a producing and reproducing married person. They are either without a wife, such as Tsuno whose two wives had died by the time of his affairs, or Ikibu who had not been in a confirmed marriage by the time he had his affairs. In the case of the women, Zosaki, Kataki and Shiseki had stopped their reproductive phase due to age or wrongly taking a

333
sterilising remedy. The fun they had was not tied to reproduction. I suggest that all these affairs were evaluated negatively by the husbands and wider community because they disturbed the order, like the odd appearance of a rainbow. In contrast to these instances which caused quarrels, the community approved of Ikibu's attempts to help Zalaku to make Kezusi and Kishi pregnant, irrespective of the fact that his help might have been based on an affair. The community also did not comment much on the fact that both Atarikii and her mother Shiseki had their first child by somebody other than their actual husband. It seems therefore that as long as children result from an affair it is much less problematic and disruptive than if they do not. Meanwhile, it was the potential mother-in-law who felt most ashamed about the fact that her daughter was rejected by a man, rather than the daughter who had demonstrated her lack of interest in him, herself.

In the same way as access to food and sex are key factors in a person's well-being, and their refusal causes a person to feel bad and sad, quarrels can also be brought about by a direct or indirect shortage of food. Although I have not witnessed this myself, there are some - though very few - comments about this in the missionaries’ diary. For instance, Zosaki complained about the community not running fast enough to extinguish the fire that had broken out in her cassava garden.

The unavailability of sex as well as the deprivation of food - both of which are a 'product' of gendered complementarity - from people, are prime sources of interpersonal conflict. Indeed, scarcity is an antithesis to the abundance which ideally characterises human life, even though it might only be achieved

348 This might, however, also be a result of the historical experience of decimation, upon which every new member to the community was welcomed irrespective of the marriage status of the parents.
parsimoniously.

8.5.2 Conflict resolution

Jouki told me once that one was not supposed to point at a rainbow. This advice seems to bear significance for the reaction to quarrels as states of disorder in general. While the disorder expressed in the visible rainbow is a reality, one should nevertheless not involve oneself in it and turn one’s own or other peoples’ attention to it. Being aware of its existence, yet letting it pass in its own time, is the rule for dealing with disorders that do not affect oneself directly but concern other individuals. It is not one’s own business, but only that of those who are quarrelling.

This way of dealing with conflict thus is strongly reminiscent of the Amazonian value of personal autonomy. As much as it is the individual’s responsibility to have brought about a conflict, it is his or her responsibility to live with its consequences. The feeling of shame is an indicator of this since it can only be felt by those directly affected by the case. When the chief cannot bring about a resolution and the shame is too big, making it impossible for the person feeling shame to face others, s/he might leave the settlement.

‘Capito (Wasurebu) came to say that Tsuno is leaving on his own in order to go to Cravari. I ask him why nobody accompanies him, and why Zalaku who knows Portuguese and who knows how to hitchhike and wants to go to Cravari as well, does not go with him! Capito was happy that Zalaku went hunting and Tsuno wanted to leave soon. And, really, the old man leaves on his own, taking his bow and arrow, his hammock, a cabaça (to collect honey?), shorts, soap. In the evening they said that he got upset about what Shakubu had said about him

349 Also see Thomas (1982) who describes a similar attitude for the Pemon.
350 This has also been accounted for the Pemon, whose first response to insult, injury, or personal friction was to move. See Thomas, op.cit. and also Overing, 1993a:51 for the Piaroa.
and about the comments of the others and decided to leave the settlement.

Four days later, somebody announces having met Tsuno in the old settlement (some 20km away.) He then decided to come along home. Everybody was relieved at seeing Tsuno return to the settlement.  

In all the cases where a Menkū has left the settlement because of such feelings of shame, when they returned they were happily received back, even if only a few days had passed since they left. Similarly, the group disapproved very much of Nozu, son of Shunju and Kalaki Iranxe, having overturned the old yet still functioning truck of the group. While he was ashamed of his deed and the whole community was extremely affected by it, only his father talked to him, and after a few days his presence within the group was accepted again. This seems to suggest that a value to maintain proximity of all members of the group is an important factor for conflict resolution, in so far as it overrules disharmony by emphasising togetherness and downplaying contentious factors.

In the last instance, a conflict tends to be related to extra-human agents, especially malevolent spirits who want to disturb the human community:

"Riaki came here with Katakisi. While she was talking, I suddenly noticed dried herb leaves scattered all over the floor, which I had kept in a book. When I looked closer I saw that several things were messed up and that there were marks of a tin of oil on the table. I commented to Riaki, 'I wonder who came here to look at books in the night? Who left leaves falling on the floor? It seems that somebody came here to look around during the night.' She quickly went out to tell the others.

351 Missionaries' diary, entry of 23.3.1985.
352 Nozu as well as other half or fully Iranxe are more ambiguous when it comes to social responsibility and the maintenance of communal harmony. Nowadays, the Menkū do not favour intermarriage with the Iranxe any more since several cases have shown that they are not valuing the same social principles anymore as the Menkū. Many who work with the Iranxe blame this on their progressed exposure to western society and the rules which govern the life of the settlers and farm workers of the region.
who then came and whom I asked. I showed them the signs and said that it is not good to meddle around when the door is closed. I said that they can always come to look at books, but if the door is closed, and especially in the night, it is not good to go in. I said this because it seems to me that our house is used for nocturnal encounters . . . First they started to talk about spirits and souls of the dead who came in at the night. And they again told the whole story of the fire that started in the night at the cabaca field. I tried to turn them off the idea that it was spirits, which made the story only get worse, since then Kishi got very angry when I said that they themselves had come into the house. I explained to them that I was not angry, but that I do not like it if they enter there at night. Zalaku said that I should throw the water of the jug away since there could be some poison in it from the spirit. If they meddled around with the jug, it must have been spirits. 

By blaming spirits as the cause of a disorder, the disorder itself is acknowledged, though no personal or collective responsibility is taken. In fact, the group as a whole takes sides with the person offended, and forms a collective front against the advances of the spirits. Thus the integrity and unity of the group is saved, while personal confrontations are avoided.

When, however, such explanations are doubted, and, in this case, the missionary questioned their reasoning, not only the 'culprit' but all the Menkû feel offended. While reacting like this to a questioned explanation, the Menkû get even more upset if they are accused of behaviours that contradict their moral values. This happened especially in those instances that Iranxe accused them of stealing things from them, a behaviour that is actually much more characteristic of the Iranxe themselves. However, the most upsetting thing to do is for an outsider to involve him or herself in questions of affection. Due to the different instances of Iranxe stealing things from the Menkû and exploiting their generosity and

337 Missionaries' diary.
hospitality, while talking in a condescending way about their relatives, the missionaries sometimes argued against Iranxe marrying with the Menkü. At the time the Menkü got extremely cross and cold towards the missionaries, although by now they have realised themselves that these unions are not stable, nor do they promote communal well-being. The quest for always increasing the community, that led the Menkü community to support marriages with Iranxe at a time where appropriate marriage partners were in short supply, has now given place to valuing the quality of relationships more than their quantity. Rather than having several marriages that do not work out because of husbands beating wives, or not producing enough and being lazy living off the work of the Menkü parents-in-law, the Menkü now prefer to wait until the suitable Menkü marriage partner is available.

We can conclude therefore, that the appeal to a higher moral order that realises itself when living well together, guides the Menkü not only in their daily life, but also when it comes to dealing with conflict. Rather than arguing about righteousness, the level of the individual disagreement is disregarded and the focus of those involved is directed towards the ideal. It is not the community which decides the fate of the quarrellers, but it is left to the decision of the individual to take action. Either shame is too big, making one party leave the settlement, or the conflict is minor so that after some time of avoidance the quarrellers can face each other. What counts is that the conditions for generating sociality at the settlement are re-established as quickly as possible.

334 See Zalaku's comment on the relatives from the Cravari (i.e. Iranxe) that do not come to help them in the ritual discourse, above.
Conclusion

In the course of this thesis I have tried to outline the importance of an analysis of gendered relationships in order to understand Menkū culture. A complementary agency of the sexes could be revealed as preconditioning the creation of real food and real people. The realness of both aspects that constitute the various realms of life is thus intimately linked to a presence, interaction, and interdependency of men and women once they have acquired adulthood. The acquisition of adulthood has been revealed as the focus of a Menkū life cycle. The productive knowledge acquired during childhood, initiation, and adolescence, consummates itself in marriage where knowledge is practice, and life is manifested knowledge. It has been shown that with old age, the productive and reproductive capacities cede, however the actively expressed concern for the strengthening of the group's productive and reproductive powers increases. For this reason, ritual activity is higher among elders than among youngsters.

Real people are then those who are able to engage in relationships of production and reproduction, both of which are only realisable in the existence of a complementarity of the sexes as they manifest themselves in producing good food and offspring. I showed that a woman is a real person once she has married and has children. The same applies for a man, since only upon the acquisition of this condition do productive and reproductive activities make sense.

Thus, as could be shown in the chapter on kinship, the reality of a person is intrinsically linked to the union with the existentially other, the spouse. Upon marriage not only a new state of being is reached - a conversion of opposites that are at the same
time ideal marriage partners into a unified oneness - but a person also engages into a whole network of relations. Through daily conviviality in form of living and working together, kin relationships are enacted and confirmed. At the same time such conviviality allows for the incorporation of outsiders as long as these participate in those activities that constitute real people.

In the last chapter of the thesis I showed how the generation of a high communal morale is dependent upon (real) people's engagement in productive and reproductive activities. Human life is where different kinds of people live and work, and mix and eat together. Conviviality has thus been revealed as an established feature of humanity, which is envied by all other intentional beings populating the universe. Difference constituted by age, initiation and sex do not preclude harmonious relationships, but make life possible. I thus argue that difference is not a metaphor for relationships of power and domination, but a precondition for identity, and thus for reality. Ultimately, the Menkù only became real people once they emerged from their primordial residence, a rock. Taking up human nature was concurrent with the differentiation of reality experienced by them. Difference, and not hierarchy, is thus the characteristic of reality and of the identity of a real person.

Playing down any hierarchical relationships that other groups might have evidenced in their gendered relationships, the Menkù had the possibility to react to their story, to history. As long as different kinds of people - or people that stood in a category of marriageability to each other - existed, Menkù life could continue, even if the group was reduced to nine people. Their 'resistance to change', I argue, lies in their understanding of difference as a precondition for life, rather than interpreting it as a means of
control and exclusion. While change occurred insofar as Western technologies have been incorporated, it did not manifest itself in the realm of sociality. Non-hierarchical gender-complementarity can still be evidenced because it is based on viewing the existential difference of the sexes as a necessity for physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being. Insofar as the 'nature' of men and women cannot be changed, so also the way of life conditioned by it is not to change as long as the maintenance of a high communal morale represents the priority of all human agency.
Annex

1. Table of Menkū kinship relations
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<th>Chart Nr.</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Shakubu</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Kezusi (Ir.)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Shisekaisii</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Talebu</td>
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<td>Typju</td>
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<td>Shiseki</td>
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<td>Jalapoitau (Ir.)</td>
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### 2. Menkū families and their residence in 1996

Names in plain text signify male gender, while italicised names signify female gender. The numbers correspond to those on the kinship chart. The residence indicates the house the couple lived in in 1996, and corresponds to the Village Plan on page 109.

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</table>
3. Myth of origin (summary)

In primordial times all people used to live inside a rock. One of them managed to escape as a bird and returned bringing back a flower. Seeing the flower, the others wanted to escape from the stone as well. Starting with the rodents 'paca' and the 'cutia', the animals attempted to make a hole by biting the stone. In doing so their teeth diversified, but only the man who had become a woodpecker managed to enlarge the hole enough so that people could emerge. Still inside, an old man advised the people that they would die outside. Rather than listening to him, a man with a big belly led the exodus, leaving the old man who still lives inside the stone. The people dispersed and sat under different trees and started to argue and to die. They then realised that inside the stone life had been good since all were united and in peace with each other.

The myth resounds with myths of origin of other Amerindian people in various ways. I am referring here specifically to the topic of the stone as the place of origin and the centre of the world; Secondly, to the creation of an opposition between the austere but eternal primordial world and the terrestrial world, which is attractive, though mortal; thirdly, to the passage between the two worlds that is obstructed by a man with a belly, which is in other words a pregnant woman; and, fourthly, to a premonition about the dangers of the terrestrial world.

The myth situates the human being in a number of oppositions and homologies which distinguish this-worldly existence from the primordial and post-mortal one. The primordial state within the stone is correlated with ugliness and eternal life, and opposed to the condition outside the stone which is related to beauty and a short life. Inefficiency is associated with the teeth which are of the rodents, and is opposed to the efficiency of the beak belonging to the woodpecker. Along these lines, we are presented with the correlation between friends, concordance, unity and long life, which is opposed to the group of the enemy, discordance, separation and short life. The soft, easy to manage wood under which the Menkù settle contrasts with the hard wood under which all the other people such as the Paresi, Nambikwara, Suyá, and Rikbaktsa shelter. The obduracy of the ugly stone is opposed to the beauty of the flower. The fearful (respectful of the order or status quo) and credulous old man who is enclosed, is opposed to the bold and fearless youngsters who doubt the unquestionability of the
status quo. Lastly, the myth locates the Menkū in their relationship to all the other groups that came out of the stone. Being the first to leave the stone, they occupy the centre of the world they encounter outside, while the others, coming out later, settle at the periphery. The identity is confirmed by distinguishing and opposing themselves from the other, that is, all other groups.
4. Myth of the origin of the garden

'A chief, his wife and their son were living in a settlement. Every day when the chief came back from his hunting or fishing expeditions, his son would ask whether he had caught anything. But instead of an answer the father would only hiss at him. The son got very upset about this and one day told his mother to go to the forest to hunt birds. They came to the father's camps in the forest, and both mother and son found them very beautiful. The son turned to his mother and asked her to bury him at the first camp. His mother refused. At the second camp he asked her again but again she refused. In his fury the son threatened to kill her with an arrow. She gave in and did as he had told her. He then said that he would live at this place from now on and she should not be sad, and should not worry since he would only die if she and his father forgot him, did not look after him properly, failed to attend to his needs or to care for him at the right time, to plant, and keep the site clean. He then told her to go home without looking back. She should make a sieve, a pot, a mat and a hoe, while his father should make a basket, a grater and a cutlass. When everything was ready they should return.

Soon after the mother had left her son she heard his screaming and it was just like the sound of a Yetá. Back at the settlement she told her surprised and aggrieved husband what had happened and that they should not fight over it. Therefore they obediently followed their son's instructions and returned to the place where the mother had buried him a few days earlier. When they arrived at the spot, they saw that the whole area had been burnt and a garden had been planted with all different kinds of cultigens: In the middle of the prepared garden they saw a big stretch of maize (maize sativa) and many other edible plants, such as bitter cassava (manihot utilissima), beans (phaeseolus lunatus and vulgaris), groundnuts (arachis hypogaea), yam (dioscorea sp.), sweet potato (ipomoea batatas), arrow root (maranta arundinacea) and gourd. They came to the conclusion that their son was not there but that all these crops originated from him:

From his arm grew sweet cassava;
from his head grew gourd;
from his nails grew red groundnuts;
from his rib grew kidney beans;
from the tip of his breast bone grew broad beans;
from his heart grew white yam;  
from his shinbone grew bitter cassava;  
from his liver grew red yam;  
from his intestine grew sweet potato;  
from his testicles grew small arrowroot;  
from his penis grew arrow root;  
from his kneecap grew small gourd;  
from his teeth grew the maize.

Upon seeing this garden, the mother began to understand the final words of her son. Everything was ripe and they brought the harvest back to their house with the help of the artifacts that the son had told her to make. Without anybody noticing, they brought all the produce into their house. In hiding, they grated bitter cassava and made the dough for cassava bread. They prepared 'chicha', and ate and drank.

In spite of trying to hide everything their neighbours nevertheless noticed the delicious things the chief and his wife had to eat. Inquiring how they obtained such good food, the chieftainess told her neighbour what she had done. The neighbour's attempt to do the same failed, since only the burial of a chief's son could generate such a garden while that of the neighbour's son merely yielded bitter yam.

Since the others were jealous of the chieftainess's produce, and could not succeed in growing their own, they finally decided to find the garden and harvest it until hardly anything was left. When the couple saw what had happened, the wife remembered her son's words. The chief and his wife started to try out how the plants could be propagated. They took the different parts of each plant and observed which of these would regrow. They found that for some plants their fruits or parts thereof (grains) had to be sown while for others their stem or root had to be inserted back into the soil for reproduction. Once they had established this knowledge, they allocated to everybody a part of their garden with the same advice as the son had given to his mother.

The chief also told them about the screams his wife had heard [...]. Everyone realised that they needed to have the presence of these sacred sounds to help them with their work in the garden. They looked for them in many different places but without success. Nevertheless they built a house for them.
In those days a particular bird was a human being. He was the chief of all people and settlements and had all instruments of sacred sounds in his own settlement. One day he noticed the unsuccessful efforts of those searching men and he felt pity for them. He agreed with the other men of his settlement to divide their sacred sources of sound with them as they had plenty. There follows a detailed description of the process by which these were brought to the other settlement. The chief of all people told the chief whose son was buried that when they were going to arrive at the settlement they should receive them with cassava bread, chicha and some meat. So they prepared everything for the night of the next full moon as was agreed.

When they heard the sounds approaching, the men went to offer them chicha. After they had had some, two of the [embodied mythical ancestors], Māxapuli and Tiwininixi, hit the man who had brought the drink to them with sticks of tucum-do-mato and cipó urubamba. As a result his back was so full of thorns that he could no longer walk upright. He told the others at the settlement that the [embodied mythical ancestors] were sometimes very wild. They decided to remain in their houses. Once they arrived at the settlement the men left the houses and the two [embodied mythical ancestors] that had hit the man hit all the houses they were surrounding. The chief of all Menkū asked whether they nevertheless would want the [embodied mythical ancestors] to stay with them, which they agreed to. Every man could choose one he liked and they were to be kept in the house of the Yetá.
5. Tables of animals used for domestic purposes
.Names are provided where known.

### 5.1 Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menkük</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>zool. name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ahi</td>
<td>paca</td>
<td>paca</td>
<td>cuniculus paca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamã</td>
<td>veado</td>
<td>deer</td>
<td>type of mazama?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamãsi</td>
<td>veado</td>
<td>deer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamãkjamãsi</td>
<td>veado galheiro</td>
<td>stag with big antlers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mówy</td>
<td>caïtetu</td>
<td>peccary</td>
<td>tayassu tajacu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>móxi</td>
<td>caïtetu</td>
<td>peccary</td>
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<td>mójamã</td>
<td>porco queixada</td>
<td>white lipped peccary</td>
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<td>anta</td>
<td>tapir</td>
<td>tayassu albirostris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kewã</td>
<td>coati</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>xiki'y</td>
<td>tamandãu bandeira</td>
<td>great ant eater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maky'i</td>
<td>cutia</td>
<td>agouti</td>
<td>myrmecophaga</td>
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<tr>
<td>makxyi</td>
<td>cutia</td>
<td>agouti</td>
<td>dasyprocta aguti</td>
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<td>boi</td>
<td>boi</td>
<td>ox</td>
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</tr>
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<td>mauwa</td>
<td>tatu canastra</td>
<td>giant armadillo</td>
<td>priodontos</td>
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<td>jamãmini</td>
<td>tatu 15 kilos</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pypy</td>
<td>tatu peba/cascudo</td>
<td>peyou</td>
<td>chaetophractus/zaedius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>johu</td>
<td>tatu liso/galinha</td>
<td>peba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>josí</td>
<td>tatu liso</td>
<td>peba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>pimã</td>
<td>tatui'ra</td>
<td>type of armadillo</td>
<td>tolypeutes tricintus</td>
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<td>jatyru</td>
<td>tatu bola</td>
<td>three banded armadillo</td>
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<td>macaco prego</td>
<td>monkey</td>
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<td>zogue-zogue</td>
<td>callicebus personatus</td>
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<td>bugio</td>
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<td>patãka ma'i</td>
<td>coatã</td>
<td>spider monkey</td>
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<td>jawa ma'y</td>
<td>coata</td>
<td>cebida ateles</td>
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<td>tiwakali</td>
<td>jaca're</td>
<td>alligator</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ijkuli</td>
<td>jabuti</td>
<td>land turtle</td>
<td>phrynops hilarri</td>
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### 5.2 Fish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menkük</th>
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<th>English</th>
<th>zool. name</th>
<th>myth. name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mijama'i</td>
<td>traíra, robafo</td>
<td>hoplias malabaricus</td>
<td>Napoku</td>
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<td>kapi</td>
<td>pacu</td>
<td>caracideo</td>
<td>Engasi</td>
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<td>kowy</td>
<td>piava de cabeça vermelha</td>
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<td>Karagabu</td>
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<tr>
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<td>piava de listras nas costas</td>
<td>leporinus sp.</td>
<td>Waturubu</td>
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<td>pacupeba</td>
<td>caracideo</td>
<td>Shisekaisii</td>
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<td>pau/paasi</td>
<td>acará</td>
<td>ciclideo, ind.</td>
<td>Jouki</td>
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<td>matrinxã</td>
<td>brycon sp.</td>
<td>Napuxi</td>
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<tr>
<td>aopy/aopxi</td>
<td>janangueza</td>
<td>ciclideo</td>
<td>Hoku/Tupxi</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

In Pereira's collection the men are said to refer to this animal as jawamay, while women are to call it wákãjñuli. The differences between the versions of Iranxe and Menkük should be object of more research that I was unable to conduct while in the field.
The following have no known equivalent in personal names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menkü</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>zool. name</th>
<th>myth. name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>waata</td>
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<td>lambari</td>
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<td>mijamoma'i</td>
<td>jaú</td>
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<tr>
<td>mijamohu</td>
<td>bagre</td>
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<td>wájokna</td>
<td>traíra</td>
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<td>lambarizinho</td>
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<td>wawaasu</td>
<td>peixe banana</td>
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<td>peixe bananinha</td>
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4.3 Maggots

<table>
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<th>myth. name</th>
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<tr>
<td>jamomù</td>
<td>coro grande de buriti</td>
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<tr>
<td>tomjaty</td>
<td>coro pequeno de buriti</td>
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<td>iwitaparau</td>
<td>coro de cajun</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>amjapuri</td>
<td>coro de soveira</td>
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<td>ximymjaty</td>
<td>coro de soveira pequena</td>
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<tr>
<td>jakymjaty</td>
<td>coro de bacava</td>
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<td>kamaaku'u</td>
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<tr>
<td>jatu</td>
<td>coro de pacova</td>
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4.4 Bees

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>myth. name</th>
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<td>tapu</td>
<td>mandaguarí preto</td>
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<td>arapuá</td>
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<td>iri'i, irixi</td>
<td>jatai, jati</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a'y</td>
<td>enxu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>jiwy</td>
<td>mandaguarí vermelho</td>
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</table>

Holanda Pereira, 1985:57 describes the Iranxe myth of the origin of names. In this myth, apart from these names, the Iranxe also mention the following which are, however, not found as names among the Menkù today:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menkü</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>zool. name</th>
<th>myth. name</th>
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<tr>
<td>myptamus</td>
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<td>caracídeo</td>
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<td>peixe folha</td>
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<td>acarapeba</td>
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<td>polya-canthrus</td>
<td>Ulipnasi</td>
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<td>myth. name</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pimätunāsi</td>
<td>borá</td>
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<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>taáxa'i</td>
<td>borazinho</td>
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<td>i'kjamā</td>
<td>borá</td>
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365


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