1. Introduction

1.1 My Fieldwork in the Andes

1.1.1 A Confession

Clifford Geertz (1968: 551) has said that “all ethnography is part philosophy, and a good deal of the rest is confession.” The introduction to this ethnographic study of a south-central Andean community begins with a confession: I not only changed the design of my doctoral research while in the field and then further refocused my analysis after returning to the United States in 1970, but I also reoriented my professional direction after my Andean experience. This chapter is an attempt to document the process of change in emphasis and orientation that began in 1967 with my first experiences as an undergraduate residing for seven months in a south-central Quechua-speaking Andean village and has culminated with the completion of this book after two return trips to the same village in 1969-1970 and again in 1974-1975. The first part of chapter 2 was written in 1976, as was the postscript.

1.1.2 My Introduction to the Andes

In February of 1967, my husband and I were two of five students from the University of Illinois sent to Ayacucho, Peru, to study with R. T. Zuidema, who was conducting research and teaching at the University of Huamanga. He had begun a project with students from Huamanga on seven villages in the drainage basin of the Pampas River that have been a political and social unit since Inca times. The region was chosen because of the excellent documentation available and because the relative isolation of the villages provided a greater degree of stability of traditional customs. Several significant publications have resulted from the Pampas River project: Zuidema
Introduction


After two weeks of orientation in Ayacucho, my husband, another archaeologist named Tom Meyers, and I journeyed on March 2, 1967 to the district capital of Chuschi, 120 kilometers southwest of Ayacucho. We traveled Andean style, in a commercial truck. I fortunately got a seat in the cab along with two other passengers. The back was packed with people and their possessions, produce, and animals. During the eight-hour trip it rained intermittently, which is not unusual for that time of year, and three times men had to clamber out of the truck to pull the vehicle out of mud holes, using chains. On arriving, we were able to get one small room in the “hotel,” a row of rooms with dirt floors and no windows behind one of the village stores on the plaza, but only after assuring the owner that we would stay a week or two. Although six or seven trucks arrived with market vendors aboard for the weekly market the next day, we were told the market was smaller than usual because of heavy rains and the poor condition of the road. (See plate 1.)

For ten days the three of us made ourselves as conspicuous as possible, which was not difficult. We sat in the village plaza and attempted at least to exchange looks with the indigenous villagers, who shyly averted their eyes and did not speak. However, outside of the village on the trails, people would greet us as they passed. This was a puzzle until in 1969 I discovered Chuschin­nos’ concepts of space and ecology (discussed in 2.8). My notes read like a forlorn soliloquy. One entry: “Well, I sat on the plaza most of the day again, and like yesterday, none of the Quechua-speaking villagers acknowledged my presence. I desperately need an interpreter. At least Bill and Tom can do an archaeological survey, but here I sit, quietly being ignored.” I am sure our presence generated a lot of curiosity, but people simply pretended we were not there. Rumors ran that we were really looking for gold and silver or that we were spies. Their suspicious and cautious attitudes also meant that we could not rent a house. There were several houses vacant in the village, but we would track down the owner through the municipal mayor only to hear that the owner was away or that possessions were being stored in the house and therefore it could not be rented. After three weeks of such discouraging efforts, we rented a house from a mestizo family, one of the descendants of the first schoolteacher who had arrived in Chuschi four generations ago. His descendants are still considered “foreigners.” Why are such persons considered foreigners after four generations of continuous residence in this village? What are the Chuschin­nos’ conceptual categories of social classes? What are the criteria for membership in their community that exclude these people? Questions abounded in those first weeks, but all one could do was
Plate 1. On the Way to Chuschi. A landslide on the road from Ayacucho after a rainstorm.
observe from a distance and wonder. Finally, we had a stroke of ethnographic luck.

1.1.3 A Breakthrough

During our third week in Chuschi, while I was sitting in the plaza as usual, two men left the church carrying a large silver cross, a wooden litter, a black shroud, a drape with skull and cross bones, and a container of holy water. The night before, the church bells had tolled the mournful death peal. We learned that a man from Upper Barrio had died of *mal aire* (harmful air). From the description of his symptoms, we decided he had died of lockjaw—hence the belief that “the evil in *mal aire* had attacked him and caused his mouth to clamp shut.” I decided that we should follow the men carrying the funeral paraphernalia; the worst they could do would be to chase us away. Reluctantly, my two archaeologist companions accompanied me.

We followed the two men to the house of the dead man, where a wake was in progress. The body was displayed on a table in the three-sided portal area of the house, and the widow sat at his right wailing a high-pitched song. There were close to twenty people present, and everyone was drunk. As we paused in the outer entry to the patio, an old man came forward with a bottle in his hand and motioned us to enter. We took off our hats and stood uncertainly, wondering what to do next. Almost immediately the old man poured himself a shot and raised his glass in the direction of Tom Meyers, who nodded acceptance. The old man downed the drink in one gulp, poured another shot, and extended the glass to Tom, who raised it to Bill before drinking. Tom drank and poured a shot full for Bill but did not swallow, while a strange look came over his face. Bill received the proffered drink, raised the cup to his lips, and said, “This isn’t cane alcohol, it’s kerosene,” as he smiled, toasted me, and drank. I took the cup in my hands, wondering what kerosene would do to one’s stomach, toasted a woman sitting on the floor, and drank, then poured her a shot. She raised it to her lips and, looking surprised, shouted excitedly, but all we understood was the word *kerosene*. Snatching the bottle from my hands, she berated the old man drunkenly sitting on the floor and leaning against the wall. He shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. The woman pointed to the bottle in her hand and then at another bottle beside him on the floor. She exchanged the bottles, poured herself a drink from the second, toasted me, and clapped me on the back, laughing. Everyone laughed: the gringos had drunk kerosene and had not even complained. Then we were offered seats and real trago, or cane alcohol. Remaining through the day, we accompanied the cadaver to the cemetery and participated in the *pichqa*, a divination and purification rite.
Involving washing the deceased's clothing and cutting and burning the funeral participants' hair. Being ritually treated in the same fashion as the other participants, we had broken through the initial barrier at last.

After our uninvited intrusion into a Chuschino wake, we were informed whenever someone died and were invited to participate. I attended at least fifteen funerals during my seven-month sojourn in Chuschi during 1967. Jokingly, R. T. Zuidema and my fellow students asked whether I was going to open a Quechua funeral parlor. Slowly, the reserve of the Quechua-speaking comuneros diminished to the point that people began to greet us and even stop and visit.

During the first week of April, we moved our two-year-old daughter, Diana, and my mother, Mildred Richerson, into the village. The rains were abating somewhat and trucks reached the village every Thursday evening, albeit with difficulty. Our second trip into Chuschi was even more eventful than the first. Initially we had secured a place in the cab of a truck for my mother, but a comadre of the owner-driver arrived and my mother was refunded the extra fare for a cab seat and bumped to the rear. Priority is always given to one's compadres, one's spiritual relatives.

Twenty kilometers from Chuschi, a landslide blocked the road, necessitating our spending the night huddled together in the cold with the almost forty other travelers under a decidedly leaky tarp. My husband abandoned the crowded confines of the truck to sleep in the rain with a waterproof ground cover and sleeping bag; soon he took refuge under the truck. Inside we heard a peculiar scratching and thumping noise as Bill tried to scale the high sides of the truck to rejoin us. Someone finally helped him in. Soaked and unable to find a spot big enough to lie down, he crouched and tried to doze. It was a miserable night for all of us; the natives kept encroaching on our space, and, unwise in Andean ways, we were unable to defend ourselves.

The next morning, when people vacated the truck, we discovered that our boxes of belongings had been flattened and broken as if a stampede had run over them. Many items were missing and the remainder were filthy and wet. An infant had had an attack of diarrhea on my mother and on some of our bedding and mattresses. The retrieval operation was very depressing, as was the prospect of getting into the village. Bill walked six kilometers to a village and rented two horses and four donkeys; the owner accompanied us. On one horse, without reins, I carried my two-year old on my lap, my mother rode the other, and Bill walked, guiding the loaded donkeys. We arrived in Chuschi in the late afternoon and installed our family in our three-room adobe house with no windows, no furniture, and dirt floors. Earlier I had felt optimistic when we finally negotiated the rental, but at that point I asked myself, "What are we doing here? This is insane."
These same thoughts occurred again when we tried to persuade the carpenter to build us a bed. He made it clear that he owed us nothing and that he would build one as a favor to us. After waiting three months we were confronted with an apparatus resembling a double-width ladder rather than a double bed. When we left in 1967, we sold the bed. Returning in 1969, we found it being used more logically as a clothes rack for drying laundry. The same preference for social debts over cash meant that we could not hire someone to work for us; therefore we did our laundry in the irrigation canal, maintained our own food animals, and generally spent a lot of time keeping body and soul together.

Establishing a family residence in Chuschi was one of the wisest moves we made. The monolingual Quechua speakers began to bring us gifts of produce or come to just sit on the floor for hours and watch us. We kept a continual pot of soup cooking for our stream of visitors. It would have been interesting to collect their impressions of us during those first months. They began to see we had a family, an extended one just like theirs, so, bit by bit, interaction opened up and people began to joke not only about us but with us. During Santa Cruz, the harvest feast, Bill was initiated into the civil-religious prestige hierarchy as if he were a young single boy. I was treated sometimes as if I were a man, sometimes like a child, and sometimes like a woman, which turned out to be a great ethnographic advantage. They took special delight in holding and talking to our daughter, for they had never had such close contact with blond, fair people before. My mother was considered a marvel for her snow-white hair, an indication to them of extremely advanced age; also, her ability to ride a horse impressed them greatly. People would appear at our door asking for white hairs (to be used in certain rituals) from the abuelita's (little grandmother's) head.

1.1.4 A View through a Kaleidoscope

Slowly we became more and more accepted. But the event that gave us social existence in the community was the acquisition of godchildren and the special compadrazgo relationship this establishes with the children's parents. When we left Chuschi in August of 1967 we had acquired ten godchildren and all the rights and duties these relationships imply. Compadrazgo relationships provided our initiation into the social fabric of the village. Our ignorance of appropriate behavior provided an excellent vehicle for ethnographic investigation. It was viewed as natural that we should ask how to perform our assigned ritual roles and social duties. Both mestizos and indigenous villagers requested our sponsorship. At the end of our 1967 stay, we sponsored a wedding that did not conform to comunero ideals: a village girl married an
outside, a “foreigner,” and we, as foreigners, were considered the most logical godparents. This case is reported in 5.6.11.

Even though we had been accepted to some degree, there were, of course, cultural rules we never learned, others we discovered rather late, and areas of investigation that remained closed to us. One of the cultural rules that we realized rather late was the rule of drunkenness. In our culture we value “holding our liquor,” but Chuschino culture values getting drunk and passing out. The success of a ritual is gauged in part by how many people pass out. Consequently, they pass out with much less to drink than we do. I have never become so drunk, nor gotten so sick, as I did during those first months in Chuschi before realizing I was not playing by their rules. At one ritual forty-two people were asleep at four o’clock in the afternoon from drinking and I was awake but not at all sober. That I too should “pass out” early in the course of events finally dawned on me.

One episode will illustrate my lack of understanding of Chuschino drinking patterns. At a fiesta sponsored by one of our compadres, I passed out after two days of continuous drinking and very little to eat. The participants decided to place me on the built-in bed made of adobe that traditionally is found in the portal area of the house. They hugged and pulled on me, but finally we all fell in a drunken heap and they just covered me up with alpaca skins and left me to sleep. Awakened by the smell of soup as someone passed a bowl under my nose, I vomited. Now, one may urinate in public, but one does not vomit in public while at an Andean fiesta. They realized I was in a “bad condition” and again let me sleep. The next morning, on awakening, I refused the formalized offer of more alcohol, another breach of appropriate behavior. My compadre and comadre solicitously had bought a bottle of sweet port and offered it in the belief that one must “clear the head” by drinking after heavy festivities. I knocked the cup from my comadre’s hand—shocking behavior in their eyes, but my anthropological relativity had dissolved in many cups of cane alcohol and the native corn beer, chicha. I apologized, and my comadre and I embraced. Even so, our relationship was strained for several weeks, an indication that total forgiveness was not so easily obtained.

The areas of Chuschino life that have remained closed to investigation center predominantly on land tenure and herding, because of the fear of taxation. A tax is imposed per animal. The other effort that utterly failed was an attempt at a household census. Again, the formalized procedures frightened Chuschinos because they resembled the procedures of the dominant national bureaucracy. Resistance was very subtle. A request to bureaucratic officials of the village elicited the response that they would see that a traditional authority accompanied us during census taking. We were to meet at six
o’clock the following morning to begin the census. For five consecutive mornings I waited, but no one appeared. An explanation from the authorities was never given. They were always cordial, and the broken appointment was their polite manner of saying that a census should not be taken.

I was fortunate to retain the services of two excellent interpreter assistants during our 1967 fieldwork. Pablo Alcocer was the son of a native Chuschino; he worked only two weeks for us but his presence opened many doors. He has since studied linguistics at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The other, Alejandro Mora, was an art student at the University of Huamanga who had a warm and patient way with informants. He worked for two months during 1967 and six months during 1969.

In July of 1967, he, with our daughter on his shoulders, was bitten by a rabid dog. He and Bill rode a half day on horseback to Cangallo, the province capital, in search of vaccine, only to find enough for four shots out of the required thirteen. He journeyed to Ayacucho for the medicine and returned to Chuschi, where the series was applied by the governmental health officer. Rabies is common during the dry season, and we were told that several years ago a man died, “frothing at the mouth and crazed with the disease. He was tied up and died like an animal.” One fear that remained with us constantly was of serious illness or accident and the possibility of not being able to get out of the village for medical attention. Mr. Mora’s frightening experience made the dangers even more vivid.

My introduction to the Andes resulted in preliminary reports on funeral practices (after attending fifteen); the harvest festival, Santa Cruz; and the traditional, civil-religious prestige hierarchy. But my picture of the Quechua culture was sketchy and incomplete, as if I had been looking through a kaleidoscope in a dimly lighted room. However, with time and a return trip in 1969-1970, I was able to “shed light” slowly on my kaleidoscopic view of the Andean world. Perhaps the most interesting ethnography anthropologists could write would be about ourselves as we experience the process of enlightenment, resulting in the construction of models and explanations.

Much of the ethnographic enterprise is doing what Geertz (1973: 3-30) calls “thick description,” which involves interpreting what he calls the web of signification. As ethnographers, we not only record the web of cultural significance in which we find ourselves—we experience it. And, in doing so, we construct models and explanations in order to sort out our experiences and make sense of them. Geertz calls this sorting “process-analysis” and goes on to say “that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (ibid.: 9).

Each chapter of this book is such a construction, manufactured by me as
I experienced the cultural web of significance manufactured by Chuschinos
in their day-to-day interaction.

I have come to think of each chapter as a turn of an Andean kaleidoscope through which we view and interpret Chuschino reality. I have used the metaphor of "a view through an Andean kaleidoscope" because of the processes of my own reflections as I constructed an orderly presentation of my data. I found that one of the major principles of construction that Chuschinos use is duality, and therefore a tactic I found useful was to discover the variations on the theme of duality. I found several. For example, the notion of phenomena as being mirror images of one another is a strong organizational principle in Chuschi. The village moieties are thought to exist in such a mirror relationship. The members of the traditional prestige hierarchies, serving the moieties, act out their ritual duties simultaneously in space in such a way as to give one the impression of kaleidoscopic movements of mirrored images. It is hoped that this metaphor will become clearer as readers look through my Andean kaleidoscope for themselves.

Another major structural principle I found useful is the notion of complementarity in the sense of one entity's being relative to another entity. For example, sexual complementarity is perhaps the most pervasive concept used to classify cosmological and natural phenomena. It also symbolizes the process of regeneration. Phenomena are conceptualized as male and female and interact with one another in a dialectic fashion to form new syntheses, such as new cycles of time and new generations of people, plants, and animals. I have described this dialectic elsewhere as the concept of "the essential other half" (Isbell 1976).

Another organizing principle based on duality is that of symmetric relationships, most clearly expressed in social relations. The basic ideology of Chuschino marriage exchange is to perpetuate equal, and therefore symmetric, relations between two kindreds. Nevertheless, complementary to symmetric patterns are asymmetric, or unequal, patterns in the Andean kaleidoscope.

The most powerful of these is what I have termed the basic opposition into which Chuschino society is polarized: the foreign dominators versus the indigenous members of the community. The major concern of this book is to explore the structural defenses the indigenous population has constructed against the increasing domination of the outside world. The major conflict is between the communal members' ideology of self-sufficiency and the increasing pressures toward cultural and economic incorporation into the nation. The stronger the pressures, the more intensified are the Chuschinos' efforts to defend themselves. I have captured only a small portion of the dynamics of social life and social change. All
ethnographies are incomplete. I would now like to explain how I came to my present perspective. In the process of peering through my constructions, that is, my kaleidoscope, I changed my anthropological focus and orientation. Such is the nature of fieldwork and subsequent analysis and interpretation that we learn to see new things as we attempt to communicate what we have experienced.

1.1.5 Another Change of Focus

The return to Chuschi in 1969 was the antithesis of our 1967 arrival. My ten compadres and godchildren greeted us as “their family,” which we are—their spiritual family. Because I had written prior to arrival, it was all arranged that I rent part of a house. One compadre provided a bed on loan, another provided a couple of chairs, and I was able to get a table made. My husband and I arrived on motorcycles from Lima, but when traveling by truck I now had the status to deserve a cab seat, and during the few journeys spent in the back of the truck I pushed and kicked and cursed like the other women to protect my space and my belongings. I had learned to defend myself.

My 1969-1970 research was greatly facilitated by the return of Alejandro Mora from Ayacucho and by three Chuschinos: Cirilio Tucno and Eugenio Vilca, who helped copy civil records, and Justa Vilca, a young woman who had migrated to Lima to work and study, provided excellent assistance. Without their collaboration, this study could not have been accomplished.

I returned to Chuschi armed with two intensive language courses in Quechua, which enabled me to communicate on about the level of a four year old child, and a research proposal funded by the National Institute of Public Health to investigate “Andean Reciprocity in Two Peruvian Contexts.” One context was to be the complex of reciprocal exchanges I had observed in the village, and the other was to be the mutual aid with which migrants had invaded private property in Lima and established a community. On the return to Chuschi in 1969, however, I found that all reciprocity was kin-based and that it was necessary to understand kinship before one could analyze reciprocal exchanges. Therefore, my second residence in Chuschi was spent in concentration on kinship.

The analysis in chapter 5, “The Structures of Kinship and Marriage,” begins with one simple question: “What is the structure of the basic opposition ‘my group’ versus the ‘other group’?” I found that the concept of “my group” can be defined in various ways, depending on the context. For example, the Quechua-speaking traditional members of the community refer to themselves as comuneros, members of the commune, as opposed to qalas,
the foreigners or literally "peeled or naked ones" (chapter 3). For marriage exchanges, "my group" is defined as ayllu, a bilateral kindred with sexual bifurcation and genealogical distance as principles of organization (5.2). For reciprocal exchanges, "my group" encompasses a wide network of consanguineal, affinal, and spiritual relatives known as the kuyaq (7.2), "those who love me." A comparison of seventeenth-century marriage records with a sample of modern records reveals that the village of Chuschi is more closed in upon itself, more village endogamous, today than during the seventeenth century (5.8.1). Consequently, the concept of "my group," which is more narrowly defined today, provides the major means for Chuschinos to defend themselves against the encroachments of the outside world.

The change of focus from reciprocity to kinship was accompanied by the collection of genealogical data as well as of statements about how various kinsmen should behave—their rights, duties, and obligations vis-à-vis one another. In other words, I constructed the typical anthropological ideal model of Andean social structures, attempting to get at the basic logic underlying the structures or, to borrow from linguistics, to enumerate the minimal number of rules operating. However, this led to an idealized, static view of social life, a depiction of a social mechanism in equilibrium and without change.

Furthermore, this ideal view of Chuschino social structures was diametrically opposed to what I saw happening: change was the reality, and the image of stability was the fiction created by the Chuschinos themselves. This fiction was perpetrated through ritual performances. Leach (1965: 16) has said that "if anarchy is to be avoided, the individuals who make up a society must from time to time be reminded, at least in symbol, of the underlying order that is supposed to guide their social activities. Ritual performances have this function for the participating group as a whole; they momentarily make explicit what is otherwise a fiction." Monica Wilson (1954: 241) believes the essential constitution of human societies can be understood through the study of rituals. She also believes that rituals, taken as a complex, express the central concerns of a people. In chapters 5 and 6, descriptions are given of five rituals performed in Chuschi in which the central concerns expressed are fertility, reproductivity, and regeneration of social and cosmological order. In addition, embodied also in the ritual performances are concerns for bounded ecological zones incorporating the notions of civilized ("my group") versus savage ("foreigners"). The expression of distinct, bounded ecological zones (2.8) correlates with the closed corporate nature of Chuschino society (6.5). Sexual bifurcation is a structural principle of organization that not only is assigned to
supernatural deities and powers but that also underlies the organization of the Chuschno cosmology. Along with genealogical distance and generation, sexual bifurcation permeates Chuschno structures of kinship and is the most salient feature of all social interaction.

The ten ritual steps toward marriage dramatize the concern of the marriage congregation (1) to “give birth symbolically to a new kindred” (5.6.8), (2) to redefine the relationships of the marrying couple and their respective kindreds, and (3) to establish a new social order. The newly defined social order specifies that the relationships between the two kindreds interacting as groups be symmetric, while the relationship of the individual affine who has married into the kindred is defined as asymmetric. The affine is considered subordinate to the kindred into which he or she has married (5.4.1 and 5.4.2). Chuschno ritual activity is the temporal process in which meaning is constructed through the manipulation of symbols whose potential is multiple, but specific referents emerge unambiguously in the ritual drama. I found these symbols to center on the major concerns of reproductivity and fertility.

None of the rituals described could be enacted without a wide mutual aid network. Chapter 7 deals with the types of reciprocity in Chuschno and gives a specific example of the reciprocal aid given to one of the highest prestige authorities (7.2); it also provides a view of the strategies available to various categories of kin in a given concrete context. Having moved far afield from my original proposals, on returning to the United States in 1970 I moved even further. Proceeding with the analysis of my data, I became concerned with the interaction of ideology and activities. Robert F. Murphy’s *The Dialectics of Social Life* (1971) was a great influence on my final reorientation.

### 1.2 The Dialectic between Structures and Activities

While I was in the field, genealogical data became convincingly more interesting for what people could not specify about their genealogies than for what they could. The genealogical amnesia of a society is perhaps just as revealing as the genealogical information itself, for it gives us clues to the reinterpretation of actual biological events. I was able to uncover some of the fictions fabricated by Chuschnos concerning biological relationships by paying attention to what they did not tell me. For example, males could readily enumerate ascendants to the fifth or sixth generation, but women rarely could remember past the third. This leads me to hypothesize that there exist for Chuschnos distinct male and female ideologies of kinship. If proven correct, this hypothesis is logically consistent with other
principles of sexual bifurcation found in the ideologies of inheritance (3.5 and 3.6), naming (5.3), and affinal relationships (5.4). It is also mirrored in many of the ritual steps toward marriage (5.6).

More concretely, I found instances of fictionalizing to avoid the primary marriage prohibition, which states that one cannot marry a person sharing one’s two surnames, the paternal surname of one’s father and the paternal surname of one’s mother. I found cases of name-changing to circumscribe this negative rule. In these cases, the actual genealogical information in the village demographic records contradicted genealogies collected from informants. Another instance I found interesting was the practice of fabricating a genealogical link or redefining a person as a near or distant relative (5.2) so that specific types of interaction would be acceptable. It appears that real activities motivate the restructuring of ideology. Near relatives are descendants of one’s grandparents, distant relatives are descendants of one’s grandparents’ siblings. I found instances in genealogical data in which a distant relative with whom an informant interacted on a day-to-day basis, often because of residential proximity, was called a near relative and genealogically reckoned to be a descendant of the informant’s grandparents. A genealogical fiction was constructed to conform with day-to-day activities.

As I proceeded with my analysis, I became increasingly aware of the discrepancies between the reality of events and activities and the shared ideologies purported to serve as a guiding model for activities. A close examination of rituals pointed out these discrepancies most strikingly. Although the major concern of Chuschinos reflected in the three rituals discussed in chapter 6 is productivity and fertility, reality is often the reverse in that scarcity prevails during half of the year. And while the relationships between two kindreds are dramatized ritually as respectful, reality is often conflict-ridden. Furthermore, one’s affines are the key members of one’s kuyaq, “those who love one,” from whom the lion’s share of reciprocal aid is expected (7.2); nevertheless, strife and infighting often occur. Ideology and activity are often opposed to one another, and one without the other gives a skewed picture of a culture.

Murphy (1971: 189) states:

The informants’ models (rules, ideologies) are not totally illusory. They represent the real situation in part, but at certain critical points they are inversions of that reality. The ethnographer’s task is to discover these contradictory relations and to perform a countertransformation on them. The level of empirical reality provided by the folk sociology serves as a base line, but it must be transcended; the ethnologist goes beyond it, so to speak, to derive another structure that is at once contradictory of the informants’ model and capable of explaining the raw
behavioral data gathered in the field. The ethnologist’s model, i.e., the social structure, is not, however, wholly derived from the latter information, for it must move to a level of generality that is incongruent with statistical reality. One might say that the ethnologist’s model, which corresponds to the unconscious model of the society, stands midway between the conscious model held by the members of the society and the data of actual relations.

I have tried to get at the base line of Chuschino folk sociology by examining the society’s rituals, and I have compared the ideologies and concepts communicated in rituals with actual events and relationships, being firmly convinced that only by this process can we begin to understand the dynamics of change. It is through the dialectics of ideology and activities that a dual process occurs, resulting in the reinterpretation of events to conform to ideologies or, conversely, the transformation of ideologies by the power of events. As stated by P. Maranda (1972), the shared mythic conceptions and structures of a culture function to abate and negate the entropic effects of history. Chapters 4 and 8 are analyses of the struggles between ideologies and the events of history. Chapter 4 is an analysis of changes effected in the traditional prestige hierarchy in 1970. Currently, a struggle is being waged between the traditional ideology of social space and the transformed concepts of returned migrants from Lima. Chapter 8 and the postscript, chapter 10, offer predictions of the outcome. The rapid events and experiences associated with migration provide an excellent laboratory in which to examine the dialectics of ideological structures and activities. I have made steps toward the study of transformations, believing such a study to be one of the tasks of anthropology. Nevertheless, the success of a culture depends on the ability to perpetuate a way of life—or, as Andean people say, “to defend ourselves.”

1.3 A Structuralist’s Perspective

Before presenting my structural kaleidoscopic view of Chuschino culture and society, I would like to acknowledge my intellectual debts. Jean Piaget (1971: 5) defines structure as a self-regulating transformational system. Furthermore, he states that a structuralist approach is clearly profitable in the social sciences and that the study of social groups, kinship systems, and myths has resulted in many structuralist theories (ibid.: 97). I have applied a structuralist methodology to the study of traditional concepts and, more important, the transformation of those concepts. Roland Barthes (1972: 148-154) has described the structuralist activity as dissection
of reality to discover discrete units and then the rearticulation of reality to discover the relationships operating between the discrete units. The structuralist operation makes intelligible that which eluded explanation before the operation was performed. I have “taken apart” the natives’ models of social space (2.7), authority (chapter 4), kinship (chapter 5), and ritual (chapter 6) and put them together again in such a way as to clarify facets that were unintelligible at the outset. Each of these chapters represents a turn on the structural kaleidoscope, revealing structural relationships and principles that render the Andean world meaningful.

I have also examined rituals to determine the central concerns and idealized values of the Chuschinos. A ritual can be defined as a series of formalized actions that are obligatory and standardized. Such actions form a pattern of symbols (Leach 1964: 14) that dramatize important shared values and beliefs (M. Wilson 1954: 241) concerning the natural and social environment in which the participants operate (V. Turner 1969: 6).

A symbol can be defined as a motivated entity, such as a word, an image, an object, or an action, that has a complex of meanings shared by a collective. Symbols are perceived as having inherent value separable from that which is symbolized. An icon is a representation that stands for an object by virtue of likeness or analogy. Symbols are utilized in rituals to unambiguously construct concepts basic to, in this case, Chuschino interaction and activity. One notes, however, in the multivocality of symbols utilized in any given ritual, the logical construction of comparisons, opposition, and analogies. One aspect that has fascinated me is the inclusion of logical opposites in Chuschino symbolic expression, as if the logic must include the obverse to construct the totality of a concept (for examples, see chapter 9). A concept is defined in the Random House Dictionary as “an idea of something formed by mentally combining all its characteristics or particulars.” I have attempted to get at the components of symbols by examining the process of combination effected in ritual. Finally, I am interested in the transformation of concepts due to activity and experience. Of course, much has eluded me, but I believe I am beginning to ask the right questions: not simply, “What are Chuschino society and culture like?” but rather, “What is the dialectic between society and culture?”—a perspective necessary for understanding the dynamics of social life, which are ever in motion just as the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope are ever changing alignment.