

THE HARD PEOPLE

**A STRUCTURALIST ACCOUNT OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITIES IN AN
ALPINE VALLEY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is about the assertion of identity and the maintenance of solidarity in Carnia - a mountainous area in the north east of Italy. The topic is analysed in relation to three interlocking themes: the social units which embody identity and organise cooperation; the tension between rivalrous assertion and the desire for harmonious cooperation; and the different social fields - economic activity, ritual, communication, property and prestation, kinship, and relationships with natural forces - in which the tension is acted out.

Constraints on the possibilities of social organisation arise from formal characteristics specific to each field. The structuring of these social fields both shapes and reflects people's commitment to key institutions: patrilocal domestic group, corporate village, church, state, nation. The corporate village is shown to have an affinity with free choice of marriage partners (at least within the village), linguistic particularism, and state organisation. Recent changes in economic life and communications have transformed local society - leading to widespread despondency, self-conscious modernity, but also emphasis on tradition, and political regionalism.

It is felt that social relationships should ideally be characterised by sympathetic cooperation and legitimate authority, but the fear is that they may collapse into - or be redefined as - conflicts involving the dangerous force of envy. Two contrasting strategies enable people to deal with this ambiguity: either use of one's own strength and vitality to exclude or overcome opposition, or identification with potential enviers and an emphasis on self-sacrifice. The strategies chosen by individual people depend on the context as well as on their sex, age, and wealth. But social solidarity requires an overall solution which assigns a legitimate role to each strategy.

Implicit in the substantive analyses is a methodological point: that a structuralist approach can make a major contribution to our understanding of European societies.

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>List of maps and tables</i>	6
<i>Note on language typeface and spelling</i>	8
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
1 Introduction	
A Environment, history, and economy	13
B Research aims	23
C Gathering the data	28
D Interpreting the data	34
2 The practical organisation of village life	
A Ovasta, a village in the <i>comune</i> of Ovaro	42
B Households and families as cooperative units	56
C Villages as cooperative units	60
3 Rivalry and cohesion: envy, sympathy, and divergent fortunes	
A Conflict and envy	72
B Solidarity and shared experience	77
C Sympathetic cooperation in the village community	82
D Unity and divergent fortunes	95
4 Communication, strength, and boundaries	
A Contrasting attitudes to sociability	103
B Communication and social pressure	106
C Strength, closedness, and resistance to social pressure	112
D Comparative material and theories about envy and the evil eye	118
E Boundaries, strength, and status	124
5 Property, provision, and sacrifice	
A Property and social assertion	138
B Provision, gifts, and sacrifice	147
C The practical and social meaning of work	155
D The traditional elite - <i>siôrs</i> and priests	158

	Page
E The ideology of purity	164
6 Marriage and village unity	
A Endogamy	169
B The ritual enactment of endogamy	173
C The implications of the 'wheels' ritual	180
7 Social relationships and nature symbolism	
A Society and nature	190
B Life-force and order	193
C Animals and disorder	202
D Plants, light, and the definition of social units	208
8 Stability and change - Carnian society as a feedback mechanism	
A Forces for change	220
B Economically motivated responses to change	223
C Rivalry and solidarity in a changed context	233
D Salvaging the traditional community	240
9 Regional identity and nationalism	254
A Patriotism, regionalism, and politics	255
B Regional identity and the experience of difference	260
C The abandonment and recovery of regional identity	271
D Theories of nationalism and regionalism	280
10 Structural explanation and European society	
A Attitudes to structuralism	286
B Elements of structure in traditional Carnian society	289
C Affinity, property, and social structure	295
D Family, village, church, and state	303
E The structural preconditions of nationalism	307
Bibliography	314

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES

	Page
Map 1 Friuli and Carnia	11
Map 2 The Val Degano / Canale di Gorto	12
Table 1.1 The decline in the population of people in Ovaro <i>comune</i>	21
Table 1.2 The decline in the population of cattle	22
Table 2.1 Population of Ovasta by age and sex in 1991	42
Table 2.2 Population of Ovaro <i>comune</i> by age and sex in 1991	43
Table 2.3 Whether Ovastan women were doing paid work in 1991, by age group	45
Table 2.4 Whether Ovastan men had ever worked abroad, by age group	45
Table 2.5 Composition of maximal residential groups in Ovasta	47
Table 2.6 Example of a family land-holding in Ovasta in 1955	52
Table 2.7 Division of land between heirs - examples from Ovasta before 1955	53
Table 2.8 Division of land between heirs - examples from Ovasta in latter half of 1960s	56

	Page
Table 6.1 Marriages of ever-married men living in Ovasta in 1991	169
Table 8.1 Net permanent emigration from the <i>comune</i> of Ovaro, and from Carnia, between 1962 and 1988	224
Table 8.2 Employment and unemployment by sex in Ovaro <i>comune</i> in 1991	225
Table 8.3 Brothers of Ovastan women who married within Ovasta	230

NOTE ON LANGUAGE, TYPEFACE AND SPELLING

In order to distinguish between the two languages used in the valley, Friulian words are printed in *bold italics* while Italian words are printed in *ordinary italics*. *Ordinary italics* are also used for other non-English words and for emphasis.

The following conventions are used for spelling Friulian words.

'Ci' 'ce' 'sci' 'sce' 'chi' 'che' 'gn' are pronounced as in Italian. Approximate English equivalents would be 'chi' 'che' 'shi' 'she' (as in 'shepherd') 'ki' 'ke' and the 'ny' sound in 'onion'.

'cj' represents a sound in between the English 'ch' and the 'ky' sound in the English word 'cute'.

'gj' is the voiced version of the same sound.

'š' represents the English sound 'sh' in front of 'a', 'i', 'o', 'u' and at the end of words.

'č' represents the English sound 'ch' in front of 'a', 'i', 'o', 'u' and at the end of words.

'ž' represents something like the English 'j'.

Vowels with circumflex accents are long.

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This project would not have been possible without the help and advice of many different people, and these acknowledgements cannot fully express how much I owe them.

One of my main debts is to the staff and fellow students of the anthropology department at LSE over the years since 1983 when I began the part-time MSc. Peter Loizos, who supervised this project, provided guidance and encouragement while I was in the field. Afterwards, both his own comments and the comparative reading which he suggested were crucial in helping me to sharpen initial impressions and intuitions into a coherent argument.

The anthropology department's thesis writing seminar was very valuable, above all for the opportunity to share ideas and problems with people in the same situation. I also benefited from the opportunity to present early versions of some of these findings to seminars at the Accademia di Scienze Lettere e Arti at Udine, the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, University College London, and Sussex University.

Several people commented on plans and drafts at various stages. They include Alfred Gell, who helped supervise the early part of the project, Cesare Poppi, Pier Paolo Viazzo, Janet Carsten, Norman Denison, Filippo and Caroline Osella, Tony Manners, Fenella Cannell, Paola Filippucci, and Jaro Stacul.

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two visits, along with some films made by the faculty at Sienna, which gave me a real sense of what working in the north Italian countryside might be like.

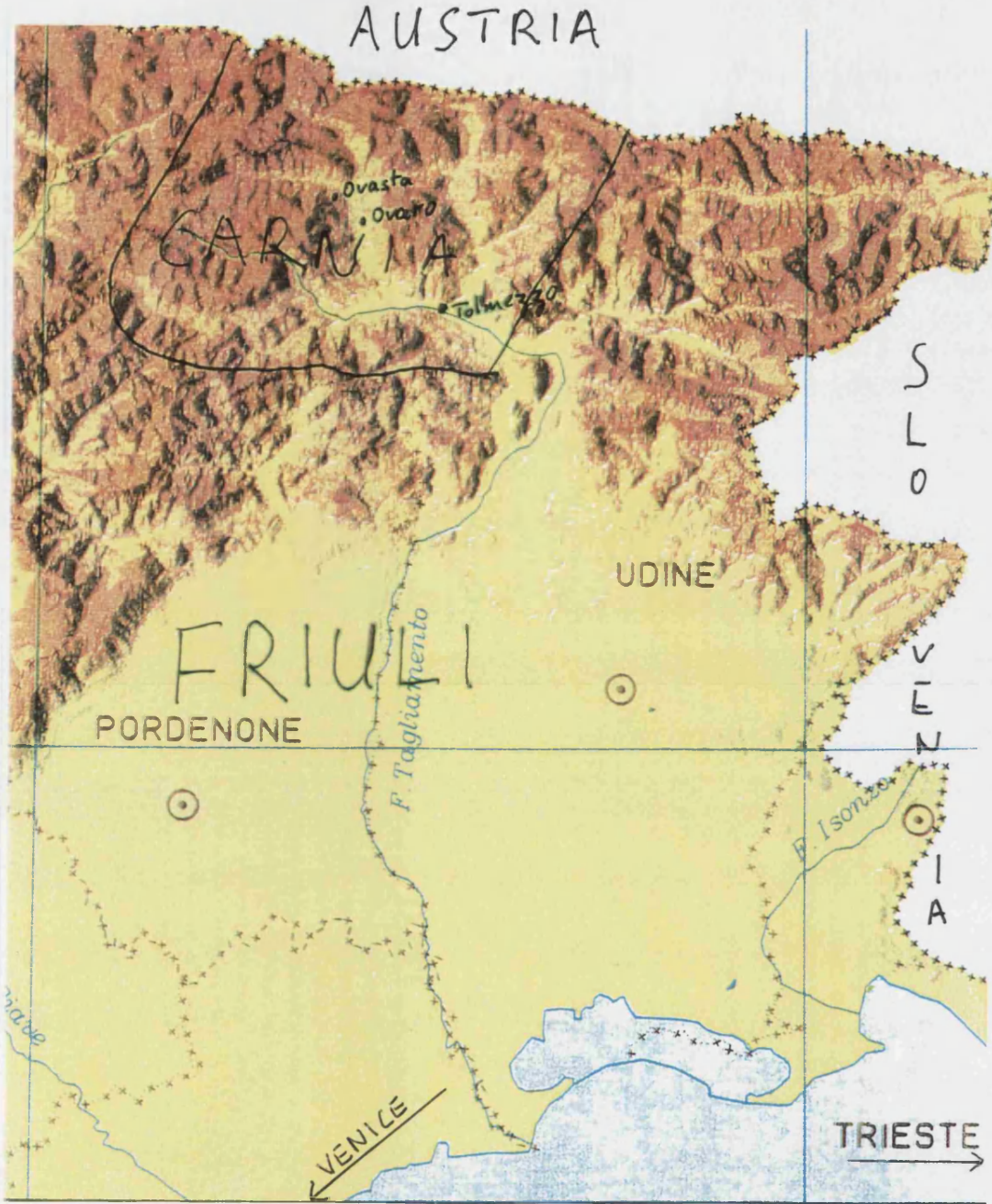
Cesare Poppi provided me with contacts in Friuli, and Giorgio Ferigo provided introductions to people in the Val Degano itself as well as the benefit of his own knowledge of and enthusiasm for Carnia's present and past. Pieri and Viviane Fontanin, and Cornelia Puppini provided hospitality and insiders' perspectives on the autonomist movement. I was able to discuss plans and initial impressions with Raimondo Strassoldo at Udine university. I owe a very particular debt to Gian Paolo Gri and to Donatella Cozzi, then both at Trieste university, for their detailed knowledge of Carnian society, and for very stimulating discussions of impressions and interpretations.

I am grateful to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for allowing me time off to carry out the fieldwork.

Map 1 is copied from a volume of the Italian census; and Map 2 comes from a volume on the Val Degano published by the Società Filologica Friulana. I have quoted in full two poems from Leo Zanier's volume *Libers di Scugnî Lâ*.

Most of all however, I owe an enormous amount to the people of the Val Degano, for their hospitality and readiness to help with information and ideas. I feel both a general debt, and great gratitude to particular friends. I would like to thank them individually, but it would not be possible to do so here without leaving out other people to whom I owe almost as much. Though my thanks must be anonymous, they are deeply felt.

Map 1: Friuli and Carnia



Map 2: The Val Degano / Canale di Gorto



1. INTRODUCTION

A Environment, history, and economy

Carnia and the Val Degano

Carnia, where the fieldwork for this thesis was carried out, is a mountainous zone in the region of Friuli in the extreme north-east of Italy. It covers an area, about 50 kilometres from east to west and about 30 from north to south, defined by the upper valley of the Tagliamento - which flows from west to east before turning south into lowland Friuli - and some smaller valleys which flow into it from the north (see Map 1). Carnia's northern border is the watershed with Austria. Its western border is the watershed with the Italian province of Belluno, and it is bounded on the south by a mountain ridge which cuts it off from the Friulian plain. At the south-eastern corner of Carnia the river Tagliamento is joined by the river Fella flowing down from the very northeast corner of Italy. About 20 kilometres east of the point where they join is the border with Slovenia.

The bulk of the material in this thesis relates to the two comunes of Ovaro and Comeglians, which contain between them about 20 villages situated in the lower part of the valley of the river Degano, the most central of the smaller valleys. (This valley, which is also known as the Canale di Gorto, is shown in map 2.) Near the villages of Comeglians and Luincis the Val Degano is itself joined by the Val Pesarina (Canale di San Canziano) leading to Prato Carnico and Pesariis and the by the Val Calda leading to Ravascletto - to form a criss-cross of valleys about 20 kilometres from north to south and rather less from east to west. The valley floor at Ovaro and Comeglians is about 500 metres above sea level - and somewhat higher in the upper Val Degano and the two side valleys. The valley sides rise to ridges of between 1500 and 2000 metres above sea level. The mountains forming the border with Austria

constitute a ridge of bare rock rising at one point to over 2700 metres.

Human habitation in the area is concentrated in nucleated villages situated on the valley floors or the lower slopes of the valley sides. The villages are small - the median population being around 150 inhabitants. Although the overall density of population is low the fact that it is concentrated in or near the valley floors means that the village communities are generally quite close to each other - often only a couple of kilometres apart, and it is safe to say that nearly all of them are in walking distance - easy walking distance given the standards of 30 years ago - of several others.

History - Carnia and Friuli

Friuli enters the historical record with its conquest by the Romans at the beginning of the second century BC. There is some controversy about the pre-Roman population of the area (Desinan). But it seems clear that at that time, and after the Roman conquest, a people called the *Carnii* occupied much of a region that corresponds to the modern Carnia and Friuli, and also perhaps Carinthia and Carniola (Slovenia). Historical references to the *Carnii* are scarce, but there is some evidence that the Romans may have thought of them as Galli (i.e. Gauls or Celts).
(Menis.)

Ever since the Roman conquest, the valleys that make up modern Carnia have formed part of the same political unit as modern Friuli. Conquest was followed by some settlement by Roman colonists. Friuli appears to have prospered under Roman administration which was centred on the coastal city of Aquileia. Aquileia was one of the main cities of the empire, and with the advent of Christianity became an important ecclesiastical centre under its local bishops who eventually assumed the title

of patriarch.

After the fall of the Roman empire Friuli was the first part of Italy to be conquered by the *Langobardi*, and for a while formed an autonomous Langobard dukedom. As the middle ages progressed the civil power of the Patriarchs of Aquileia grew until they became the feudal overlords of all Friuli. Politically the patriarchs were vassals of the German emperors, and many of them were of German origin - as were the noble families which owed them allegiance. This situation persisted for several centuries, and formed a sharp contrast to the situation to the west and south west, where autonomous city states, ruled by local aristocracies were gaining autonomy from both Emperor and Pope.

The middle ages also saw some Slav settlement in Friuli, reaching beyond the eastern valleys where Slav dialects are now spoken. There is evidence of some Slav settlement in Carnia in the sixth and seventh centuries AD. In the later middle ages there was substantial Slav settlement in lowland Friuli, following depopulation due to various disasters.

The Patria of Friuli was conquered by the Venetian republic in 1420, but continued to be run as an separate unit with considerable autonomy until the Napoleonic Wars at the end of the eighteenth century. After a few years as part of the transient system set up by the French, Friuli - along with the other Venetian lands - was ceded to Austria. Austrian rule ended in 1866, since when Friuli - and Carnia with it - has formed part of the unified state of Italy.

the origins of the Friulian language

Friulian - the language used on informal occasions in most of Friuli and Carnia - is a romance language with a strong

resemblance to the Ladin spoken in the Dolomites and the Romansch spoken in the Swiss canton of Grisons. By the later middle ages it was clearly distinct from the language spoken in other Italian regions (Frau). Some local scholars (such as Menis pp27-8) believe this difference can be traced to the influence of the celtic speech of the Carnians, while others trace it to the political isolation of Friuli from the rest of Italy during the early middle ages (Strassoldo and Cattarinussi pp28-9).

Carnian history in the twentieth century

The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century saw the rise of socialist and catholic political activity in Carnia - in both cases associated with the foundation of cooperative dairies and other institutions (Renzulli). Locally, the people of the Val Pesarina, with an anarchist tradition centred on the village of Pradumbli, were particularly radical in their ideas.

When Italy entered the Great War in 1915, Carnia found itself on the front line against Austria. This situation lasted until 1917, when the Italian defeat at Caporetto was followed by a retreat which left Carnia behind Austrian lines until the end of the war. Political activity resumed after the war, until the early 1920s when the establishment of fascist rule at national level was followed by the placing of local authorities under the control of fascist-appointed officials known as *podesta*.

After the fall of Mussolini in 1943 Carnia, along with the rest of northern Italy, was left in the control of the German forces and under the authority of the residual fascist republic of Salo. However in the summer of 1944, a partisan rising drove German and fascist forces out of Carnia for three months. The local partisans were

composed of two different forces - the communist led *Garibaldini* and the anti-communist *Brigata di Osoppo*. The partisans in the Val Degano belonged to the *Garibaldini*, the more active of the two movements. After the Germans reconquered the miniature partisan republic in the autumn of 1944 they installed an occupying force of several thousand cossack and mongol troops, along with their families, who had thrown in their lot with the Germans during the latter's advance into Russia. Some partisan activity continued until the end of the war, with a brief - and vividly remembered - flare-up in its closing days.

From the end of the war until the start of the 1990s, the extremes of anarchist and fascist politics have been absent from the Val Degano area, whose comunes have oscillated back and forth between control by Christian Democrat and coalitions centred on the socialist and communist parties. For several years one of the three representatives of the regional constituency of which the Val Degano forms a part belonged to the Friulian autonomist movement. At the time of my fieldwork this was no longer the case, but there was considerable and growing support for the *Lega Nord* - the northern league - which advocates the effective autonomy of northern Italy from the rest of the country.

Throughout these political twists and turns the role of the state has been steadily growing. At the beginning of the century it provided police and law courts, and a few years of primary education - demanding in return taxes and military service. The first state pensions were introduced in the fascist period and there is now a fully developed welfare state. Government subsidies play an important role in the economic and cultural life of the valley.

The twentieth century has also seen an extension of the transport system within the valley. Although the nearest railway station - Stazione Carnia - is now just outside

Carnia itself, a branch line built in 1910 reached as far as Comeglians halfway up the Val Degano. The line was closed in 1935 and only the embankment can still be seen. But there is now a frequent bus service linking the valley to Tolmezzo and beyond. The quality of the roads has been steadily improved since the war, and most families now motor between the villages on well maintained roads.

An earthquake shook the valley in 1976, considerably weakening many of the houses, though the Val Degano did not experience the wholesale destruction and loss of life that occurred a few kilometres to the south east. The aftermath of the earthquake demonstrated the central role now played by the state, which provided funds to restore damaged property. These funds stimulated a local building boom which lasted until the late 1980s.

Economy and economic change

Nowadays productive activity in Carnia is almost completely integrated in the money economy - the subsistence activities of most families being confined more or less to extensive vegetable gardens, though a sizable minority continue to rear a pig or keep a cow. In one sense this state of affairs is new, in that up to about thirty years ago people relied on home production for most of their food, and much of their clothing. However, even though these aspects of production were handled largely on a non-monetary subsistence basis, other aspects of economic life seem to have been integrated into a wider market economy for as far back as records extend. The aspects concerned included dairy and cheese production, some local quarrying and mining, some local manufacturing - for instance of clocks - but above all forestry and seasonal emigration.

Vegetable gardens and other cultivated land - including small orchards and small areas devoted to crops such as

maize and potatoes - are generally placed near to the villages. But most of the non-wooded land round the villages is given over to grass meadows (*prâts*). The lower meadows and those halfway up the valley sides are or would have been scythed three times a year. The upper meadows were, and in some cases still are, used as summer pastures - cattle and sheep being grazed there under the care of herdsmen during the summer months. These pastures were generally equipped with some kind of stalls, and with accommodation for the herdsmen - the word *malga* is used to refer both to a pasture and to the buildings on it.

A belt of woodland - mostly pine, but with a good deal of beech as well - separates the high and low meadows. Since livestock rearing has declined rapidly following the second world war this belt has been allowed to expand both upwards and downwards at the expense of what were formerly *prâts*. For centuries timber has been a major export from Carnia - during the period of Venetian rule [15th century to 1797] much of this timber went to supply Venice's needs, and timber remained critically important to the local economy until after the Second World War. It is still a major local product. The skills involved were wood-cutter [*boscador* or *boscaiolo*] and sawmill operator. There were also some skilled carpenters, of whom a few remain.

Wood also entered into the local subsistence economy - locally gathered firewood was the only fuel [and is still an important fuel], and the structural beams of houses were made from the local pines. Until two or three centuries ago houses seem to have been entirely wooden structures but by the seventeenth or eighteenth century the more prosperous families were building their houses of stone, a custom which became general during the nineteenth century. The stone used was *tufo* - a local volcanic rock which is easily worked when it is first quarried but then sets hard on exposure to the air.

Though seasonal emigration dates back for as long as we have records, its form has changed over time. During the Venetian period much of Venice's trade with Austria was in the hands of Carnian ambulant traders known as *cramars*. Much of this trading took place in the winter months when men could be spared from agricultural tasks. In the nineteenth century this trade dried up and seasonal emigration drew on the same skills that men used in their subsistence activities: they worked as building labourers, miners, lumberjacks and sawmill operators. Most of these being outdoor occupations they were alternatives to agricultural work, instead of being supplementary to it, and emigration became an affair of spring, summer and autumn, instead of winter. As a very high proportion of men were seasonal emigrants agriculture was left largely in the hands of women. (Renzulli.) Earlier this century women themselves frequently worked outside the valley, often outside Carnia, as domestic servants before they were married.

Until the first world war the main zone for seasonal emigration was the Austro-Hungarian empire. After that France, Switzerland and Belgium seem to have been the main destinations. Seasonal emigration finally came to an end as a result of the economic transformation that affected rural areas in most of southern and western Europe in the second half of this century. The changes came to a head in the 1960s when rising real incomes in the cities led to a wave of permanent emigration to urban areas which reduced the population of Ovaro *comune* by over 20 percent in a single decade (table 1.1). Since then a low birthrate, and some continuing outflow, has produced a further steady but less dramatic population decline.

The outflow of population was followed by a change in the working patterns of those who remained in the valley. The number of cattle provides a useful measure of the commitment to agricultural activities (table 1.2). Herds declined from around the middle of the century, but the

rate of decline speeded up around the end of the 1960s. Between 1968 and 1989 the number of cattle in Ovaro *comune* fell by over 60 per cent. The early 1970s also saw the end of seasonal migration - ending an economic system based on predominantly female agricultural work and substantial male seasonal emigration which had lasted for over a century.

Table 1.1 The decline in the population of people in Ovaro *comune*

Year	Population	
	Total	as % of 1951 total
1951	3,935	100
1961	3,873	98
1971	3,033	77
1981	2,708	69
1991	2,404	61

Source: ISTAT census figures for 1991, and background material for plans of Comunità Montana della Carnia

Table 1.2 The decline in the population of cattle

	Year	Total cattle
All Carnia	1881	24,617
	1911	21,531
	1931	21,892
	1951	14,908
	1971	12,055
	1981	7,834
	1989	5,935

Ovaro comune	1968	1,176
	1977	928
	1989	449

Source: background material for plans of Comunità Montana della Carnia

Technical and institutional changes have also had a major impact on local life in recent decades - greatly increasing people's sense of day-to-day contact with the world beyond their own valley. In the 1950s few families owned cars, but now almost all do, and two-car families are not uncommon. The possession of television sets, often left on almost permanently, is now universal. The school leaving age has been raised both legally and in practice. Before the 1960s it was rare for people to continue beyond 5 years of elementary schooling. But by 1990 not only was attendance at secondary school compulsory till the age of fourteen, many continued their secondary education for several more years in order to obtain a technical or professional diploma, or in order to go on to university.

B Research aims

The initial topic

The title of my research proposal was "local identity and ritual in Carnia". The idea grew out of a visit to north Italy in 1988 in which I had made the acquaintance of a number of Italian anthropologists with an interest in their own society, and had been intrigued by two themes. The first was the emphasis that they placed on local diversity, between valleys, between neighbouring villages and so on. The second was the realisation that in parts of northern Italy there were traditional rituals, relating to agricultural fertility and the human life-cycle, which had relatively little to do with the catholic church. I thought a study focusing on the place of ritual in local life would make it possible to investigate both themes.

As I read round the subject it soon became clear that the emphasis on local diversity was not just a scholarly opinion but an important theme in Italian culture generally (Pratt; Silverman). It is part of a set of ideas which emphasises people's attachment to their native community. In some contexts this attachment is a matter of pride, while in others it is viewed negatively as *campanilismo* [literally bell-tower-ism], that is to say attachment to one's own community as symbolised by its bell-tower, and indifference or hostility to the interests of other communities. In fact this pronounced local patriotism has been widely reported in southern and alpine Europe, as has a series of phenomena which generally accompany it. Chief among these are religious and other ceremonies which are specific to each village; dialect differences that distinguish neighbouring villages; a high level of village endogamy, partly enforced by the young men; a system of nicknames; and the role of young people, particularly young men, in some village ceremonies as well as in fights between villages.

The anthropological literature contains two main explanations for an emphasis on village solidarity. One - which is concerned with solidarity *within* the village - focuses on the need for cooperative labour in agricultural activities, particularly in the kind of mountain environment which characterises most of southern Europe. The argument is that cooperation on a village level is needed, and thus institutions which promote this will have an adaptive advantage (Rhoades and Thompson). The other explanation, advanced by Wolf, is that closed corporate village communities enable their members to resist the encroachment of powerful *outsiders* - and confer an adaptive advantage for that reason (Wolf 1957;1966;1986).

Whatever their empirical support¹, these explanations are partial. They concentrate on the advantages conferred by local cooperation but do not really explain how this level of cooperation is achieved, or the emotional content of people's attachment to their village. Of course, the sense of emotional attachment is likely to be closely related to the degree of practical cooperation achieved. Indeed emotional attachment may be a functional prerequisite for cooperative action, by making it possible for individuals to subordinate their own interests to those of the community as a whole. But to say that something is functionally necessary is not the same as explaining it. The sources of the emotional attachment to the village community need to be considered in their own right, without assuming that they are an automatic by-product of the need for practical solidarity.

So this problem became the central theme of the research

¹Viazzo summarises the anthropological and historical debate on the respective roles of ecological and socio-cultural factors in shaping alpine social organisation - arguing that common features point towards ecological determinism while variation between alpine social structures indicates socio-cultural causation. He concludes that both play significant roles.

proposal. The aim of the project would be to investigate the social processes that might sustain emotional attachment to the village community - particularly the ways in which perceptions were structured so that people came to identify personal interests with community interests, both in dealings with outsiders and in relation to the natural world. Village rituals, whether or not organised by the church, were clearly of central concern for a study of this type.

There were two reasons for thinking that Carnia would be a suitable location for a such a study. Firstly it has a well documented local ritual tradition [Ciceri; Osterman] which includes ceremonies in which the community as a whole is involved in celebrating human and natural fertility. Secondly it has a long-standing reputation for intense localism. Writing in the 1890s a friendly observer included these remarks in a discussion of '*il tipo morale*' of the Carnian people:

"for one who has studied them in their home environment the defect which emerges most strongly is the frequently envious sense of individualism which sets the adults of each hamlet against each other, and which becomes a harmful '*campanilismo*', setting hamlet against hamlet, comune against comune, valley against valley, and all of Carnia against Tolmezzo [the administrative centre of Carnia]. This is a failing whose bad fruits never lead, at least today, to bloodshed, but are restricted to lawsuits, administrative and political disputes which make it difficult and unfruitful to unite their forces for common goals and which, it must be said, is fairly noticeably diminishing from generation to generation."

[Marinelli p203, my translation]

It is doubtful whether these attitudes really were diminishing at the time Marinelli wrote. I certainly

heard much the same points made during my fieldwork - sometimes as a description of current reality, and at other times as a feature of a way of life that had lasted until about 1960.

The radical changes in the material basis of society which took place about that time clearly must affect the role played by the ideology of localism, and might well lead to its dilution or transformation into something else. At the time I was planning the research, I thought of these developments mainly in terms of the geographical extension of the economic and social environment - and proposed to investigate the effects this had on the size of the geographic unit with which people identified. I thought that perhaps village loyalties would be transformed into regional loyalties, and that it would be possible to trace this transformation in the differing experiences and attitudes of successive generations. The process of transformation might shed light on the relation between attachment to local communities and feelings about the 'imagined community' (Anderson) of the nation state.

a community in decline

What I had not anticipated was the pervasive sense of collapse. Towards the end of my fieldwork in Carnia I was being shown round one of the local factories, which makes and exports industrial clocks, by a friend in the design department who was also a workers' representative on the factory council. The company has been operating in or just outside the village of Pesariis for over two centuries, but the clocks themselves belong clearly to the later twentieth century. Some moving parts are still individually machined, and skilled craftsmen operate machine tools to fashion the stamps used to press out the casings of the clocks - but the timing mechanisms are now electronic and bought in from outside. So, although many of the workers are still using their own skills to shape

things, they are no longer responsible for the most sophisticated parts of their products.

As we went round my guide talked about the reduction of the workforce brought about by these technical changes, and discussed whether the technical expertise needed actually to design electronic circuitry might be available in the local labour market. We also talked about the commercial environment of the company, its sales network and the degree of official subsidy available to companies in the region.

The reason the visit sticks in my mind is a conversation we had with three of the operatives. When my guide explained that I had come to study Carnian society and traditions, one of the men replied that I had arrived only just in time. The Carnians were dying out and within 50 to 100 years the only inhabitants would be bears. Though they chose to view it in very different ways - one from the perspective of commercial rationality, while the other was concerned with biological continuity and the threatening encroachment of the wild - both my guide and the operative were referring to the sense of decline which colours many aspects of life in Carnia today.

This was only one of many conversations on the same theme. People talked about Carnians, only half-jokingly, as a dying race. They never tired of pointing out the advance of the woods over what had been until recently scythed hay meadows, stressing how dark and ugly the woods are and how they seem to be closing in on the villages and the remaining cultivated land. According to them the collapse is not only physical but social as well. People are less likely to visit each other at home than they used to be, they no longer congregate in the village squares, and even the bars have fewer customers than they once did. People have become selfish and no longer help each other out. Above all they say that there is less *allegria*, a word which combines the senses of "joy" and "togetherness".

This meant that the original research topic had to be extended. I had intended to investigate the sources of emotional attachment to the village community, and to wider geographic units. My informants were concerned with a more fundamental problem: how to sustain the sense of belonging to a community at all.

C Gathering the data

Making contact

The data for this thesis was obtained during 4 visits, amounting to 10 months in all, spread over a little less than two years. I first arrived in the Val Degano at the end of November 1989 and finished my last spell of fieldwork at the end of September 1991. Since then I have returned to the valley for brief visits in 1992 and 1994. I saw seven and a half months of the year in Carnia - November to February, the first half of March, and July to September - but not April, May, June or October. I had to adopt this pattern of repeated shortish visits in order to fit in with my work commitments, since my employers were not prepared to grant me more than 4 months leave of absence at a time.

I chose to work in the Val Degano partly because I had been told it was a comparatively traditional part of Carnia, and partly because on a pre-fieldwork trip to Friuli I had met a local community leader from the valley who could provide me with some introductions. Once there I spent substantial amounts of time in 3 different villages - Ovaro, Luincis, and Ovasta - and stayed briefly in 3 others: Tualis, Comeglians, and Lenzene.

When I first arrived it was not easy find anywhere to stay. Although there is some summer tourism, the part of the valley where I was working is not a winter-sports area and the rented accommodation was not provided with central

heating to cope with winter weather. A number of people said they could not rent an apartment to me for this reason - despite my own willingness to make do with a wood-burning stove. There was also, I think, some nervousness about what playing host to an anthropologist would involve.

After several days I managed to rent an apartment in a family house in Ovaro where I stayed for the next 6 weeks. However I did not want to stay there indefinitely since I wanted to live in a village where it would be possible to get to know everyone - and Ovaro with over 500 inhabitants seemed too big. A second, more important reason for wanting to move was that people told me that the outlying villages, away from the main road and up the valley sides, were more traditional² than those - such as Ovaro, Chialina, and Comeglians - that were situated on the main road. Since I wanted to find out about traditional village localism it seemed important to move to one of these more traditional communities. My subsequent moves to Luincis, away from the main road, and Ovasta - up the mountain side above Luincis - were attempts to do this.

Apart from the last 3 months, in which I concentrated particularly on the village of Ovasta, I split my time between the village where I was staying and the rest of the valley. There were several reasons for choosing a wider field of enquiry than a single village. One was that, because people were telling me about the differences between villages, I wanted to get an idea of the range of variation. Another was that villages are not the only significant local units. Official life, officially

²By 'traditional' I mean here 'similar in some ways to what they would have been a few decades ago'. 'Tradition' is a folk concept both in Italy and in Britain which has rightly received a good deal of critical examination. Much of this thesis relates to the social meaning given to temporal succession. Chapter 8 assesses recent changes in the class of things which are thought of as traditional, and in the symbolic role which that class plays.

sponsored leisure and cultural activities, and much shopping and casual social contact are focused on the central village of the comune - and so even after moving to Luincis, I often found myself visiting Ovaro and Comeglians.

However the main reason was that at first I found it difficult to get to know people, and the strategies I used to cope with this problem initially led me to develop a rather sparse network of contacts in different villages, rather than a dense network in a single village. I am not sure how much of this difficulty was due to shyness and awkwardness on my part, and how much was due to reserve on the part of the people I was trying to contact. To begin with, I certainly did feel apprehensive about approaching people with whom I might have little in common, and starting to talk about their lives - and so I may well have been slower to make contacts than I need have been. On the other hand, there was a good deal of reserve on the part of potential informants, and as I got to know them better I gradually became aware of some of the reasons for it. Even if I cannot really assess how important they were in comparison with my own hesitations, it is possible to say something about these reasons.

Several local people told me that I would find it hard to work in Carnia because people were so *sierât* and mistrustful. The question of what the word *sierât* means, and how it relates to actual behaviour, is a topic for a later chapter - but there really did seem to be some feeling of apprehension about an unknown outsider. On three or four occasions I had the experience of walking into a bar where I had not been before and hearing the conversation come to a halt while people turned to look at me. It gave me the impression that I was trespassing into their private space.

People were also concerned that I might have chosen to study them because I thought they were primitive. I was

told that "we are not Zulus". I think this sensitivity relates to a fear that perhaps they actually are primitive. Certainly this is something others tell them. An elderly Frenchwoman, married to a local man, told me of her amazement when she first arrived in the valley: "I thought I had arrived among Zulus". There are jokes about the naivety of Carnians that are very like the "Irish jokes" told by the English. This fear of being thought crude or outlandish was also apparent in some women's anxiety that I might not like the food they offered me. They emphasised that it was rough and ready ["*a la buina*"] peasant cooking - presumably thinking that I would be used to something much more refined. Another example was the first time I went to see fire-throwing [of which more later]: the young men of the village were preparing the "*cidulas*" - the wooden disks that would be lit and thrown - by sawing some logs into circular sections, drilling a hole in each, and attaching wire handles. As I was watching the busy scene one of them turned to me and said "You must think we're mad".

Another worry was that I might write about facts that could be considered scandalous. Something like this happened a few years ago when a film was made about an incident of incest and murder that occurred in another valley. Apparently there was a good deal of anger in Carnia about the image of them which this conveyed to the outside world. A number of people made it clear that there were things that they were not prepared to tell me about. Among the things which people saw as inherently scandalous were quarrels within the family or within the village. The importance to people of seeming *uniti* - at one with each other - was obvious from the number of mildly malicious comments I heard about villages where the people made a show of being *uniti* but weren't really.

These fears never entirely disappeared - reasonably enough, since many of the things I was interested in were to do with rivalry and conflict, or with beliefs and

customs which my informants knew that educated people might consider primitive. But as I got to know people better, and established a certain amount of rapport, I felt that I was being told enough to form a reasonably good idea of some of these difficult areas of social life.

This analysis is written with hindsight. When I arrived the practical problem was how to make contacts. One step was to go to almost every organised event I heard of. As it was the Christmas season there were a number of officially organised celebrations. Then in the weeks after Christmas several villages held fire throwing ceremonies, and various associated celebrations, and I was able to watch and to some extent participate. I also followed up introductions to people involved in local politics and to some priests, and went to religious services and a few political and parish meetings. All these activities generated a scattering of contacts in various villages.

I found in fact that several people, when they heard what I was doing, invited me round, gave me introductions or told me of events to go and see. Some because they were interested while others made it plain, then or later, that they saw me as someone who was far from home and rather lost who needed a helping hand. From the start three or four families, and two of the local priests, were particularly helpful in providing hospitality and free-ranging discussions about local life.

Language

As time went on I became more linguistically competent. Two languages are used in the Val Degano, Italian and Friulian. Almost everyone can understand both Italian and Friulian though some people can only speak Italian; one or two of the older people only speak Friulian. In general Italian is the 'dignified' language, used on most

formal occasions and in nearly all written matter, while Friulian is used for nearly all casual conversations.

I had studied Italian before going, and was able to hold conversations though not very fluently. I had also obtained a few materials for studying Friulian on a short visit to Friuli before starting fieldwork, and was able to refer to the short grammar given by Gregor - so far as I know the only work on Friulian available in Britain - but it was only after about 3 months of fieldwork that I began to be able to speak it well enough to hold proper conversations. In my final spell of fieldwork I used Friulian most of the time and felt reasonably at ease in it. Nevertheless my vocabulary was restricted, and I found it difficult to follow conversations in Friulian in which several people were taking part. My Italian also improved during my fieldwork - reinforced by radio, TV, and reading - and when I was unable to understand or express something in Friulian it was usually possible to clarify matters by switching into Italian.

On the whole my efforts to speak Friulian were well received, but not always. A couple of people said that it seemed peculiar to hear me speaking Friulian, and I quite often found that when I opened a conversation in Friulian the person I was talking to replied in Italian. I don't think this was just because I was a foreigner - after all I am not a native Italian speaker either - but because Friulian is the language that marks social belonging. By speaking Friulian I was doing my best to claim the status of a kind of honorary insider. The people who welcomed my efforts were, I think, signalling their willingness to go along with this fiction - while the those who insisted on Italian were emphasising my real status as an outsider.

The data itself

In order to obtain a realistic picture of practical life I

collected biographical information - about education, work, and family - from the inhabitants of Ovasta and Luincis. I supplemented this with some open interviews about family economic management and inheritance.³ I also consulted the land register and parish and *comune* records of births, marriages and deaths. Further economic and demographic data was available from the appendices to the economic plan of the Comunita' Montana della Carnia, and from the Census.

Information about other topics emerged in a less systematic way. When the opportunity arose, I conducted formal interviews - generally using a tape recorder or a portable computer to record the dialogue. Equally, if not more, useful were informal conversations, sometimes following on from a more limited formal interview, but most often arising in the course of daily life or after some special occasion. Finally there was the information picked up by observation of everyday behaviour, and also of special occasions - from fire-throwing or the butchery of the family pig, at the traditional and homely end of the scale - to football matches, choral recitals, and political meetings at the more modern and organised end of the scale.

D Interpreting the data

ethnography and images of the past

Since the thesis is about a society that has recently undergone a process of radical change, the questions of what has and what has not changed and why are never far from the centre of attention. In the course of answering these questions I have described many aspects of the

³Some of these interviews were carried out, and taped, for me by a local student of psychology. I was also able to delegate some of the collection of questionnaire data to two local young people.

society as I believe them to have been in the past - particularly in the earlier part of this century - using some documentary evidence, but relying mostly on people's statements about the way things used to be, and evidence gathered from observation and discourse about present-day life. A procedure of this kind is potentially vulnerable to several methodological criticisms.

Some of these relate to the idea that one's access is through discourse - and that what one is receiving is not a factual account of the past but examples of the use of *the image of the past* in the present. These uses may be internal to the society - images of how things ought to be, or of how they 'really are' once one gets beneath superficial appearances. Or the images presented, and accepted by the ethnologist, may be to do with the negotiation of relative statuses - in particular with the assertion or denial of informants' status as contemporaries - 'co-eval' with the ethnographer and not 'backward' objects of the outsider's expertise (Fabian).

These are real problems, but I do not think they prevent one learning about the past as *it actually was* - not with absolute certainty, but with a similar degree of confidence as applies to our beliefs about the present. This is partly because some pieces of evidence - records, photographs, buildings - are not discourse at all. However selective they may be, they represent the past as it was seen at the time they were made, not as it now appears to people. The second is that informants themselves are not single-minded ideologists. They too may be interested in trying to understand what really happened. They may also be fairly neutral about many aspects of it. Different people have different viewpoints which provide a way of checking partial accounts. To the extent that these viewpoints differ systematically between people of different generations, they are themselves evidence since they *may* reflect differences in the socialisation and experience of successive generations.

Generational differences in daily activities *may* also be interpreted in the same way - particularly when combined with statistical evidence of changing patterns of work and social interaction.

the problems of studying a society near to home

But establishing what actually went on is only part of the problem - at least as important is finding a point of view from which to interpret it. The classic anthropological problem of the fit, or lack of fit, between the observer's conceptual scheme and that of the society being studied poses itself in a particular way in the case of studies carried out 'at home' or near to it. The risk in this case is that the categorical systems of the anthropologist and the people being studied may fit each other too well.

One aspect of this is that shared ideological categories may lead both observer and informant to share a misdescription of the particular characteristics of the society and of the way it differs from mainstream western society. Herzfeld (1987) has argued that this problem is particularly acute in the case of Greece which is seen by both observers and locals as simultaneously the source of western culture and a partially non-western oriental society. The shared dichotomies in the case of Carnia are only marginally less fundamental: as well as the issue of whether Carnian culture belongs to the past or the present, there are the related dichotomies of urban versus rural, academic versus folk culture, and nordic versus mediterranean. These are all dichotomies which cut through local people's perceptions of their own society as well as structuring their perceptions of the relationship between Carnia and the world outside. If I had been mainly interested in analysing the differences between Carnian and English society, or indeed Carnian and Italian society, the problem of separating analytical from shared

evaluative categories would have been a major difficulty.

In fact both my experience of fieldwork, and the issues I was interested in, posed the problem in a rather different way. At an intuitive level I did not experience Carnian society as fundamentally different from my own, but rather as one that presented essentially similar experiences and ways of thinking - though sometimes in unexpected ways. I did relate what I saw and was told to images of the past - but it was to the comparatively recent past of my own society. While I was in the field I was reminded of the novels of Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence. Their versions of English rural and industrial life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seemed at the time to have as much to say about Carnia as anything I had read in anthropological studies. Overall I had the sense that living in Carnia gave me the chance to experience directly an aspect of the past that is still close enough to form part of my image of what, at some level, life in England is really about. If Carnia was 'other', it was so in a way that made it feel closer to some aspects of my own social identity than would have been possible if Carnia and contemporary England had been absolutely the same.

Given this degree of felt identification, the fundamental problem posed by working 'at home' was that familiarity might lead me to see some features of social life as unproblematic rather than as being in need of explanation. But the problem is easier to state than to solve. The ideal of 'reflexivity' - the attempt to identify the implicit assumptions one brings into the field - risks breaking down at precisely the point it is needed: the point at which one tries to distance oneself from assumptions that are so ingrained as to be imperceptible. Reflexivity can only work if one has some other external vantage point from which to question ideas that one would otherwise take for granted. No doubt complete success is impossible but, as Pina-Cabral (1992) has argued,

anthropology does provide an external vantage point - through its awareness that things are done differently elsewhere, and because it has constructed a body of theory that makes it possible to view any society as if from outside.

The anthropological tradition combines personal fieldwork, and hence insight into the experience of life as it seems to local people, with formal analysis and therefore the possibility of cumulatively generalisable knowledge. The hope is that over time each side of the enterprise contributes to the other. While anthropologists working in non-western societies rightly emphasise the problems involved in entering the experiential worlds of the people they have come to study, the main problem for anthropologists working 'at home' is making the familiar seem strange enough to deserve a formal description at all. This may be why formal structural analysis is relatively unpopular amongst specialists in European society, but it is also why it is necessary.

The ultimate test of whether one is liberated from the blinkers of cultural presuppositions is the capacity of the resulting insights to explain what actually happens. In this thesis I have tried to relate a formal account of symbolic and social structures to the experience of social life, as local people describe it. The analysis is intended to be not only interpretive, but also explanatory in a causal sense. The last three chapters - which deal with social change and make comparisons between Carnia and societies which differ from it in important ways - make it possible to put the explanation to a sort of test. The response to externally generated changes in economic and institutional life clarifies some of the causal relationships underlying the original system. And comparisons with other societies show how some behavioural differences correspond to differences in formal symbolic structures.

the chapter plan

The account that follows attempts to integrate economic circumstances, lived experience, and formal structures into a single explanatory framework. Chapters 2 to 7 contain material about both contemporary life and the situation as it was before the 1960s. The emphasis is on continuity rather than change.

Chapter 2 uses data about the village of Ovasta to illustrate patterns of residence and property holding. It goes on to discuss collaborative action within the village community - both the institutional structures and the pragmatic motives involved. It shows how the system emphasises the collective relationships involved in membership of a family or village. Dyadic ties are down-played.

Chapter 3 discusses the rivalries that can disrupt efforts at cooperation, and the conceptions underlying this rivalry. It goes on to discuss the way that representations of sympathy and shared experience are used to counter the fear of envy. Representations of sympathy express the unity of the village, but have to take account of the fact that not all experiences are shared. This fact leads to two distinct styles of social unity, one of them associated with men and the young, and the other with women, the old, and the church.

Chapter 4 considers the same issues in the context of communication. It shows how cooperation and rivalry are reflected in patterns of communication, and obstacles that block communication. It relates these to local ideas about hardness, strength, closedness and openness - and the dangers associated with verbal and non-verbal communication.

Chapter 5 looks at the way that property rights and

productive activity can express relationships of authority and solidarity. Work, as the activity which sustains or modifies these relationships, is potentially a means of competing for social status. The ideology of self-sacrifice helps to integrate it into an image of overall solidarity.

Chapter 6 discusses marriage patterns in relation to village endogamy and the ritual of the 'wheels'. It looks at the way this ritual and the related custom of asking for *entrastalas* payments construct an image of the village as united by both kinship and affinal ties - and the way these themes are connected with age-group relationships and the symbolism of passing time.

Chapter 7 shows how symbolic themes that structure social life - particularly the ideas of strength and communication - also help to organise the way people experience the natural world. Human beings are both like nature - in that they are subject to the same forces as plants and animals - and in interaction with it. Wild nature is both a source of independent strength that can be drawn on to resist and shape society, and a hostile domain to be subjected to human control and social order.

Chapters 8 and 9 look at the changes that have occurred in the last three or four decades.

Chapter 8 uses them to trace some of the causal relationships that link economic circumstances to social and symbolic structures.

Chapter 9 relates the changes to evolving ideas about regional and national identity.

Chapter 10 summarises the main findings from a structural point of view, and places some features of Carnian society

in a historical and comparative framework.

2. THE PRACTICAL ORGANISATION OF VILLAGE LIFE

A Ovasta, a village in the *comune* of Ovaro

population

Although this thesis draws on contacts and interviews in various different villages in the *comuni* of Ovaro and Comeglians - and occasionally further afield - I will focus particularly on the village of Ovasta; and so it is worth setting out some basic facts about the village and its inhabitants.

Table 2.1 Population of Ovasta by age and sex in 1991

Age groups	Males	Females	Sex ratio (M/F)	Per cent of total pop.
0 - 4	2	3)	
5 - 9	4	4) 0.9	9%
10 - 14	1	1)	
15 - 24	13	10	1.3	14%
25 - 34	13	13	1.0	16%
35 - 44	5	8	0.6	8%
45 - 54	16	11	1.5	16%
55 - 64	15	8	1.9	14%
65 - 74	11	13	0.8	14%
75+	5	10	0.5	9%

Source: own interviews

Table 2.1 gives the age and sex distribution for the village of Ovasta, and Table 2.2 gives comparable figures for Ovaro *comune* as a whole. The first point to note is that these are elderly populations. Twenty three percent of Ovastans are aged 65 or over, compared to just 9% aged under 15. The equivalent figures for the *comune* as a

whole - 22% and 12% - are only slightly less extreme. The small number of children is particularly striking: in both Ovasta and the comune as a whole the number of inhabitants in the 15-year age band 0-14 is less than that in all but one of the 10-year age bands of older people. This shortfall of births must have become critical around the mid-1970s, since the 15-24 age band is not particularly small in comparison with other age groups.

Table 2.2 Population of Ovaro *comune* by age and sex in 1991

Age groups	Males	Females	Sex ratio (M/F)	Per cent of total pop.
0 - 4	32	38)	
5 - 9	48	56)	12%
10 - 14	67	57)	
15 - 24	172	140	1.23	13%
25 - 34	171	158	1.08	14%
35 - 44	171	145	1.18	13%
45 - 54	180	143	1.26	13%
55 - 64	136	168	0.81	13%
65 - 74	128	159	0.81	12%
75+	64	171	0.37	10%

Source: ISTAT census figures

The other notable fact about these population distributions is that there is a surplus of middle-aged men. In the *comune* as a whole this surplus affects all ages below 55, whereas in Ovasta it affects the 45-54 and 55-64 age bands particularly. It therefore looks as the net rate of emigration of women from the *comune* has been higher than that of men for some time. If these departures took place in early adulthood the excess net outflow of women from the *comune* would have started in the

early 1960s - at the same time as the overall population decline really set in. Though the numbers in Ovasta are small, they suggest that the village may have started losing women a decade earlier.

The relatively mild overall deficit of middle-aged women is much more acute in the case of single people. In Ovasta in 1991 all but two of the women aged over 35 was married or widowed, but there were no less than 15 bachelors who had passed their thirty fifth birthday.

work

In 1991 the great majority of Ovastan men were manual workers. The two main areas of work were construction, and activities connected with timber: felling trees, work in sawmills, or work in Ovaro's paper mill which formerly used local timber as its raw material but now recycles paper and cardboard. Two of the younger men are *geometri* - a profession which combines the role of surveyor with some building design and with property conveyancing. There are also a few men with technical qualifications or supervisory posts. There were no graduates in the village though two of the younger men were studying for engineering degrees. The only men who spent all their time on agriculture were already over pension age.

The situation of women was very different. Paid work was the norm for women in their twenties, and for some in their thirties, but the remainder concentrated on their homes and on gardening or agricultural work. Seven of the 10 paid workers in Table 2.3 were unmarried.

Table 2.3 Whether Ovastan women were doing paid work in 1991, by age group

age group	doing paid work	not doing paid work
20-29	7	3
30-39	3	5
40-49	0	7
50-59	0	6

Source: questionnaires. Replies obtained from most but not all.

Table 2.4 Whether Ovastan men had ever worked abroad, by age group

age group	had worked abroad	had not worked abroad
20-29	0	10
30-39	2	3
40-49	5	2
50-59	6	6
60-69	7	2
70+	3	4

Source: questionnaires. Replies obtained from most but not all.

Although this division of labour is traditional, the content of both male and female work-roles has changed. Although many people still do work hard on the land, the decline of cultivation and cattle-rearing means less need for hay, fewer hay meadows to reap, and no need for women to take on the back-breaking agricultural work load of the past. The main change in men's work role is that seasonal emigration is a thing of the past. As table 2.4 shows, it came to an end quite suddenly. While most men in their

late thirties or over had spent some seasons working in foreign countries, no one in his mid thirties or younger has done so. The last age group to work abroad were those who reached adulthood at the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s.

kinship and co-residence

One of the ways in which the village can be thought of is as an aggregation of its component families and their houses. The village of Ovasta is in fact a very particular kind of aggregate - in that all of its residents belong there by virtue of birth or marriage. In the case of men, the great majority belong to the village by birth. Most married women originate outside the village, though a substantial minority - nearly all in their forties or older - were born in Ovasta themselves. This does not mean that no-one has ever bought property in the village and moved in without marrying a village girl. One of the main village families - which had expanded to five households by 1990 - was descended from a man who had bought village land and moved in around the middle of the nineteenth century. But this was an exceptional case.

All the people of the village live in houses which belong to themselves or their families. A few houses in the village are owned by outsiders who use them as holiday homes - about half of these outside owners are themselves from Ovastan families. The general rule is for families to cluster in patrilineal groups - so long as the people concerned are still living in the village.

Table 2.5 sets out the relationship between residence and kinship. Because there are different degrees of co-residence it lists *maximal residential groups* and shows how these are composed of smaller groups. The smallest groups - those shown between square brackets - are

Table 2.5 Composition of maximal residential groups in Ovasta

1. [E(m),W] [S,SW,SS,SD] [B,BW]
2. [E(f)] [S,SW,SS,SD] / [S,SW,SS,SS]
3. [E(m),W,D] / [B,BD]
4. [E(f),H,S,S,D] / [Z,ZS]
5. [E(m),W] [S,SW,SS,SD]
6. [E(m),W] [S,SW,SS]
7. [E(f),M] [S,SW,SD]
8. [E(m),W,S] [S,SW,SD]
9. [E(f),S,D] [S,SW,SS,SD]
10. [E(m),S] [S,SW]
11. [E(m),W,S] [D,DH,DD]
12. [E(m),B] / [D,DH,DS,DD]
13. [E(m),W,S,D] [B]
14. [E(m),W,S,D] [M]
15. [E(m),W,S,D] [M]
16. E(m),W,S,D,B
17. E(m),W,S,M
18. E(m),W,S,D
19. E(m),W,S,S
20. E(m),W,S,S
21. E(m),W,D,D
22. E(m),W,S
23. E(m),W,S
24. E(m),W,S
25. E(m),W,S
26. E(m),W,D
27. E(m),W

28. E(m),W
29. E(m),W
30. E(m),W
31. E(m),W
32. E(m),W
33. E(m),D
34. E(f),D
35. E(f),S
36. E(f),S
37. E(f),SD,SD
38. E(m),Z
39. E(m)
40. E(m)
41. E(m)
42. E(m)
43. E(m)
44. E(m)
45. E(m)
46. E(f)
47. E(f)
48. E(f)
49. E(f)
50. E(f)

[][] denote separate nuclei, with internal connecting doors

[]/[] denote separate nuclei, without internal connecting doors

E() denotes the person from whom the relationships are counted. E(m) for a man, and E(f) for a woman.

Source: own interviews.

residential nuclei who share a common residential space, generally with its own kitchen.

In several cases two or more nuclei each have their own spaces, often with lockable internal front-doors, but share a common external door. These are shown by adjacent square brackets. I have only shown these nuclei as part of the same maximal residential group if they can be linked together by a primary kinship tie - that is to say that the one nucleus contains a member who is parent, child, or sibling of someone in the nucleus with which it is paired.

Finally there are nuclei who live next door to each other, but without internal connecting doors, either in the same building or an adjoining one. These are represented by square brackets separated by a slash.

The table shows that the basic residential nuclei are nearly all composed of members of a single nuclear family - the rare exceptions consisting of a nuclear family plus one other relative. The importance of the extended family becomes apparent when we look at the kinship links between nuclei living in adjacent accommodation - generally but not always within the same building. Seven of these maximal groups are patrilineal stem families consisting of a young couple and the husband's parents. In two cases the older couple are parents of the younger wife. There are also four cases in which the adjacent nuclei are headed by siblings: three of them by brothers and one of them by sisters. All four sibling pairs are relatively elderly: the youngest are well into their fifties.

Except for a divorcee - the only one in the village - the solitary men are all bachelors. None of them have living parents. The five solitary women are all widows - two of whom have adult children in the village. All the other old people of the village either live with their spouses or with children or grandchildren.

the village environment

The built-up area of the village does not consist only of houses. There is a bar and a small grocery shop, both run by the same family and occupying a large and a small room respectively in the same building that the family live in. There is also a church situated near the lower edge of the village, overlooking the valley. In all this Ovasta is fairly typical of the 12 villages in Ovaro *comune*. All but one contain a bar, and about half have a grocery shop. Every village has its own church, in which regular services are held. Four priests work in the *comune*, each responsible for a number of the villages. Ovasta's priest and one of the others work closely together as a single team.

Though the village does contain a number of named and asphalted streets, these are little more than routes between the buildings - not streets in the sense that applies in a town. Not many houses face the streets. A few houses face into large shared courtyards, while others stand in their own ground at an angle to the streets. Essentially the village is arranged as an unsystematic cluster of houses, with a few smaller courtyard clusters within it.

In amongst the houses are hay barns and animal stalls, emphasising the fact that the village still lives partly off the land - though much less than it used to. Near the houses are vegetable gardens and a few apple trees. Although Ovasta is over 200 meters above the valley floor, the land immediately above it is flattish, and most of this level area, as well as some gently sloping land below the village is devoted to hay meadows. Above the flat area a ridge - forming the corner of the lower Val Degano and the Val Pesarina - rises a further 1,000 meters to a peak from which the village and its surrounding hay meadows appears very small and far below (see Map 2). All

the land on both sides of this ridge is part of the territory of Ovasta. Although it is now entirely covered by wood, much of the land was once devoted to hay meadows. The peak itself is just a small crag, which needs to be scrambled up. But just below it is a piece of level ground - now covered in scrub, which used to be the highest of Ovasta's hay meadows. From this it is a short walk to the top of the main ridge that forms the western boundary of the lower Val Degano.

The village territory consists of the land round the village, and on each side of the ridge leading up to its own peak. Within this territory are many smaller named areas - such as Villaval, Rops, and Samaior. These are place names, not units of property - indeed each area is divided into many property holdings. A substantial portion of the land is owned by the village as a unit, but most is privately owned. A property holding usually consist of several strips of land scattered across the different named areas which make up Ovasta's territory. Table 2.6 gives a typical example, from the land register compiled in the mid 1950s. In total it comes to 3.18 hectares - divided into no less than 19 different strips in 12 named locations. The smallest of these strips was a vegetable plot of only 0.03 of a hectare. This arrangement means that the holdings of different households are mixed up together. The boundaries are indicated by inconspicuous stick or stone markers at the corners, and are not fenced off in any way. The only hedges are by the sides of one of the main tracks through the village grounds. Apart from this the only artificial barriers are fences and low walls that mark off small gardens round most of the houses.

Table 2.6 Example of a family land-holding in Ovasta in 1955

Locality	Number of strips	Area in hectares
Samaior	1	0.81
Ronceng	3	0.68
Villaval	2	0.22
Poz	3	0.30
Sot Ovasta	1	0.08
Stretteure	1	0.11
Rops	1	0.22
Prometo	1	0.03
Ovasta	2	0.04
Sfuaz	1	0.05
Agadons	2	0.24
Ropas	2	0.41
TOTAL	<u>19</u>	<u>3.18</u>

Source: land register compiled in mid 1950s

inheritance

Like the houses, land in the village territory is mostly owned by village residents - particularly by the senior man in each extended family. Until very recently, the system of inheritance operated to maintain this system of ownership - and the pattern of patrilocal residence described above. Under Italian law a portion of the inheritance - *la legitima* - must be divided equally between the testator's offspring regardless of sex, but the rest - at least half - can be disposed of as the testator chooses. Within these constraints, people told me that the common practice would be for the house to be left to the sons, along with as much of the better land as

possible. The daughters would get the rest. As between siblings of the same sex there is a good deal of emphasis on equal rights to the inheritance. Property is passed on at death, though formal ownership may not be transferred until much later, since the transfer cannot be legally registered until the legatees agree to make the *divisione*. Dowries were limited to a *corredo* - or trousseau - of clothes and working equipment; they did not include any accommodation or land.

Table 2.7 Division of land between heirs - examples from Ovasta before 1955

Example	relation to testator	property in hectares
1	D	0.61
	D	0.69
	D	0.47
	D	0.27
	D	0.24
	D	0.36
	D	?
	S	<u>3.11</u>
	total	<u>5.75</u>
2	D	0.56
	D	0.20
	D	0.47
	D	?
	D	0.79
	S	<u>3.81</u>
		total
3	D)
	D)0.99
	S	3.44
	S	2.80
	S	2.41
	shared	<u>0.11</u>
	total	<u>9.75</u>
4	D	1.16
	S	5.04
	D	<u>1.95</u>
		total

Source: mid 1950s land register

Table 2.7 gives an idea of how these inheritance rules worked out in practice. The information comes from the mid 1950s land register - and relates to land-holdings only. On the basis of information about kinship collected in interviews, it was possible to identify several sibling groups whose father had died before the register was compiled. In a number of cases the property had not yet been legally divided between the heirs. (In one case - that of two brothers who did not wish to risk the quarrels to which divisions give rise - it is still held in common.) But in four cases it was possible to trace the individual property holdings of each sibling. Although these may be affected by purchases and sales subsequent to the division, and do not include buildings or mobile property, they do provide confirmation that the rules described above were carried out in practice. In all four cases the male descendants received far more than their sisters, and the inheritances of same-sex siblings were roughly equivalent.

The failure to favour a single heir above the rest may appear surprising in the light of studies - such as those of Cole and Wolf, and O'Neill - that argue that the need to maintain farm enterprises leads to the practical favouring of single heirs, in order to keep the property together. This never seems to have been standard practice in Carnia. In a study of inheritance under the last two centuries of Venetian rule, Misturelli (p59) states that the basic principle of inheritance law was inheritance by males, on whom depended the continuity of the family - and that the norm was for brothers to receive equal shares. There were also ways in which specific heirs could be favoured, or division of the property prevented altogether. The fact that some rich families in the Val Degano have maintained their position for generations, or even centuries, suggests that these strategies must have been used. Nevertheless Misturelli (p67) cites an eighteenth century author to the effect that anything approaching primogeniture was very rare in Carnia, and

strongly opposed by public opinion.

Equal inheritance need not lead to fragmentation if only one of the heirs marries and stays within the village. But in 1991 Ovasta contained five pairs of married brothers who had both remained in the village. Another indication that parents used to aim to provide viable inheritances for as many of their sons as possible is the pattern of village surnames. The 50 maximal residential groups shown in table 2.5 divide into 67 basic residential nuclei. Fifty of these basic nuclei are headed by people with one of just four surnames - Timeus (20), Gortan (20), Rotter (5), Cattarinussi (5) - suggesting a pattern in which, over the generations, it was common for more than one son to inherit property, marry, and start his own family. In fact the number of Cattarinussi households has expanded in this way from a single ancestor who moved into the village in the nineteenth century. About the same time, one of the Gortan families produced several sons and the resulting process of division increased the number of Gortan households. No doubt, in the past as now, practical constraints would often mean that only one son married and started his own family within the village - resulting in stem families - but the evidence that the underlying ideology favoured equal treatment of sons, in practice as well as theory, is clear.

In recent decades, however, things may have been changing - not towards a less egalitarian system, but towards one in which daughters receive equal treatment with sons. In six cases (five of them relating to the latter 1960s, and one undated) a note has been made on the mid-1950s land register to indicate the proportion of a land holding that had been left to each heir. These proportions are set out in Table 2.8. Five of the six inheriting groups include both sons and daughters - and in three of them daughters received equal shares with the sons.

Table 2.8 Division of land between heirs - examples from Ovasta in latter half of 1960s

Example	relation to testator	proportion of property
1	S	1/2
	S	1/2
2	D	2/9
	S	5/9
	D	2/9
3	S	1/3
	D	1/3
	S	1/3
4	S	1/4
	D	1/4
	S	1/4
	D	1/4
5	S	1/4
	D	1/4
	D	1/4
	S	1/4
6	D	1/6
	S	3/6
	D	1/6
	SS	1/6

Source: annotations on mid-1950s land register

B Households and families as cooperative units

Domestic groups as cooperative units

These days the standard domestic division of labour for middle-aged couples is between husbands who do paid work, and wives who are responsible for domestic work and substantial vegetable gardens. Husbands and sons are responsible for gathering and chopping firewood, and all members of the family cooperate in hay-making. Several older couples in Ovasta still keep two or three cattle, and since they rely on pensions for their monetary income the husband is free to take a larger part in agricultural

work. Among younger couples, wives are more likely to have some paid work, and are correspondingly less committed to gardening and other agricultural tasks.

There is a good deal of help between parents and married children - both with small tasks and with such major commitments as children caring for their elderly parents, and retired fathers helping their sons with house-building - but the degree of integration between the activities of different generations used to be much greater up to about the early 1960s. In those days it was frequent for young and middle-aged men to work abroad for most of the year, leaving their wives and sisters to work on the family land under the direction of the elderly couple. This system, in which the senior couple was invested with a great deal of practical authority is now referred to as the '*famiglia patriarchale*'.

Nowadays informal cooperation between members of different families is very limited. It is very rare to see non-relatives working together in the fields, though people do help out in the case of a catastrophe such as a bereavement. In the old days cooperation was much more frequent. Women used to form groups who would work in rotation on each others' fields. Men would help each other with heavy tasks such as bringing down hay from the high pastures. People would gather in each others' houses to work together in the evenings, thus saving fuel and providing a social occasion. People also remember it as a time when people were generally more ready to *dasi una man* - 'give each other a hand'.

Authority in the home

When visiting families in their homes I sometimes found myself sitting at the kitchen table talking to the husband over a bottle of wine, while his wife hovered in the background getting on with domestic work but also

listening to the conversation and ready to provide more drink or food if required. Some husbands underlined their commanding status by giving harsh criticisms or orders to their wives in my presence. In most families the difference in role between husband and wife was less marked than this, for instance both might sit at table and the wife might even do most of the talking. But there would still be a difference in the style of speaking. Although couples did sometimes try to talk over each other, it was generally the wife who gave way to her husband. Men tended to give their view of things in an authoritative way - confidently stating their opinions. Women on the other hand might be reluctant to express their own views, or if they did present their views might ask their listeners for confirmation that what they said was right or reasonable.

It is also a general rule that the home is a place in which women look after men. It is women who cook, clean, and wash clothes. Men are not expected to be competent at these tasks - I was often asked sympathetically how I coped living on my own. Here again the higher status of the man seems clear. I saw no sign that this division of roles was less marked among younger couples. If anything the opposite was the case, with younger couples ostentatiously allocating the role of spokesman to the husband and carer to the wife - while some older couples had modified the roles somewhat to fit their particular personalities.

Age is another principle which is used to assign authority in the family. Adult and adolescent children treat their parents respectfully most (but not all) of the time, and many (though not all) adolescent children do their share of agricultural work. In the case of younger children parents generally seemed concerned to inculcate respectful manners. They seemed to have a fair degree of success, though I did also see instances in which attention-hogging or aggressive behaviour from children was indulged for

considerable lengths of time. At the time of the 'patriarchal' family farm, the authority of the older generation was more pronounced than it is now - with the old couple effectively directing the labour of their daughters and daughters in law.

This discussion of intra-familial relationships in terms of authority should not obscure a vital point - that the family is supposed to be united by ties of affection. Marriages are definitely supposed to be based on love. (As far as I could discover this has always been the case, though other factors were felt to be important as well.) The same is true of the relationship between parents and children. I had several discussions with people about the difference between the Carnian custom, in which unmarried adult children continue to live in the parental home, and the English middle class custom in which they are expected to leave. They explained their own practice by the ties of affection between parents and children - and thought that the English custom was rather hard. Affection softens the impact of authority and gives the fulfilment of duties some of the character of spontaneous cooperation. This used to be more important when the household was more of a productive unit. One of the trials faced by young wives used to be the contrast between the pattern of authority in their homes of origin, where relationships were flexible and spontaneous, and that in their new home where the authority of the mother in law was not softened by any previous ties of affection.

There is a widespread idea that the apparent allocation of authority has never been either fully accepted or completely effective. Both men and women say that women are actually better at getting their own way. There is a saying, based on a traditional story, that women are so cunning that a woman even managed to shut the devil in her oven. When I remarked to one male friend that there seemed to be very few women on the local council his comment was in effect thank goodness, at least politics

was one sphere that women did not dominate. This fear goes along with an admiration for the determination with which Carnian women used to work to provide for their families, and a sense that women are often the central figures in their families. The image of the dominant Carnian mother figures prominently in educated people's discussions of local social problems, such as alcoholism (e.g. Bearzi).

But if women are often willing enough to go along with this image of themselves as really strong and controlling figures, there is another discourse in which they represent themselves as the victims of the roles that have been imposed on them. Thinking about the epoch of hard agricultural labour, elderly women say that in their younger days they were treated as slaves and donkeys by their husbands' families. The subsequent generation of wives who find themselves at home with little to do complain bitterly of their sense of confinement.

C Villages as cooperative units

Organised cooperation

When I returned to Ovasta during a brief visit to the valley in autumn 1994, people told me with pride about an incident that had occurred during the previous autumn. Heavy rain had damaged the roads, and so the leader of the village administration had posted up a notice asking everyone to turn out on a particular day to help repair the damage. Most people had done so, and the day became something of a social occasion, ending with a few glasses of wine. The incident is illustrative both of continuity and of change. The incident would not have been worth recounting if this kind of joint labour was still a routine occurrence. On the other hand it could not have been organised - or at least not so easily - if the village did not have an elected administration and a

tradition of collective work.

For as far back as records go there have always been elected authorities in the village. Until the end of the eighteenth century Ovasta, like most Carnian villages, was a *comune* - a municipality - in its own right. Each *comune* was governed by an assembly of household heads, and a group of elected officials who were empowered to enforce local statutes giving them a substantial degree of detailed control in daily life (Bianco). As a result of the napoleonic wars, and the passage of Carnia under Austrian administration, the old village *comuni* were abolished and new multi-village *comuni* instituted in which the individual villages were classified as *frazioni*. Nonetheless, the villages continued to elect leaderships to manage their own affairs - though the form of village authority has varied over time and differs from village to village. At present Ovasta has two elected bodies: the *consulta* which is responsible for representing the village's interests in dealings with the *comune* council; and the *ammistrazione frazionale* which manages the village's collectively owned land, and disposes of the revenue derived from it. Until the mid 1970s there was also a cooperatively owned *latteria* - village dairy - to which most families belonged, and which had its own assembly and elected officers.

Collectively organised village activity was of more practical importance in the days when the villagers' livelihoods depended to a large extent on agriculture and forestry. The village community used to be responsible for repairing the paths that led to the high meadows and pastures and for keeping the road to the village clear of snow. The collective land for which it was also responsible, with some qualifications, consisted of an extensive wood and a small *malga*. The wood was, and is, sold to timber merchants to pay for collective expenses such as asphaltting a road or building the village school-house. A few trunks would be cut to provide free timber

to a villager when he constructed a new house. It was also a source of firewood. The *malga* was let for 9-year periods to whoever bid highest at an auction for the lease, but is no longer used. The cooperative dairy was founded in the early 1920s, and built by its members. It had one full-time employee in charge of the cheese-making, but he required assistance which was supplied by the members according to a rota. Members also had to accept regular inspections of their stalls to ensure that their animals were kept in hygienic conditions.

Ovasta was not only organised for collective activity at the practical level, but was also able to unite to assert its interests against external authorities. The context of this assertion was the question of ownership and control over the collectively owned land in the village. The replacement of single-village by multi-village *comuni* at the start of the nineteenth century led to conflicts and ambiguities over the ownership and control of collectively owned land. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of villages conducted lawsuits to win back control of their own collective village land from the *comuni*. There were three examples in the lower Val Degano - Liariis, Tualiiis, and Ovasta - and another, Pesariis, in the neighbouring Val Pesarina.

Of the two examples in the *comune* of Ovaro, Liariis won back control of its land in the nineteenth century, following which it has been held as joint property by a *conzorzio* in which members of the original village families have a share. Ovasta's successful attempt to win control of its common land arose out of an incident at the end of the second world war. In the closing days of the war, a clash between partisans and retreating axis forces resulted in the town hall of Ovaro *comune* being burnt down. After the war, the *comune* authorities looked for a source of ready funds to pay for a new town hall. Their first solution was to fell some timber in the woodland owned by Liariis's *conzorzio*. But when the lumberjacks

arrived to fell the trees the inhabitants of Liariis turned out to bar the route and the attempt had to be abandoned.

Faced with this opposition the comunal authorities changed tack and decided to take the trees from the wood above Ovasta, which had the advantage that it was formally comunal property - although in practice much of the cash raised by sales of timber from Ovasta's wood over previous decades had been used to pay for projects in Ovasta itself. This time the felling went ahead. The inhabitants of Ovasta were incensed in their turn, and the incident precipitated their decision to go to law to obtain control of their own collective land. In order to meet the cost of the lawsuit, which lasted about a decade, the village leadership levied contributions from each household. This was done on three separate occasions and almost everyone paid. In the end they not only won control of their own land, but obtained their own *amministrazione frazionale* organised on much the same lines as a *comune* council (though with fewer powers), with formal elections and the right to petition superior authorities for financial assistance independently of the *comune* itself.

Their triumph did the people of Ovasta little practical good. This was partly because they won at just about the time that the market for local timber started to collapse, and because their stock of timber had been depleted by the post-war felling. But another factor was that their success in wresting their land from the *comune* antagonised the other *frazioni*. This made it harder for them to obtain funds from the *comune* for public works, since their requests tended to be met with the reply that now they had their own wood they should pay for any special projects themselves. They also had to put up with mocking references to the independent republic of Ovasta.

Pesariis, Liariis, and Tualiiis - the other villages that successfully wrested control of their own lands from their

comuni - are also the objects of some envious criticism. People remark that the similarity of their names - the 'iis' ending is unusual - goes with a similarity of character. The inhabitants of all three villages have the reputation of being arrogant and quarrelsome.

Authority in the village

As in the family, authority at village level is assigned according to age and sex. The assembly of the *conzorzio* at Liariis is restricted to heads of household - in practice middle-aged and elderly men. The same was true of Ovasta's village assembly until a few decades ago. In 1991 a meeting to discuss Ovasta's collectively owned wood was open to all villagers - but 90% of those present were men; age however was not a major factor - the leading participants were aged about 30. Recalling the situation in the 1960s, middle aged people remembered the old men sitting on a bench in the centre of the village and getting children to run errands for them. Older children would attempt to order their juniors about. The fire-throwing ceremony was one occasion in which the *coscrits* and other young men would get younger boys to fetch and carry for them.

At the top of the age hierarchy were and are the *vecjos* - the 'old ones' - an expression which is used to denote both the elderly and the dead. They are appealed to as a source of moral authority. At the meeting in Ovasta, one speaker (aged about 30), made the point that the village should continue to run its own wood autonomously, despite the fact that it was no longer very profitable, because the *vecjos* had struggled to win control of the wood during the 1940s and 1950s and it was appropriate to continue what the *vecjos* had started.

If the allocation of public status according to age and sex parallels the situation within each family, there are

two other sources of authority which are specific to the public sphere - religious authority and the power of money. Until recently rich men and the priest had their names or titles prefixed by the respectful term *siôr*. Thus *Antonio* would have been referred to as *Toni* if he was not rich, but as *Siôr Toni* if he was. Similarly the priest would have been addressed as *Siôr Plevan* or *Siôr Santul*. Interestingly the term *siôr* does not only denote respect; it is also used to refer to the power of money. Thus '*al e siôr*' simply means 'he is rich'.⁴ The priest also has power - to bless or to curse - which he has acquired through the sacrifice of spending long years studying.

limiting conflictual relationships within the community

But the crucial point about authority within the village is that it ought to be collective, and so the expression of rivalry is systematically discouraged. The discouragement of rivalry extends to the kinds of relationship on which rivals might draw for support.

The power of the taboos on overt rivalry and factionalism can be seen particularly clearly in a context that requires them to be broken - that of contested elections. In the past the *capo frazione* of Ovasta often had his mandate renewed by acclamation. However the constitution of the *ammistrazione frazionale* requires elections to be held at fixed intervals. The *ammistrazione frazionale* has five members, and for the elections to be valid the posts must be contested by two lists. The election fell due in 1991 during my stay in the village and was held by secret ballot in the former village school. But before this could take place it was necessary to have two lists

⁴The Italian equivalent of *siôr* as a respectful term of address is *signor*. In Piemonte the dialect word *snhur*, which comes from the same root, has 'rich' as its main meaning. (Albera p439).

of candidates. A public meeting was called in the main hall of the ex-latteria - attended by many of the adult and adolescent men and a few young women. After a report from the outgoing administration and some rather rambling discussion of how the wood should be run, the meeting got down to the business of drawing up lists of candidates.

The first problem was to persuade enough candidates to stand. Everyone appeared to see it as a duty which they would only take on with reluctance. While much of this may have been sincere, not all of it was. After much urging the barriers of reserve were finally broken and there was a minor rush of volunteers, resulting in eleven would-be candidates - one too many. At this point it might have been expected that one of the individuals who had previously stressed that they were only standing out of a sense of duty would take the opportunity to withdraw - but not a bit of it. What actually happened was that the last person to put his name forward was persuaded to withdraw.

The selection of the candidates was not the end of the problem. They now had to be grouped into two rival lists. None of the candidates wanted to take the initiative of saying which of the others he would prefer to align himself with. Eventually they decided to write out the ten names on slips of paper, and select the members of the two lists by drawing them as lots from a box. In order to make it doubly clear that the resulting lists were not the expression of any division within the community the task of drawing the lots was assigned to me - in my capacity of anthropologist!

Drawing lots is a traditional way of avoiding conflict, by making it clear that any inequality of outcome is not the result of preferential treatment. One context in which it was used was in allocating each household's share of collective labour. When clearing snow from the road to the village, or repairing the paths to the higher meadows,

the road or path would be divided into sections - involving as nearly equal a share of work as possible. Lots would then be drawn to decide which family should be responsible for clearing which stretch of road. A possibly more idiosyncratic application involved a father who was very concerned that his children should not quarrel over their inheritances after his death. In order to ensure this his will specified that the property should be divided into equal portions and then allocated between his heirs by drawing lots.

Paradoxically the need for unity *within* the community sometimes makes it necessary to invoke *external* sources of power and authority. Rivalrous feelings are a problem when organising any collective activity. This problem is at a minimum in the case of entirely traditional activities - because the pattern is already set. The fire-throwers of Comeglians explained to me, after I had sat through several 'planning' meetings in one of the local bars at which nothing seemed to get decided, though lots of conflicting views were forcefully expressed, that this did not matter since they always did the same thing in the end anyway. However anything beyond that does need leadership, and results in tension about the leadership role. I saw or was told about several clashes in which organisers of group activities felt that they were not receiving the support that their efforts deserved, while other members of the community felt that the organiser was carrying assertiveness too far.

Here the role of the priests and the *siôrs* are important - because their special position gives them the authority to disregard much of the carping criticism that faces all would-be leaders. The *siôrs* are less prominent now, since locally based wealth plays a less important economic role than it once did - but priests are still very important as a force that is capable of imposing unity on their quarrelling parishioners. Priests are also able to give a push to collective action when it is threatened by nothing

more serious than apathy. A few years after winning the legal battle for control over their wood, the low revenues it generated led the people of Ovasta to lose interest, so that people could not be found to stand for election to the village authority set up to run it. At this point the local priest intervened and persuaded enough candidates to stand to allow the authority to continue.

the sense of community and individual relationships with external power

Despite the need for collective relationships with external authority, individual relationships which involve requests for particularistic favours from sources of authority outside the community are definitely not legitimate. This is partly because they involve some surrender of the status which goes with independence. People maintained that Carnians often failed to obtain all that was due to them from official bureaucracy because if they received an initial rejection it hurt their pride too much to argue or to ask again. The feeling that one should provide for oneself applies to communities as well as to individuals. I was told in the village of Liariis that they had built their school house from their own resources, which demonstrated their self-reliance, unlike the people of Ovasta whose school house had been paid for out of *comune* funds. (In Ovasta I was told that the funds had been obtained by selling trees felled in Ovasta's wood, which at that time was controlled by the *comune*.)

A second reason why relationships involving particularistic help from outside are unacceptable is that they involve the individuals concerned obtaining advantages that other members of their community do not have. One example of this was the way people reacted to the distribution of aid for repairing and rebuilding houses following the 1976 earthquake. The criteria governing the amount of financial aid that could be

claimed were complex, and the rules eventually settled on were different from those applied in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Suspicions of favouritism in the way these complex rules were applied generated a good deal of ill-feeling.

This ill-feeling can be present between communities as well as between individuals and families. People said that the amount of earthquake assistance allocated to each *comune* depended in part on the political connections of the mayor. The same was believed about road building. During my stay, work was proceeding on a route linking the Val Pesarina to another valley to the west. The main road up the Val Degano was subject to problems of landslips and subsidence, as well as being barely wide enough for the load of traffic it had to bear. There was a feeling in other *comuni* that improvement of the main road should have taken precedence, and that the mayor of the *comune* of Prato had managed to get the road in the Val Pesarina built by drawing on political connections. He was angrily criticised for this at an inter-*comune* meeting called to discuss what to do about the main road.

If the state bureaucracy is the main source of favours (or suspected favours) now, in the past the priests and the *siors* were more important figures. One particular local priest is supposed to have had close relations with the former management of the paper mill, and to have been able to recommend his parishioners for jobs. Another priest recently arranged for a few young people to work in a neighbouring valley where they could learn a trade.

Political parties - the potential controllers of public funds - are seen as highly divisive, to the point that people are extremely reluctant to say which party they support.⁵ The priests and *siors* of old seem to have been

⁵Loizos (1977) reports a 'philosophy of anti-politics' in a Cypriot village, based on the same feeling that external ties divide the village and that the use of

treated with more overt respect, backed up sometimes by the importance of their public roles as doctors, pharmacists, and the like. But this respect was always ambiguous. There was a saying that you should respect the priest because he could curse you, and doctors and pharmacists because they could poison you. Individuals who had too much to do with the church were known as *bigotti* and suspected of wanting to raise themselves above other people. I heard the priest with the paper mill connection referred to, by someone in another village, as the dictator of his village. The village of Comeglians was an object of great resentment - and now some slightly scornful pity - because its inhabitants were thought to have actually taken pride in their dominant families of *siôrs*, whose power is now very much a thing of the past.

None of this amounts to hard data that patronage was or is extensive. I once bumped into a friend waiting outside the mayor's office in the hope that he might be able to find her a job - though in fact he did not. Another friend told me that he hoped connections in the *comune* administration might help him finally get the financial help to restore his home that he felt he deserved. I was also told of a couple of instances where it looked as though favouritism might have helped someone get a job or a contract. But on the whole people did not speak openly about specific instances, so the true extent of favouritism might be greater. On the other hand people's general suspicions about favouritism may have been fanned by reports of mafia scandals and corruption in the national press, leading them to suspect local instances even when there was no real evidence.

It is clear that any patronage that does exist in Carnia must be on a far smaller scale than in southern Italy. A point people made more than once was that the funds for post-earthquake repairs may not have been allocated

external connections to pursue individual interests can damage the interests of the community as a whole.

fairly, but they were at least spent on buildings. A large proportion of the funds voted to repair the damage caused by the Naples earthquake of 1980 never got spent on construction work at all. It is also clear that the prevailing value system in Carnia strongly discourages patron-client ties.

3 RIVALRY AND COHESION: ENVY, SYMPATHY, AND DIVERGENT FORTUNES

A Conflict and envy

Property and rivalry

The cooperative basis of village life was always in danger of being disrupted by quarrels.

Boundaries used to be an important source of disputes. During my stay I became aware of one current case of the suspected moving of a boundary marker. Such cases were clearly far more important in the past, when agriculture was the major source of subsistence. Another such dispute about land underlies at least one case of enmity between two Ovasta families.

Even so not all disputes about property are purely economic. A clue to this is given by a phrase sometimes used to describe such disagreements - they are known as *cuestiones di corts*, i.e. 'courtyard questions'. Since productive landed property is not generally adjacent to the house, there is no particular reason why people who share the same courtyard should be involved in economically based disputes. In one example which shows that no economic issue at all need be involved, one householder told me how he had successfully prevented a neighbour from erecting a wall to separate the portions of the courtyard owned by the two families. The point seemed to be that he simply objected to this act of assertion on the part of his neighbour. The relevant concept here is not self-interest but rather something along the lines of "rivalry" or "envy".

There are two words which together convey this spectrum of meaning. The dictionary translations of *invidia* and *egoismo* are 'envy' and 'selfishness' but the feelings they convey are stronger than their English equivalents.

Together they denote a state of greedy and hostile competitiveness that threatens to pervade social life. One form it can take is wanting to have what others have - whether possessions, beauty, or simple happiness and good fortune. Another is wanting to be seen to be best or first - people who start harvesting crops early are suspected of wanting to score a point by being first, while neighbours who immediately start harvesting themselves betray their own *invidiôs* (envious) natures by their evident desire not to be seen to fall behind. Most references combine these two ideas with spitefulness - *invidiôs* people want to spoil the success or happiness of others, so as to enhance their own relative position.

Invidia provides a motive for hostile actions generically referred to as "*dispiets*" - which in this context carries the connotation of acts of spite. As I got to know people better it became clear that many, perhaps most, of my informants thought that some of their neighbours had inflicted *dispiets* on them - and attributed these *dispiets* to *invidia*. Even so, people were unwilling to go beyond such general assertions and say what specific *dispiets* they had suffered. Among those that I was told about were: partly opening a neighbour's cowshed on winter nights so that the cattle would suffer exposure; planting pine trees in order to prevent sunlight reaching the grass in front of an enemy's mountain hut; telephoning the police to complain when a neighbour had spilt some dung (the main fertiliser) in the street, although they would soon have cleared it up anyway; and spoiling a neighbouring family's view by not decorating the windows facing them with flowers and instead leaving ugly things outside that side of the house. As these examples show, the actions which their victims experience as *dispiets* range from serious acts of sabotage to relatively minor irritants which perhaps are only interpreted as *dispiets* because the relationship is already hostile.

Although some people are considered outstandingly *invidiôs*

and others are not, the consensus is that a degree of *invidia* is very widespread indeed. It is clearly connected to a sense of generalised competition for good fortune, so that A's good fortune is felt as a misfortune by B - even when A has not directly taken anything from B. But it is less clear why people should view things in this way. Local people offered different explanations.

One explanation was that people are concerned with status. Since status is a matter of relative position anything which tends to improve A's position must by definition worsen B's situation. This conception of *invidia* as a struggle for status was pithily expressed by a man who compared the behaviour of his fellow Carnians to the pecking-order disputes of animals. At an amateur theatrical held in a disused *latteria* the audience laughed loudly, and with a sense of recognition, at a scene in which two women quarrelled over who should have the honour of offering the priest something to drink.

The rivalry for status extends to communities as well as people. There is a tendency to attribute collective personalities to the inhabitants of each village. This can be a question of physical traits; for instance the people of Prat are famous for having large noses. More often it is a question of personality or behavioural traits - mostly aspects that deserve criticism. The inhabitants of several villages are reputed to be arrogant and quarrelsome. Particular villages also have reputations for madness, rowdiness, or being sunk in gloom. In some cases the rest of the valley unite in making snide remarks about a particular village which is thought to think itself superior to the others. In others two particular villages have a sense of mutual rivalry. Ovasta has a relationship of mild rivalry with Luincis, the village immediately below it on the valley floor. In Ovasta I was told that, before the earthquake and the subsequent availability of funds for restoration and improvement, Luincis had been a squalid dirty place. When

I was talking to a couple in Luincis about the fact that very few marriages had taken place between people of Ovasta and Luincis the reaction was 'who would want to marry those barbarians?'. When I moved to a different village my new neighbours pressed me to say that the reason I had come to live with them was that their village was *better* than the one in which I had been living previously. Naturally people feel a corresponding resentment if they sense that the inhabitants of another village think that *they* are better.

There is also a sense of rivalry between larger geographic units. I was once asked whether I thought the Val Degano was more or less beautiful than one of the neighbouring valleys, in a way that left no doubt about the answer I was meant to give. On another occasion a drink in the bar of the poshest hotel in Tolmezzo turned into an interview with a local journalist. My complimentary, and sincere, comments about local cooking were reproduced in the local newspaper along with a brief explanation of why I had chosen to work in Carnia. However the latter had changed from being a statement of why I found Carnia interesting to a statement that Carnia was the *most* interesting place to study in the entire Alps.

the sense of limited good

Other people had a different explanation of *invidia* - attributing to their neighbours a literal belief in something very like the concept of 'limited good' which Foster (1965) believed to be characteristic of peasant societies in general. For instance I was told that some people are unwilling to sell or rent strips of land which are too small to be worked separately, because of a feeling that the farmer who consolidated them into a workable plot would be profiting at the original owners' expense. The people who talked in this way tended to identify themselves with the enterprising individuals, and

characterised the notion of 'limited good' as an irrational idea held by their *invidiôs* neighbours.

Not everyone agrees that the idea of 'limited good' was irrational. People often pointed out that some important good things, such as the stock of village land, really were finite - and that this mattered when times were hard and agriculture was the major source of subsistence. They backed this up by talking about the rigours of the natural environment and the efforts that used to be involved in wresting a living from it. A characteristic comment was that the Italian name for the *comune* at the entrance to the Carnian valley system is *Amaro*, which also means 'bitter' - according to them a highly appropriate pun. Comments of this kind convey a sense of the comradeship of shared hardship, but they do not give an explicit reason why the sense of limited good should lead to the general resentment of people who are lucky enough to find an opportunity to escape from some of those limits.

One old lady threw some light on this question when she said that all the local rich people had been like "*strias*" - witches - because the only way to gain such disproportionate wealth was immoral behaviour towards others. To illustrate the point she told the story of an ancestress (some generations back) of a prominent local family who had been so mean that she preferred to give left-over food to her pigs rather than to human beggars. After her death her spirit was found to be haunting the pig sty and had to be exorcised. This old lady would not of course have described her own attitude as *invidiôs*, indeed for her the truly anti-social people were those who engaged in purely selfish enterprise. Her theory of 'limited good' was ethical as well as physical - the point was not merely that good things are absolutely limited but also that they should be shared. Those who refused to give a reasonable share to others were effectively profiting at their expense.

The clash between these two viewpoints may explain much of the discourse about *invidia* and *egoismo*. On the one hand there is a sense that if people have managed to achieve success of any kind, they are entitled to enjoy it. On the other hand there is a feeling that good fortune should be shared. The two ideas are clearly in conflict, and in many situations there is no consensus about which should prevail. While one's own resentment is likely to be experienced as justified indignation, it is easy to characterise the negative feelings of people on the other side as *invidia* or *egoismo*. In effect, 'invidia' is the way one describes the attitude of people who appear to want a larger share of the available good things than the speaker believes they are entitled to.

B Solidarity and shared experience

This account of conflict and envy might lead one to think that Carnia resembled Banfield's image of a 'backward society' characterised by 'amoral familism'. But 'amoral familism' is not at all a good description of the attitudes of contemporary Carnians - though they do recognise it as a danger. The very fact that they lament the attitude of *ognuno per conto suo* - 'everyone for himself' - which they believe has arrived with modern society, shows that 'amoral familism' has not been internalised as an acceptable form of conduct.

Cooperation is still practised to some extent as well as preached and, as the first part of this chapter made clear, cooperation used to be far more extensive in the past than it is now. The problem was how to maintain cooperation in a climate where authority was disputed and relations between neighbours were menaced by *invidia*.⁶ The way cooperation was achieved, and authority reinforced, is the topic of the next few chapters. The

⁶Foster (1972) also emphasises the social importance of individual and collective strategies for counteracting the effects of envy.

construction of a sense of unity was not just a matter of forbidding divisive actions - it also involved positive expressions of fellow feeling. The specific measures used to promote unity depended in part on the aspect of social life concerned, but a feature which all the measures shared was an emphasis on the appropriate state of mind.

Sharing experience

A crucial feature of envy is that the people in the relation of envier and envied evaluate the same situation differently, in fact in opposite ways - so that the good fortune of one is felt as ill fortune by the other. If everyone felt the same way there would be no need to fear the dangerous consequences of *invidia*. Thus social life would be secure if people always felt others' experiences as their own. The expression of this kind of shared identity is a theme that runs through all the symbolism of social solidarity in Carnia.

A common form of friendly greeting is to ask someone a question to which you already know the answer. Meeting a friend in the early part of the morning you might enquire '*Se-tu jevât?*' - 'Have you got up?'⁷. If you join a group of friends someone may well turn to you and ask '*Se-tu rivât?*' - 'Have you got here?'. Once, on entering a shop in Ovaro, which is lower down than Ovasta where I was living at the time, I was greeted with '*Se-tu vignût ju?*' - 'Have you come down (here)?' Clearly these questions are nothing to do with a need for information. When I enquired about the reason for asking them the response was

⁷I tended to get up rather late by local standards, and at first I thought people were being ironic at my expense. They said they weren't, and I believe them - more or less. I heard other people greeted in the same way, and the general principle applies to other greetings as well. All the same, may be they were having a bit of a go.

that it was a way of being friendly. The underlying point may be that they show that the speaker has not merely registered the other's arrival but has gone to the trouble of imagining what the other must recently have been doing. Though the questions themselves are trivial, the implicit message - that the speaker can imagine himself in the other's situation - is a far-from-trivial reassurance of sympathy and good relations.

Another example of the idea that a shared outlook is a necessary feature of sociability is a saying that every village has its own traditions and every family has its own customs. Family and village are the main solidary units of traditional society, and the saying expresses the idea that the members of both units are bound together by a shared way of doing things. The emphasis in this particular saying is on the distinctiveness of each particular family and village, but people employ the same idea to emphasise a wider sense of community. If we were talking about some feature of life which was similar in Carnia and England people would say, with an obvious sense of satisfaction, that *tutto il mondo e paese* - 'all the world is (one) village'. Here again the point is that shared experiences are a basis for a sense of community.

shared movement through space and time

An important way in which people share experience is by moving together through space and time. In the Val Pesarina there used to be a tradition of militant anarchism. One aspect of this tradition - followed, I think, only by a minority - was the holding of civic, non-religious funerals. The funeral procession took a particular form (different from that followed in the *comune* of Ovaro). First would go the coffin, followed by all the mourners, with men and women walking together. When I was discussing this with an inhabitant of Ovasta who had attended one of these funerals a few years before,

he explained that it was important to understand what this order meant. As they followed the coffin everyone was supposed to think that they themselves would one day lead the procession.

Although this point was made as something which applied specifically to anarchist funerals, I believe it captures the symbolic mechanism underlying all the many processions that take place in Carnia: namely that by moving in one another's footsteps each participant is identifying him or herself with all the other participants - including, in the case of funerals, the deceased. This interpretation is confirmed by the inverse use of the same metaphor - the equivalence of shared movement and shared identity - to signify separateness from the social group. If a man says '*To seguo la mia strada*' - 'I follow my own road' - he is readily understood to be asserting his independence and self-sufficiency.

People also see themselves as moving together through time. People born in the same year refer to themselves as each others' *coscrits*. The word literally means 'conscript' but, as in the Basque country where Ott worked, its meaning of age-mate extends to women as well even though they are not subject to conscription. As a later section will show, these apparently unrelated meanings are linked by the role played by conscripts in ritually marking the passage of time at village level. Fellow *coscrits* sometimes greet each other in a jokey way as *classe*, meaning that they belong to the same age-class. After leaving school, fellow *coscrits* from the same *comune* meet every five years for a joint supper which starts with a mass and develops into an eating and drinking session which can last most of the night.

These suppers are obvious occasions for the celebration of fellowship. But local people insist that funerals too are an assertion of solidarity, indeed perhaps the most important kind there is. Some pointed out to me that

funerals are held for the benefit of the living as well as the dead. Attendance at funerals is often numbered in the hundreds (in fact I think that an attendance much under a hundred would be unusual), and the family of the deceased appreciate a large turn-out. Though turnouts are variable, it would be wrong to think of this as primarily a reflection of social status - the interpretation people offer is couched in terms of sympathy (particularly in the case of an untimely death) and of the liking and respect in which the deceased was held. These explanations were borne out by the largest funeral that took place in Ovaro during my stay there. This was for a man who before his retirement had been a comunal policeman. He was appreciated for the courage with which he faced his death from throat cancer, remaining sociable and courteous till the end despite the physical effort it cost him to talk. He was also in a sense an embodiment of the community itself, as someone who used always to be journeying between the different villages of the *comune*, to place official announcements on the village notice boards.

The salience of funerals as an expression of solidarity amongst the living must be linked to this shared feeling of sympathy for the dead. Funerals give people the chance to express their solidarity in a way that is free of the envious feelings which are bound up with life, reproduction, and success. By joining the funeral procession - and so voluntarily identifying themselves with the dead person - the mourners temporarily renounce all these things, and with them the source of any feelings of *invidia* or conflict. Of course, in some cases people attend funerals as a matter of duty, without any real feeling for the deceased - but, even if the feeling is missing, the mourners are still enacting a temporary renunciation of life and its ambitions in favour of a symbolic identification with the dead. Attendance at funerals is particularly important for people linked to the deceased in time or space. People make an extra effort to attend the funeral of a fellow *coscrit*, and it

is obligatory for each household in the deceased's village to send at least one member to the funeral. Some families still follow the custom, which used to be universal, of keeping the corpse at home on the night before the funeral in the expectation that fellow villagers will visit during the evening.

C sympathetic cooperation in the village community

The family as a unit of shared experience

As the members of a nuclear family live in the same house, participate in many of the same activities, and depend (largely) on the same sources of income, they naturally share many experiences. This very fact means that they have less need than less densely interacting groups to mark their sense of shared experience in special ways⁸. The role played by shared experience in the life of the family emerges with greatest clarity in people's responses to situations in which experience can no longer be shared. The classic example of this is when a daughter marries and leaves home - as expressed in the words of the following song.

*In chel dî da las mes nočas
Joi ce festa i vin da fâ*

*E me mari poverina
T'un cjanton a vaiera*

*E gno pari la confuarta
Che in chest mont no vin di stâ*

Quant che jo i voi via di chenti

⁸Though the unity and distinctness of the family group are marked in various other ways which will be discussed later.

Fin las pieras a vaieran.

On my wedding day
oh what a party we will have

and my poor mother
will cry in a corner

and my father will comfort her
[saying] that we do not remain in this world.
[i.e. that we will die]

When I leave here
even the stones will cry.

This song, which is sung as if by a bride to be, is a great favourite. It expresses the anguish that parents are supposed to feel at separation from their daughter, in terms which emphasise the shared life of the family unit. The daughter is so much bound up with the parents' sense of their own existence that on her departure all that they can think of is death. Indeed the house itself will join the mourning: 'even the stones [of the walls] will cry'.

The middle-aged woman from whom I took down these words commented that they were absolutely true. Her own marriage had been very hard to start with, because of the shock of leaving affectionate parents to work under the authority of an unsympathetic mother-in-law. At first I thought that she was confusing things. After all the song is about the *parents'* suffering, not the bride's. However I am now inclined to think that her comment was in the spirit of the song. It is a protest at the pain of separation which is understood to be felt by everyone involved: parents, daughter, stones, and all.

Linguistic forms show that this feeling of mutual sympathy

is matched by a sense of shared identity. The word for house *cjasa* can also be used to mean family. Houses and extended families share nicknames. For instance one courtyard in Ovasta, inhabited by some branches of the Rotter family, is known as *Dagnul*. Pietro Rotter, who was raised in Dagnul but has now moved down the road, is known as Pieri Dagnul. Much the same can be said of the name *Michielut* - 'little Michele' - which refers both to a building and to a branch of the Timeus family which once lived in it but now lives elsewhere in the village as well. Some people refer to these nicknames as *nons da cjasa*, 'house names', while others refer to them as *nons da famea*, 'family names'. This use of names seems to express a continuing sense of identity between the house and those who have issued from it.

The symbolism of wider solidarity - its embodiment in buildings

While the individual *nons da cjasa* express the identities of particular families, considered as a system they express a conception of the relationship between the individual families and the village as a whole. There is no single way of naming houses. But certain patterns emerge from a description of the names given to houses in Ovasta. The names sometimes apply to individual dwellings and sometimes to groups of adjoining houses.

A few houses are named after the official surnames of village families. Examples are: *da Mecchia* which once, though no longer, was inhabited by members of the Mecchia family; *da Mini*, which is a shortened version of the name of the family who once lived in it; and possibly *da Cort* which refers to a courtyard which includes the home of the De Corte family.

Other names reflect the position of the house. Examples are *Soratet* - literally 'over roof' - which

is situated slightly higher up than the rest of the village; and *Gjavada* - 'lifted-off' - which is situated on a narrow pathway into the village where it used to be necessary to lift the yoke off oxen to let them get past. *Dal Crist* refers to a couple of houses built next to a crucifix near the entrance to the village.

Others refer to individuals, for instance *Michielut*, *Dagnul*, *Tina*, *Beta*, *Cec*, *Prosper*. These names are mostly diminutives, and they generally refer to people who have died, sometimes a considerable time ago. They can refer to women as well as to men. At least four of them are identifiably Friulian rather than Italian.

A couple of names refer to other places. *Tramontin* - 'from Tramonte' - refers to a family whose ancestor came from Tramonte in the middle of the last century. *Sauras* is the name of the main community in the next valley, and used to refer to a house above the village. The name implied jokingly that it was so far from the centre of Ovasta that it might as well have been in the next valley.

A final example - *da Bas* - has a story attached. *Bas* means 'low'. Many generations ago the head of the family had been detested by his wife. When he eventually died the funeral procession wound its way down to the main church along a path that was overhung with branches. His widow called out to the men carrying the coffin to hold it lower down - because if the coffin hit a branch and her husband fell out his spirit would come back to haunt her.

Overall these names can be described as informal, linked to the past, and dependent on some feature - be it location, origin, or a striking personality - that is

defined from the point of view of the community rather than the households' occupants. The names reflect a spontaneously shared view point. As such they embody one of the principles of community solidarity, and do it in such a way that the past history of the village and the names of some prominent *vecjos* form a part of the continuing life of the village community.

Solidarity at the village level is also associated with particular buildings - each of which embodies a particular style of sociability.

The bar, or *osteria*, is a place both for quiet talk and for more raucous sociability - and very occasionally for loud, ragged singing. Men often gather there to play cards. In the old days men used also to play *mora* - a game along the lines of the English children's game 'scissors, paper, stone'. *Mora* involves the two competitors making decisive gestures with their arms and shouting at the same time, and is illegal because of its tendency to lead to fights. I only once saw it played in Ovasta, and the fact that the ban is generally respected may be a symptom of social change. The decoration of bars associates them with other manifestations of masculine assertiveness. A boar's head projects from one wall of Ovasta's bar⁹. In Comeglians the main bar is decorated with pictures of football teams and girlie calendars. In the villages on the main road there is also a different kind of bar which is simultaneously a cake shop, and lacks these masculine connotations. Priests are rarely seen in bars. The one local priest who does frequent bars and is

⁹Hunting is a minority activity among Carnian men, since it is limited to a restricted number of permit holders. Permits must be bought, and a would-be hunter must both pass a test and wait for a vacancy to arise in his own or another *comune*. However, for those who do take part, hunting is a profoundly moving experience and one that creates a strong sense of identity with fellow hunters. (Hell's ethnography of hunting in modern Alsace, where there is a similar permit system, also stresses the intense emotions involved.)

a regular card-player is pointed out, with approval, as an exception.

Every village has its own church. While bars tend to be situated in the heart of the village, churches tend to be on the edge - often in a prominent position where they can be seen from other parts of the valley. The activity in the church is opposite in every way to that in the bar. Ordinary speech is hushed. The main proceedings are of course highly formalised. The role of the congregation is to sing and to give the responses. The singing has a supplicatory tone, very different from the triumphant vigour of English Anglican and non-conformist hymn singing. Religious services provide a context in which solidarity is promoted through the shared experience of suffering and loss. Images of renunciation are at the heart of the christian message, and local churches all include vivid images of Christ, the Madonna, and various saints - all persons who have renounced wealth, sexuality, and simple good fortune. Though the images emphasise suffering they also depict a kind of tranquillity. They are about self-sacrifice - and the peace and harmony which come with the renunciation of selfish concerns.

Christian symbolism spreads beyond the churches themselves to pervade the whole valley. In part this is a matter of the church bells, many of which are attached to mechanisms which automatically sound the hour, and also ring the *Ave Maria* round about the time of sunrise and sunset. One often hears church bells ringing simultaneously from different parts of the valley. Bells are also rung to announce services, and there is a special way of ringing them which announces a death. When they hear, or think they hear, this sound people ask themselves anxiously who might have died.

I heard a few stories which showed that knowledge of death is sometimes believed to travel supernaturally to those who are close to the deceased. One girl described how she

suddenly found herself thinking about a young man from her village at about the same time as he suffered a fatal accident while working abroad. Another young woman described how, on hearing of a death in the family, she had set off to tell her father, who was working in the woods - only to learn that he had just left for the village because he had a sense that something had gone wrong.

Some people in Ovasta believe that a message about a death was once brought by the Virgin Mary. An elderly couple showed me a picture, painted by the husband, depicting the event - which happened in the middle of the last century, when a young man fell to his death from a cliff above Ovasta. The searchers were able to find his corpse because the Virgin appeared at the point where he had fallen. Another elderly woman told me a story in which a supernatural being appeared with a more reassuring message - a saint who told her that a relative who appeared to be on the point of death would in fact survive.

Round about the beginning of this century another saint conveyed a message about where he wanted his image to reside. A wooden statue of San Duri - the local name for Saint Ulderico - was removed from Ovasta's church to be placed in a small shrine just outside the village. However as the workmen were installing San Duri in the shrine a thunder storm came on, and they realised that he wished to return to the church, where he still is. The old lady who told me this story said that some of the workmen who told the story were atheists - so one could be sure that it was true.

At the moment there seems to be little overt disbelief in christianity. A few young men told me that they were not believers, but said that it was something that was hard to say openly. Although regular church goers are a minority, almost all parents send their children to catechism classes.

The villages and the countryside are dotted with shrines. Some are in the sides of houses or beside the roads, others at forks in the road, and still others on mountain tops. One crucifix is placed at the point at which someone arriving from below would enter the main part of the village of Ovasta. This might seem to suggest that shrines mark boundaries, but I did not discern any consistent pattern of placing them at the boundaries separating one village's land from the next. Although there is no single consistent pattern, the main principle - governing the siting of both churches and shrines - is that they should be placed in prominent positions. This may be connected with some idea of taking control of the environment. A young man told me that the cross on top of the mountain behind Ovasta had been placed there by the young people of the village about a generation before. When I asked why, he replied that he didn't know but that perhaps it was 'to show that it is our mountain'.

The third kind of building that provides a context for village sociability is the *latteria*. These rather imposing buildings generally had the dairy facilities on the ground floor, while the first floor could be used as school house or as a hall for meetings and village celebrations. Nowadays they are mostly disused, and suffer from broken windows and other signs of dilapidation. The ground floor of Ovasta's *latteria* is still used as a point for collecting milk, for transport to another dairy. The top floor of these buildings are still occasionally used for some meetings, village-wide meals, and dances. Their social function seems to be particularly important in winter when it would not be practicable to erect a marquee, tables, or a dance floor, out of doors. Some rudimentary heating is installed for these winter gatherings, but they can still be very cold.

The last of these physical expressions of village sociability is now entirely a thing of the past. This was the bench in the village *plača* - generally an irregular

open space somewhere in the centre of the village - on which the old men used to sit, talking to each other and occasionally issuing orders to the village children.

The enactment of village unity

The village's sense of shared experience was not embodied only in physical structures but also in shared movement. There are (or in some cases used to be) four occasions during the year in which the inhabitants - or a particular group of them - join together to make a tour of the village. In doing so they enact both general christian solidarity and also identification with each others' interests as farmers, parents, and lovers - so affirming their solidarity in the main aspects of life that are potentially subject to *invidia*.

On the village saint's day, or on one of the days dedicated to the Virgin, the relevant statue is carried in procession along the village roads. May is the time for the *rogazion* - in which the priest and the villagers make a circuit of the fields nearest the village, to ask for successful harvest. On the last day of the year small children visit every house in the village asking for *sops* - small gifts of fruit or sweets and, these days, also money. The word *sop* is also used to mean a gift given by a godparent to a god-child, which underlines the sense in which this ritual places all the village adults in the role of protectors of all the village children. The children recite a verse which emphasises the gentle, and christian, nature of the proceedings.

Sops, sops, coculas, e lops.

Dait, o no dait, in paradîs lait.

Sops, sops, nuts and wild apples.

If you give, or don't give, may you go to paradise.

The remaining tour of the village is that made by the *coscrits* - those village boys who in the previous year have attended the *visita di leva*, the medical check which precedes military service - in the day of the village's fire-throwing ceremony. The atmosphere of this *gir dal paîs* - 'tour (or circling) of the village' - is very different from that of the other three. It is part of a ritual sequence which needs to be analysed as a whole, and related to both to other rituals and to standard feelings and behaviours. Some of these relationships will only become clear in later chapters.

The ritual is known as throwing *las cidulas* - the 'wheels' or 'disks'. In the Val di Gorto it usually takes place in the winter or spring. Each village has its own traditional date for the ceremony: either the last night of the year, *epifania* (Twelfth Night), or the eve of the day of the village's patron saint. The full sequence consists of the *gir dal paîs* during the day, the bonfire and the actual throwing of the *cidulas* in the early evening, then a dance for the whole village later that same evening, and finally a supper for all the unmarried adults in the village. Only the *gir dal paîs* will be described in this chapter. The rest of the ritual is analysed in chapter 6.

The principal actors in the first two stages of the sequence, are the *coscrits*; but even in the old days a village would not have produced many *coscrits* in a single year, and so they would have been accompanied by other unmarried young men from the village. In those villages where either the *gir dal paîs* or the throwing of the *cidulas* are still reserved for the young men, the young men are very definite that this is the traditional and appropriate way for things to be. However in other villages young women also take part in the *gir dal paîs*, and in some villages children and young women also take part in the proceedings round the bonfire.

The *coscrits* and their companions, always including an accordionist, go round the village in a little group. The *coscrits* themselves sometimes wear neck-kerchiefs in the Italian national colours of red white and green which they acquired on the *visita di leva*.¹⁰ On each kerchief are the signatures of as many girls as the *coscrit* could persuade to sign for him. As the group approach each house they loudly strike up a song. Although there is no set repertoire, the following song figured prominently when I accompanied them.

*L'alegria, a e dai žovins,
e no dai vecjos, no dai vecjos, maridâts*

*a an pierdude la virtût lant a messe
in chel dî, in chel dî, ch'a son sposâts.*

Alegria belongs to the young,
and not to old, old married people

they lost their vigour when they went to mass
on the day, on the day they got married.

*Ciolimi me
ciolimi ninine
che jo ti doi di mangia ben*

*e la matina
polenta e cosui
e alla sera
cun-t-un len.*

Choose me
choose me darling
and I will give you good food

¹⁰I noted this on two occasions. On one of them, described in chapter 8 section D, the kerchiefs were worn by girls who were standing in for absent male *coscrits*.

and in the morning
polenta and bean pods
and in the evening
with a piece of wood.

Some of the phrases in the second part of the song need to be explained. Polenta and bean pods would have been considered a very poor diet. The word *len* is used to refer to any piece of wood from a stick, to a rolling pin, to a bench. In the song the phrase 'with a piece of wood' is understood to mean that in the evening he will beat her with a piece of wood. Both songs contrast the vigour and happiness of youth with the meagre reality of married life - associated with poverty, brutality, and the enfeebling influence of the church. Though they are light-hearted songs, not meant to be taken literally, they show that the young people approach the houses of their married elders in a boisterous assertive mood.

When the *coscrits* and their companions arrive at each house the door is opened and the young people go through into the kitchen or a sitting room. They have a recognised right to do this, despite the fact that as individuals at any other time of the year they would have to ask permission to enter. There they sing some more and are then offered wine or *sgnapa* - spirits - to drink, and snacks to eat. They are also given some money to pay for the expenses of the rest of the proceedings. The snacks include local, possibly home-made, produce such as salami. In the past the gifts were also in the form of produce - for instance salami or beans - some of which the *coscrits* could sell to local shopkeepers to raise the money they needed.

One feature of the proceedings is that the young people drink a great deal, which naturally adds to the boisterousness of things: one group I accompanied began by being too self-conscious to sing properly, but soon were singing vigorously. A man of about thirty told me that as

a child he had been frightened of the *cidulârs* - 'fire-throwers' - when they came round, and a couple of times I noticed small children looking distinctly alarmed at the irruption of these loudly singing people into their homes.

Ovasta has an additional ritual which also involves circling the village. This occurs on the final day of the year when the *bric* circles the village carrying a broom, accompanied by a neighbour carrying a *gei* - the traditional back-basket - into which people put items of food. Next year the neighbour will be the *bric*, and his neighbour will carry the *gei*, so that the roles themselves rotate round the village, making a full circle every few decades. This is now carried out purely for the sake of tradition, but previously the *bric* had the job of summoning people to village meetings and the food was compensation for his efforts.

Circular motion - in the shape of religious processions - figures prominently in the symbolism of social unity which Pina-Cabral reports in north Portugal. In Ott's account of a French Basque community it appears as the single most important symbol of social unity. In Ott's village the circularity linked neighbouring households in a pattern of asymmetric exchange of ritual services, and of mutual aid in practical matters. Although any particular household was linked directly only with its nearest neighbours, people were aware of the underlying principle of circularity and its fundamental role in constituting the community.

The circulation of the *bric* is the only Carnian ritual I heard of which actually involves a link between adjacent households, and that seems to have been rather a special case. Otherwise the analogy seems to be with the religious processions described by Pina-Cabral. Pina-Cabral reported that processions were supposed to circle in a particular direction described as 'on the right',

which had strong connotations of purposefulness. I did not collect systematic information about the direction of religious processions in Carnia, but the association of circular motion with purposefulness seems to be confirmed by the following account. My informant was a woman who had once sought divine help on behalf of a relative who she thought might have been bewitched. She visited three different churches in the valley in order to obtain priestly blessings at each of them. Three is a powerful number, but for the procedure to be effective it was also necessary to make the trip in a circle, since if she ever doubled back on herself the power of the blessings would be lost.

It is also possible that the self-completing character of circular motion enables it to symbolise both unity and distinctness. Given that motion in common expresses identification, and solitary motion expresses independence, joint motion that remains within the village territory seems a natural expression of shared purposes binding the village together as a distinct unit. Circular motion could thus be seen both as an expression of unity, and as a way of conserving the power generated by the resulting unity of purpose. Still more fundamentally, not only circular motion but also circular objects seem to have connotations of unity - as the discussion of the sun, moon, and burning disks in chapters 6 and 7 will show. This fits well with Ott's finding that the image of the circle operated as an implicit symbol of social unity.

D Unity and divergent fortunes

life, death, and the generational struggle

The experiences of some social categories are so distinct from one another that they pose a real problem for social representations of unity based on shared experience.

Among the categories whose situations are most diverse are the different age groups - particularly if the notion of age group is taken to include not merely people at different stages of the life-cycle but also the dead and the not-yet-born.

There is a sense that death is not merely the end of life, but a force that is actively opposed to life. The dying can endanger those who are yet to be born. My informants were a young couple. Her father's final illness occurred when she was pregnant. Although she wanted to visit and care for him, her elderly female relatives were against the idea for fear that contact with the dying man would harm the unborn child. She resisted their pressure and continued to visit her father, but nevertheless when he was on the point of death she allowed herself to be bundled out of the room so that his dying glance should not be fixed on her and so harm the child.

The kitchen is very much a symbol of the life and vigour of the family, so it is interesting that there seems to be some feeling that it too should be protected from contact with death. An old couple told me about an incident in which a new door had to be made in the wall of a house, so that it would not be necessary to carry a corpse out through the kitchen.

As well as the opposition between life and death, there is an opposition between older and younger age-groups. The aggressive way in which the *coscrits* and their companions assert their right to breach the boundaries of established households is one example of this - as is the notion that *alegria* belongs to young people, and not to older married people. Even if older people do not marry, they cannot hang on to the right to *alegria*. Past the age of thirty or so they are classified as *vedrans* - a label which makes it clear that they have lost the right of young people to consider themselves as possible lovers and prospective members of a married couple.

Children too, count as an age group in opposition to the old - and in fact used to wield a kind of collective authority within the village community. It may seem curious to talk about children exercising any kind of authority. The rhyme that accompanies the *sops* ritual certainly depicts them as gentle beings who are imposing no demands at all. But in fact children, except perhaps for the very smallest, seem to have played an assertive part in community life - deploying sanctions as well as charm - in a way that closely paralleled the actions of their elders. The children were seen as a force for unity. Their informal play groups were meant to incorporate all the village children of roughly the same age. They seem to have enforced a rough and ready egalitarianism: a woman in her thirties from one of the families belonging to the old local elite told me that her schoolmates had made her and the other children of *borghesi* families suffer for their privileged backgrounds.

Children did not only exercise their powers on each other. A woman in her forties smiled as she told me how they used to enjoy laughing at adults who they saw quarrelling. Older people enjoy recalling the tricks they used to play on adults when they themselves were children. The word they use to describe these activities is '*dispiets*', which is the same word as adults use to describe the spiteful activities of which they accuse their neighbours. The *dispiets* inflicted by children could be as drastic as those of which adults accuse each other. One old man described an occasion on which he had provoked mayhem by releasing the family pig, and another in which he and some friends dug a trap in a path leading into the village - into which his own grandfather fell and broke his leg! No doubt this was an extreme case, but it indicates that children's *dispiets* could extend beyond mere naughtiness to include cases of serious harassment. Sometimes this harassment seems to have been directed at the adult world as a whole, but sometimes it focused on particularly marginal and vulnerable people.

Looking back on this, people's attitudes vary. I was present when a couple of middle-aged people recalled with amusement the way they and the other village children had tormented an elderly woman¹¹, but another contemporary of theirs thought that it had been a cruel custom. Despite these different attitudes to the victimisation of vulnerable individuals, people generally seem to remember childish *dispiets* (which seem to be much less common now) with a kind of indulgent affection - possibly seeing these assaults on adult property and convenience as an assertion of their own freedom from the approaching constraints of grown-up life.

These intergenerational tensions put the ceremony of asking for *sops*, described in the last chapter, into a new perspective. The ritual can be seen as a way of avoiding potential hostility by emphasising an alternative relationship of fellow feeling and positive exchange. The rhyme chanted by the little children at the door of each household refers to the fact that their elders are going to die before them but - instead of treating this as an occasion for dangerous hostility - makes it the occasion for an exchange of gifts. The children receive food, and in return wish the givers well in the after-life. In blessing people who are closer to death than themselves they are following a more general rule about the way the dead should be referred to. In ordinary conversation, if people want to refer to somebody who has died they are careful always to follow the deceased's name with the epithet '*biât*'. This word, which is used to indicate commiseration, literally means 'blessed'.

¹¹I did not ask whether they had thought she was a *stria* (see chapter 4) - but she was clearly a possible suspect. Children's license to bully the old makes a curious contrast to these fears - particularly when one considers that children were supposed to be particularly susceptible to supernatural danger. Perhaps the very fact that children were able to victimise such people demonstrated that they were the stronger ones and so had no need to be afraid.

the envied and the blessed

The idea that invoking blessings on someone is a way of dealing with potential hostility is supported by something that some old people said. This was that '*al e miôr di jessi invidiât che di jessi biadât*'. '*Biadâ*' means 'to call someone *biât*'. So the saying translates as 'It is better for people to envy you, than for them to call you blessed'. *Biât* can be used to refer to anyone who is unfortunate or poor - i.e. to the people who have most reason to feel envious. A few decades ago beggars were referred to as the *biâts*. People say that in the years immediately after the 1940-45 war beggars used to come down from the neighbouring large valley of Cadore - now a good deal better off than Carnia - and would always be given something to eat. But *biâts* were not only objects of pity, they were also frightening. A forty-year-old woman recalled how her mother used to scare her by saying that if she did not behave the *biâts* would get her.

When a person refers to someone as '*biât*', the word is pronounced in a special tone of voice and interrupts the flow of their speech. It gives the impression that the speaker is lingering sympathetically over the image of that person's suffering, before feeling ready to get back to the business in hand. The possibility of envious hostility is being denied by the same mechanism of sympathetic identification that underlies so many rituals of community solidarity. This is not to deny that the sympathy is sincerely felt, indeed its very sincerity is a condition for its effectiveness. Nevertheless, this momentary taking on of the *biât's* suffering does effectively displace the alternative reaction - which is fear of the *biât's* envious hostility.

This identification with the poor, the suffering, and the dead, is of course at the core of catholic christianity. It is emphasised in the decoration of the churches, and it is what gives funerals their significance as the most

important celebration of the unity of those left behind. It seems to me that the sense of quiet joy that people feel during and after other religious processions is linked to the temporary respite that this gives from the fear of *invidia*. In effect, the participants do not have to fear the hostility of the unfortunate, because they have temporarily agreed to take on their sufferings. It is a release from envy, but only at the cost of surrendering to the demands of the envious that all should share in their misfortune.

contrasting models of unity

It is not surprising that the more fortunate feel some ambivalence about participating in rituals which evoke this kind of solidarity. One reflection of this is a distinct sex-bias in the rates of participation in religious rituals. On the whole church-going is something which men ostentatiously hang back from. At church services about two thirds of the congregation are women. The men who do attend often wait outside the church until the last minute, and when they do enter stand at the back. On the other hand the bar, with its emphasis on boisterously assertive sociability, is male territory. In the villages on the main road, where some of the bars are combined with cake shops, the segregation is less marked, but in Ovasta it is almost absolute. Almost the only woman seen in the bar is the wife of the proprietor, who takes her turn at serving the drinks.

There is a general tension between the *alegria* of young people - particularly young men - and the authority of the church and of elderly women. The tension, which used to be more marked than it is now, is vividly illustrated in the following story, told me in 1990 by a woman in her sixties - so the events described must have taken place in the 1940s.

"When we were young girls, at Clavaias, there was the feast of San Lurinč. There was mass, blessing, singing of psalms, a procession with the saint round the village. The day before two musicians came; there was a dance in the *latteria*. In those days people didn't come from far away. They came from Veizzas, Gracc, and Liarias. We danced, it was a nice *fiesta*. The next day was San Lurinc. The priest came up from Liarias. He was angry that we had danced. Instead of doing the whole *fiesta* he only said a basic mass. In the sermon he criticised us so much. Outside the church he really went for [lit. "gave some of everything to"] the parents who had allowed us to dance.

"There was a young man who wasn't so afraid, he wasn't very religious - just went to church to obey his parents. When someone said to him, "why don't you go to church?", he said that his sister was a nun who prayed for everyone, including him. The priest was furious because the young people danced again the week after. That young man said to the priest - "*siôr plevan*, we undanced [*i vin disbalât*"] what we danced the other day". All the people laughed. [I asked what "*disbalât*" meant. She said that when they are dancing people spin round, the young man meant that on the second occasion they spun round in the other direction.]

"Afterwards the young people discovered that it was a certain woman who had told the priest that we had danced. One of them made lots of little posters, nicely written in block letters, and during the night they stuck them up in the village. They had written in Carnian:

"'On the day of San Lurinč the furious priest instead of making a beautiful *fiesta* only said mass and in the sermon distributed dry brandy [i.e. a real ticking off] to all the young people. And *siora* [lit. Lady] with her squinting eyes like a Mother Superior told the *siôr plevan* [the priest]. Nasty gossiping women, concern yourselves with knitting and slipper making and not with

the doings of young people.'

"After that she felt *vergogna* [shame, embarrassment].

"Afterwards everyone came to know which young people had done it. But no-one told her anything, because if they had she would have gone to the police, who would have made them pay for it.

"On the Sunday on which we danced for the second time a storm came - hail stones - then these old women, who thought the priest was in the right when he said that there would be punishments from God, one of them came up to my mother and there was me and my friend, and this old woman began to shout that the storm was our fault because we had gone dancing. Then my mother gave me a slap. I was 20 years old."

[My translation. Based on full notes taken while she repeated the story to me slowly.]

4. COMMUNICATION, STRENGTH, AND BOUNDARIES

A Contrasting attitudes to sociability

hardness and closedness

One of the first things that Carnians told me about themselves was that they were hard - '*dûr*'. Their eagerness to point this out made it clear that hardness is something they value. Hardness is in part a physical quality, involving strength and resistance to physical hardship. Lumberjacks are *dûr*. Carnians make their *polenta* (a kind of large maize dumpling) with rough flour, and point out that it is *dûr* like the *polenta* which lumberjacks used to cook in the days when they lived by themselves in the woods during the working season. But hardness is not just to do with overcoming physical obstacles. It also refers to the personal qualities required to make one's way in the world. A man is *dûr* if he resists the criticisms and sentimental appeals of others and concentrates instead on looking after his own and his family's interests. Hardness thus combines the qualities of physical and moral resistance: it is the capacity to deploy physical and psychological strength in one's own interests.

Another concept often used is that of "closedness". Both Carnians and their neighbours describe the Carnian character as closed - *sierât* in the local speech, *chiuso* in Italian. *Sierât* has a very wide range of meanings including reluctance to reveal emotions, secretiveness, and exclusiveness. Carnians as a group are said to be *sierât* to outsiders, but individual Carnians are also often said to be *sierât* towards each other. The notions of hardness and closedness are very closely related. Some young men thought that they were different aspects of the same thing. A woman suggested that perhaps the reason why Carnians are so *sierât* is that they are so *dûr*. This emphasis that Carnians place on qualities that embody

resistance is explained by their sense of rivalrous competition for the limited good. But the words *dûr* and *sierât* form part of a wider system of ideas concerned with ways of using strength and communication so as to achieve desired patterns of social relationships.

openness and spontaneous cooperation

Despite describing themselves as *sierât* local people attach a great deal of importance to sociability. There is no doubt that people really enjoy getting together, so long as the togetherness is combined with friendly feelings. When I asked why people took part in various gatherings, traditional or not, one of the most common replies was that it gave them a chance to *star insieme* - simply to be together. Few public social gatherings take place without a speaker congratulating the crowd on having come together *in allegria* - 'in a state of exuberant happiness'. Such occasions are far more common in summer than in winter. When I first arrived, in the winter, people assured me that there would be much more going on in the summer. Indeed the summer is studded with sporting fixtures, reunions of the *ex-alpini*, and village festas.

Music and, particularly, dancing are very important aspects of conviviality. A few discos in Carnia, and just outside, are visited by young people - generally in small groups of one to three car-loads. The dancing on community occasions, such as village festas, is standard pre-rock ball-room dancing. There are a number of small bands - usually composed of four or so young men - who belt out the tunes, while young and old rotate their way round a dance floor laid out under a large marquee. Singing is also important. The churches used to have male-voice choirs, though these have now virtually died out. In their place choral societies now flourish - each with their own distinctive version of male and female 'traditional' dress.

Noticeable as all this organised *allegria* is now, people insist that it was far more a feature of life in the past. One of the ways in which it found expression was in endless talk. Most villages still have one bar or *osteria*. A few decades ago it was common to have two or even three - effectively a bar for every 150 people. These days the bars in the villages are very quiet, livening up a little before lunchtime, and more so before supper and at the weekends. Even so, they typically attract only part of the male population, and few return there after supper. People say that in the old days, before television, far more of the male population were to be found in the bars and that card games, talk, and singing carried on later into the evenings. People also gathered in village squares. In May the young people would meet to talk every evening after reciting the rosary in church.

Occasions for *allegria* could involve work as well as talk. The most important example was the custom of visiting other families to spend the evening working and talking together. Women were the central figures on these occasions, which were known as visiting *in fila* - the word *fila* refers to spinning, which was once one of the main activities. They would take their children along, and some men would also be present - the younger ones turning up in order to talk to the girls. By getting together on winter evenings the families concerned were able to economise on fuel. Nevertheless the significance of these gatherings was at least as much social as practical: they breached the potential isolation of separate households and provided an occasion for exchanging gossip and telling stories about the past.

Many people's recollections of the good old days are also tied up with music. After reaping in the high meadows, people would hold informal singsongs while they were waiting for everyone to arrive so that they could start the long walk down to the village together. I was told,

though this must be a tradition rather than a living memory, that the women of Ovasta sang as they carried the materials for building the *latteria* up the hillside in their *geis* - the wicker back-baskets which are a traditional symbol of women's labouring role. Near the end of my first stay in Carnia, an old woman called out to me as I was passing the vegetable garden where she was working - in order to tell me something which she felt I ought to know before I left. This turned out to be a description of how people used to reap the meadows in summer time. She emphasised the number of people who would be out reaping at the same time and the rhythmic swish of their scythes. Set against this would be the metallic sound of people sharpening their scythes. She said it was like music.

Whether one classes such tales as memories or myths, it is clear that the references to music invoke an image of overall harmony in which cooperative work and sociability are fused. The point is that open communication went with an attitude of more general openness to each others' needs - producing an atmosphere which suited the formal and informal relationships of practical cooperation described in chapter 2. Clearly neither the self-image of the hard, closed Carnian nor the image of *allegria*, open communication, and cooperation represent the whole of reality. The rest of this chapter is about the relation between them.

B Communication and social pressure

reputation and evil tongues

In these memories of the good side of traditional society, the emphasis tends to be on the spontaneity of it all. Both talk and cooperation were a manifestation of mutual good will. But an alternative explanation of why sociability and cooperation went together might be that

generalised communication would subject everybody to the authority of public opinion. In effect everybody would be constrained by membership of a circle of reciprocal communication and control.

Some comments by local people suggest that they too see things in this light. One of the reasons given for marrying someone from the same village was that you knew them and their family and so had a good idea of what to expect. A professional man in his thirties, active and respected in local politics, explained his sympathy for autonomism in terms of the preservation of the traditional local community. He went on to talk about the value of a community based on personal relationships, in which the qualities of each person were known to all, and people could use this knowledge to guide their practical relations with one another. This individual was very unusual in giving such an explicit account of the connection between communication and social control. But the content of what he said is amply confirmed by the animosity people still feel over things fellow villagers did - sometimes more than a generation ago - and by the fear of gossip. *Malas lengas* - 'evil tongues' which deliberately spread spiteful gossip are very much feared. This fear shows that reputation does matter, and the prospect of damage to one's reputation would have been a serious social sanction.

striae and the power of invidia

Malas lengas are generally said to be inspired by *invidia*. This is an aspect of a more general connection between *invidia* and the dangers of communication. For some Carnians at least, *invidia* is not simply a psychological state which motivates *malas lengas* and specific *dispiets*. Envious thoughts themselves have a direct power to harm the envied person. As Pina-Cabral (p176) reports of Portugal, envy is thought of not simply as an emotion but

as a powerful malign force.

Relatively early in my stay one or two people told me that their grandmothers had believed in witches and supernatural evil forces, but I paid little attention. Their accounts seemed to refer to a time that was now finished, and gave no clue [though anthropological reports from other places should have] that these beliefs were particularly closely connected with the problems of social conflict and cohesion. It was only during the last few months of my stay that a different perspective on the topic began to open - when I was told on two different occasions that some families still had quarrels "due to superstition". Neither informant was willing to say more about the quarrels, or who was involved, or even to specify the "superstitions" concerned. However after this I raised the topic when I thought it might be acceptable. Although the responses were often negative - to the effect that the person concerned had never heard of quarrels for such reasons, and that no-one believed in witches and suchlike nowadays - I did collect a number of accounts of people exerting evil powers. In these cases either the power itself, or the fact the person used their power, was generally attributed to *invidia*.

One of the two contemporary cases that I heard about specifically¹² was described to me by a couple of girls in their early twenties. A few months earlier the mother of one of them had been discharged from hospital after an operation. On returning to her village she had the misfortune to be greeted by a woman who was well-known to be a *stria* - a witch. That very night she had a relapse and needed to be hospitalised again. Her daughter seemed to have no doubt that this was a direct case of cause and effect, and the girls told me another story about the same woman. One of them had been outside the house with her mother who was tending her flowers. The *stria* came by and

¹²The other involved an old woman who believed a neighbour had put the evil eye on her vegetables.

remarked on some of the flowers, implying that she would like to be given a few. After the *stria* had gone the girl's mother told her that the flowers the *stria* had been looking at would be the first to wither - and, "though it might seem incredible", so it proved. According to these informants this woman is a very selfish person, someone who cannot see a good thing belonging to someone else without wanting it for herself.

The girls said that most people in their village believed in *strias* - though they told me a mutual acquaintance in the village, a technically qualified man in his thirties, did not believe in them and dismissed supposed instances as nonsense. When I asked if there were any other *strias* in their village, they said no she was the only one. I heard of a couple of other villages where there had once been a particular woman who had been feared as a *stria*. However this did not necessarily mean that she was the only one capable of exerting malign forces. Another girl in her twenties (this was a topic on which most of my informants were women) remembered being told by adults to avoid the village *stria*, but she also remembered her aunt placing a holy olive branch in the cowshed to protect the cattle from a neighbour who she believed was casting the evil eye. There was no suggestion that this neighbour was a *stria*, she was just a woman with whom my informant's aunt had a quarrel.

There seems to be some vagueness in the way people use the term "*stria*". There is an idea that *strias* in the full sense could cast spells and would meet together to dance high on the mountainsides. Each *stria* used to store her magic power in a little box. But when people talk of present-day or recent *strias* I think it is more likely to be in the looser sense of women who are so full of *invidia* that they are particularly suspected of causing harm through their evil thoughts.

Their *invidia* often seems to be directed at manifestations

of fertility. Potential victims include flowers, cattle, attractive women and, above all, children. One elderly woman said that her mother, when a girl, had been complimented by a neighbour on her beautiful hair. When she next combed it she found there were lice in it. Clearly the neighbour had been a *stria*. Another elderly woman told how she had been walking her small baby; on the walk they had been greeted by a woman suspected of being a *stria*. There must have been something in this suspicion because when they got home she found a louse in the baby's hair. A third woman recounted what happened when her husband left to work abroad shortly after their marriage. On the first night after he left the marital bedroom was infested with ants. The next evening she found a mouse there. Her explanation was that there must have been someone who "envied" her ("*mi invidiava*").

coercive communication

In her work on witchcraft in western France, Favret-Saada emphasises the important role that communication, particularly speech, plays in transmitting the deadly power of the witch. Her remarks apply equally well to the way Carnians envisage the operation of the force of envy. The *stria's* words may be the medium through which she projects her power - either by enviously remarking on the other's good fortune, or by maliciously critical remarks. In the case of the evil eye power is projected when the envious person "*ti spia fiss...cui voi*" - 'stares at you fixedly with their eyes'. Sometimes no contact at all is necessary, wishing someone evil is enough. One elderly woman told me that she had never been afraid of *strias* because her grandmother had told her to think to herself about any supposed *stria* "whatever you wish me, I wish the same to you" - so that the witch's evil thoughts would boomerang. Note the implication that anyone can potentially transmit the power of evil thoughts.

Communication is also dangerous because it allows envious individuals to learn of your possible good fortune and so provokes their *invidia*. One of my informants explained that if a woman has the weakness of talking about all her affairs, the *stria* comes to feel a certain envy and - even without wanting to - the *stria* will try to inconvenience the talkative woman and do her harm.

There is an association between the idea of evil tongues and the idea of the evil eye. An old woman explained to me that she used to pray for protection from both. Although other informants do make the distinction - occasionally stressing that though evil tongues are an undeniable reality they do not themselves believe in the evil eye - there is a marked parallel between the way communication can enhance the two dangers. As with the evil eye a way of avoiding evil tongues is to keep oneself to oneself. Though *malas lengas* were described as untrue, it is fairly obvious that a talkative person might be vulnerable because they let slip some fact which other people might consider discreditable.

A striking feature of all this is that the kinds of communication which convey envious harm are virtually the same as those that convey legitimate authority. Thus direct criticism, hints, and tale-bearing are all ways in which pressure might be brought to bear on someone who was behaving badly. Even the eyes can be used to convey authority just as easily as to menace envious harm. On two separate occasions men who I was interviewing about their upbringing stressed how intimidated they had been by their fathers' look of disapproval. All the examples discussed in this section involve the communication of moral pressure. Whether the pressure is experienced as legitimate, or as a manifestation of *invidia* depends on the context, and on the particular viewpoint of the person concerned.

A second point is that this moral pressure is not

something that can simply be shrugged off. Criticism can leave people feeling intimidated. The harm to one's reputation done by spiteful gossip is felt as serious damage in its own right, as well as having practical consequences. And hostility that is not directly expressed in words but hinted at, conveyed by a look, or simply believed to exist, can seem so powerful to its victims that it pervades the environment and is enough by itself to generate misfortune.

C Strength, closedness, and resistance to social pressure

strength

Like the people studied by Favret-Saada, Carnians say that the impact of evil wishes and similar psychic phenomena depends on the relative strength of the ill-wisher and their intended victim. Specifically it depends on the relative strengths of their respective *fisics*. A person's *fisic* seems to be conceived of as a physical quality - something people casting the evil eye *an tal lor cuarp* ('have in their body') - though it is not identical with muscular strength. Two informants compared it with the force exerted by a hypnotist. In the case of potential victims it also refers to a type of mental toughness. Selfish people are less exposed to harm than those who are '*massa buina*' - too good, in the sense of innocent and trusting. In this sense there is a parallel between the notion of a strong *fisic* and the notion of hardness. The essential idea is of a personal force - both physical and psychic - which is pitted against the personal force of the *stria*. When an elderly woman was explaining the notion of *fisic* to me, her son broke in to point out that what was involved was really the same thing as strength of personality. If two people clashed one would expect the

individual with the stronger personality to come out best.¹³

An example will illustrate what is involved. In this case the informant was an elderly widow, and the story relates to the time she was a young mother. Untypically she continued to live in her father's house after her marriage, along with her sister - who also had children. Also living in the same house was her aunt (FBW). The way she told the story focused entirely on the relationships between the three women - so that I do not know anything about their men folk. However as units with rival claims on the patriarchal house and property, there would have been a potential tension between the family of my informant's father and that of his brother - so the situation predisposed the sisters and their FBW to quarrel.

The sister's children were sickly. One day a gypsy woman told my informant and her sister that her sister's children would never flourish so long as she continued to live under the same roof as someone who felt *invidia* towards her. The person in question must have been the aunt. Her *invidiôs* nature was also apparent from her constant criticism - for instance when my informant acquired a sewing machine her aunt criticised her for doing things the easy way. My informant clearly believed that the aunt's *invidia* had caused the sickness of her sister's children, but she herself did not feel vulnerable

¹³Ott (1992) reports the existence of a generalised notion of strength, at once physical and spiritual, in the Basque country where it is known as *indarra*. The nearest Carnian equivalent would probably be *fuarcia* - strength or vigour - which can be used in both physical and psychological senses. The term *fisic* - referring to a source of power that is simultaneously physical and psychological or spiritual - belongs to the same semantic field.

Herzfeld (1981) records the Greek term *fisiko* - in much the same context as *fisic* here - which he glosses as character.

to her. She attributed this invulnerability to her *sanc fuart* - "strong blood" - which manifested itself through the fact that she was always able to answer back when her aunt made envious criticisms. This caused her aunt to respect her and refrain from harming her.

This example shows that the qualities needed to withstand the evil eye were precisely the same as those needed to stand up to an evil tongue. Indeed this informant's account moved so readily between the two notions that they must have seemed to her no more than different manifestations of the same underlying force. The equivalence of a strong *fisic* - in this case described as strong blood - and strength of personality is equally clear. The account can be understood equally well as being about a contest for status between my informant and her aunt, or about my informant's success in protecting herself from the evil eye - confirming that the two things are fundamentally equivalent.

resisting suggestion

The actual harm done by the evil eye may not be as important as the general disorientation that the harm might cause. One informant said that it was best not to ask oneself if each particular misfortune was due to a *stria*, since that way one could quickly drive oneself mad. Another old lady had once been told by a nun who she revered that anything might be true, but that it would be best for her own sake if she did not believe in *strias*. A third informant commenting on a relative who had suffered from the envy of a *stria*, remarked that she had a weak personality - and on another occasion had to be treated in a mental hospital.

In these examples the ability to resist *strias* appears to an aspect of a more general capacity to hold on to one's own sense of reality. The analogy is strengthened by the

fact that something like the generalised notion of *fisic*, combined physical and psychological strength, appears to underlie the way people think about mental illness. In her work with Carnian women receiving out-patient treatment for depression, Cozzi found a marked tendency to discuss psychological symptoms in physical terms. The popular name for depression is *esaurimento nervoso* - 'nervous exhaustion' - and the symptom that most worried the patients and their relatives was their inability to get down to work. Mental illness is thus interpreted as if it were physical illness, both in terms of its causes and of its effects.

So physical vigour seems to be associated both with the ability to withstand witches and with resistance to undesirable thoughts and emotions. It is as though physical strength enables people to disregard any inappropriate messages that reach their consciousness - whether from the external world or from within their own psyches. In this sense strength enables one to be *sierat* - which would explain why the qualities of hardness and closedness are thought to be so intimately associated.

physical closedness as a barrier to dangerous communications

However the most basic way of protecting oneself against envy is to cut off the communications which could provoke and transmit it. The word *sierât* indicates a particular style of conversation: one that is taciturn and which particularly avoids revealing anything about the speaker himself. One reason Carnians give for being *sierât* is that they are *difident* - mistrustful, at least until they have got to know the person in question. One particularly revealing formulation of this attitude is the suspicion that someone who appears particularly friendly is likely to be slandering you behind your back.

In fact any sort of hostility leads to avoidance. A standard Italian expression which people use for this is "*non si guardano in faccia*" - "they don't look each other in the face" - but it sometimes goes beyond that to forbidding their children to have contact with members of the other family. In one case known to me a family tried to prevent their daughter taking her first communion at the same time as the daughter of a rival family. The people who cut off relations in this way may well be doing it out of a sense of self protection against bad influences and so as to avoid the pain of hostile encounters, rather than as a deliberate act of aggression - but that doesn't stop it being extremely hurtful. The most passionate anger that I heard expressed about people's neighbours was from mothers whose children had been treated in this way by a neighbouring family.

The desire to avoid other people's envy has implications for the use and valuation of different forms of social space. A crucial point is that one's own home provides a sanctuary - so long as envious rivals can be kept out. As one old lady said, one is safe in one's own house because *achi n'ond'e nissun ch'al gira, al e four...[ch'a] sucedin las cragnas* - 'no-one wanders round here, it is out of doors that revolting things happen'. However if some misfortune were to happen at home she would ask herself *cui ch'a veramenti al a stât par cjasà* - 'who has really been in the house'.

The dislike of malicious gossip provides another reason for staying at home. One elderly lady explained that this was why she spent so much time at home watching the television. An elderly man explained his avoidance of the village bar by saying that when he did go there he heard things that he could not stomach - *non mi vanno giù*.

Communication and the assertion of collective power

Closure involves the individuals using their own strength, or the physical barrier of the house's walls, to opt out of communication and so resist not only *strias* and envious rivals but also the power of public opinion. Because of this, the assertion of the power of the community also involves the demonstration of the community's ability to breach the boundary of the household - enacted in the *gir dal païs* of the *coscrits*, as well as in the custom of visiting *in fila*. But community control also needs to ensure that what is communicated is the legitimate power of public opinion and not destructive *invidia*. Messages must be transmitted in a way that is subject to community control - in other words it must be possible to argue with them and so appeal to general standards. This is how the woman with *sanc fuart* was able to counteract the *invidia* of her aunt.

It may seem almost too obvious to point out that she was able to do so by using language. Bloch (1989) has suggested that this openness to contradiction is a crucial feature of everyday language. He contrasts it with symbolism and formalised language which owe their power to the very fact that they cannot be integrated into ordinary dialogue. Their position outside the framework of everyday speech means that formal and symbolic messages are not open to challenge and therefore *must* be accepted, unless the intended audience opt out of the communicative context altogether. Bloch's argument applies equally well to messages conveyed by hints and looks, and helps to explain why the evil eye is felt to be more powerful than evil tongues. But the contexts are very different. Bloch was writing about the use of extra-linguistic communication by high status groups to establish control over the rest of the community. He saw ordinary speech, with the power it gives people to argue, as destructive of this social control. In the present case, extra-linguistic communication - in the form of the evil eye -

is associated with illegitimate power, and everyday language conveys the legitimate controlling power of public opinion.

This analysis is confirmed by the way people use sign language. This consists of a series of standardised signs, shared with other parts of Italy and southern Europe. These signs are used to convey meanings which one does not express openly in polite conversation - to do with sexuality, contempt, breaking off relationships, and disbelief. In other words non-verbal communication escapes from some of the social control which governs the use of ordinary language. Particularly interesting in the present context is the sign which expresses disbelief. This is formed by pulling down the lower eyelid of one eye, exposing the eyeball and the red flesh of the inner eyelid. The sense of being confronted with an evil eye could not be made more vivid. What this evil eye does is undermine the meaning expressed in language, and which politeness requires all concerned to accept. This parallels one of the effects the evil eye has on individual victims, which is to undermine their confidence in their own definition of reality. People making this evil-looking sign are implicitly attacking the collective sense of reality established through language.

D Comparative material and theories about envy and the evil eye

envy in other European societies

Fears of envy and the evil eye, and sometimes witches, are widely reported in European ethnography. As in the Carnian case, the things that give rise to envy range from human sexuality and reproduction (Stewart pp232-7), through agricultural production (Holmes p155), and economic success (Cole 1991:pp108-124), to well-being in general (Pina-Cabral 1986:pp174-186). The ability of

physical boundaries, such as the walls of the house or a hedge, to block the evil eye is reported by Rheubottom, Cole, and Pina-Cabral - while Pina-Cabral and Stewart refer to the emphasis on separateness and closedness in anti-envy rituals. Favret-Saada notes that some people who believe themselves bewitched are considered mentally ill by psychiatrists, and Stewart notes that one of the main conditions which is attributed to the evil eye is a kind of listlessness that corresponds quite closely to the psychiatric concept of depression. Stewart also notes the close connection between the evil eye and ideas about verbal communication - and observers have generally seen fears of the evil eye and fears of gossip as particular manifestations of a more general fear of envy.

interpretations

However they have provided contrasting accounts of the social significance of this fear. Some authors see it as a force for social control - the product of a sense of 'equity consciousness' (Schneider 1990) - which reinforces adherence to egalitarian norms. But other authors see it as a divisive force (Cole), and Herzfeld (1981) argues that ideas about the evil eye are manipulated in a way that reinforces boundaries between social groups.

The Carnian data certainly supports the association between *invidia* and division. The envious are, or ought to be, outside the household group, and the response to envy is to shun the supposed enviers. This does not rule out the idea that the fear of envy is a force for social control, but it creates a problem: the relationships which are most practically important - those between family members and between other people who need to cooperate closely - are those in which people do not allow themselves to suspect each other of envy. They do not always succeed in keeping their minds clear of suspicion, but the effects of this suspicion are not to motivate the

person who feels envied to meet the envier's expectation - on the contrary it is to disrupt the relationship. So the fear of envy would appear to be ineffective in precisely those relationships where social control is most important.

In fact people are concerned with the feelings and opinions of those close to them, but this concern takes a different form. Instead of the fear of envy there is the celebration of spontaneity and *allegria*. This still provides a motive to cooperate since there will, of course, be more *allegria* and spontaneous friendliness on the part of other members of the group if one is sympathetic to their needs and wishes oneself. Indeed one old lady attributed the helpfulness of her neighbours to her own *allegria* personality. Like the people of Alcala, Carnians are acutely interested in 'the state of the heart' of people they associate with (Pitt-Rivers p 207). Pitt-Rivers attributes this concern to the requirements of a loosely structured form of social organisation. Although 'loosely structured' is not the right phrase for Carnian social organisation, the Carnian emphasis on collective relationships downplays many of the particularistic bonds that might otherwise shield individuals from the force of public opinion. This may well be one reason why the affirmation of sympathy plays such a prominent role in local ritual.

But the concern with others' states of mind goes deeper than the requirements of a specific form of social organisation. The reason why expressions of sympathy - or accusations of envy - can play an important institutional role, is that the consciousness of other peoples' sympathy is something that matters intensely to people in its own right. Being thought well of by people who occupy a place in one's own thoughts is a central concern of most individuals - as important to their peace of mind as material success. Within the group this concern is conceptualised in positive terms. With outsiders, or

those about to be reclassified as outsiders, it is conceptualised negatively in terms of the harm that can flow in various ways from their ill intentions. The importance of cutting communication with an envious person is only partly pragmatic, it also has the effect of distancing the envier from the victim's own consciousness - and so lessening the pain associated with the sense of being an object of hostility.

the question of belief

Though the beliefs in witches and the evil eye reported in different European societies have a good deal in common, there seems to have been a good deal of variation in people's willingness to talk about them to anthropologists. The experience of Holmes, working in Eastern Friuli, seems to have been very similar to my own. He asked about these matters after he was already well known in the area. When he did broach the topic his enquiries were initially met with denials (p154-5). He eventually collected many accounts from old people but most of them treated these fears as something that had faded out in recent years. Favret-Saada working in northern France also met with evasions which persisted right up until the time that she herself was perceived as being 'caught' in spells (p31). In north Spain Christian was told that 'We don't believe in witches. And if we do we don't talk about them'. But his informant found the topic very upsetting. He concluded that it was a 'dark corner' (p198).

Herzfeld found that people in one Greek island were reluctant to discuss instances of the evil eye with and outsider. On the other hand Cole, working among women in north Portugal, does not report any difficulty in learning about their beliefs about *inveja*. Pina-Cabral, who worked in the same region, reports that it took him some time to realise about these beliefs, but not because his

informants were concealing them. Since he himself, like other middle-class urbanites, thought of *inveja* in psychological terms it took him some time to realise that his informants were using the same word to refer to a direct force for evil (p176).

It is difficult to decide how far the varying experiences of ethnographers are due to variations, and changes, in the pattern of beliefs and how far the differences are explained by differing degrees of willingness to talk about such beliefs - or indeed what relationship there may be between degree of belief and willingness to talk. Nevertheless some points emerge from the material presented in this chapter.

It is clear that one reason for the reluctance to discuss beliefs in witchcraft and the evil eye is the wish not to seem backward and superstitious to the outside investigator. But it could be a dangerous topic even among believers. To discuss specific instances is to make a grave accusation. In response to one specific enquiry of mine, the people I was interviewing thought of an example and started to say something, but then stopped themselves - saying that the facts were unclear and it was better not to discuss something like that without being sure. It is easy to see that people who spread unprovable accusations would risk being classified as *malas lengas* themselves. They are also placing themselves in a position of psychological discomfort: given the importance attached to mutual good feeling, recalling and discussing supposed instances of intense ill feeling must be a disturbing experience.

This leads on to the question of why people might believe that hostile feelings can cause direct harm, by way of witchcraft or the evil eye. Discussions of the social functions of the belief do not explain what makes it seem plausible to the individual believer. I believe that the experience of competition and struggle does help to

explain beliefs in the power of witches and the evil eye. But the explanation must be in terms of psychological *mechanisms* rather than social *functions*. I will first explain the idea in intuitive terms, and then back it up with references to cognitive theory - as expounded by Bourdieu (1977) and Bloch (1992). The basic idea goes back to the way people use the word *dûr* - hard. It represents both the capacity to struggle against the difficulties of material reality and the capacity to resist the opinions and wishes of other people. In one's efforts to get ahead, or simply maintain one's family's position, one must confront both, and both are felt equally as drains on one's strength. In this situation the experience of other people's opposing emotions actually does add to the difficulty of carrying out one's daily tasks - including those which involve physical activity. So it would be perfectly true to say that other people's envy causes some kinds physical misfortune, namely those due to failures of efficient activity on the part of the victim. Generalising this to situations where activity by the victim is not directly involved - for instance the growth of flowers - only involves the transition from (1) 'envy causes *some* physical misfortune', to (2) 'envy could cause *any* physical misfortune'. Although the two propositions are logically quite distinct, the ideas feel so similar that one can intuitively understand that it might seem natural to treat them as equivalent.

Some theoretical backing for this explanation is provided by Bloch's argument in his article on *What goes without saying*. He cites evidence that people do not store practical knowledge in propositional format but rather as webs of associations. Such a form of storage might not distinguish (1) and (2). An explanation could also be formulated in terms of Bourdieu's ideas about mental schemata. The use of the word *dûr* is evidence that physical effort and social conflict are understood in terms of the same mental schema. The use of the word *siôr*

to denote both wealth and status illustrates a similar conflation of physical and social reality. The belief that the quality of interpersonal relationships can affect physical reality is simply a consequence of applying the same schema to both areas of experience.

From this point of view the thing which requires explanation is not why people might believe in the physical power of hostile wishes, but why they should *disbelieve*. Disbelief becomes a matter of keeping potential fears at bay. This is consistent with Favret-Saada's report that witchcraft victims in northern France do not believe until confronted with personal experiences that cause them to see themselves as victim (p15). She also reports that people who do think they may be in danger may express ostentatious disbelief as a sign that they have the personal strength to resist the threat (p65-67). As some comments by Carnians also suggested, disbelief reflects freedom from the potential danger, and belief is one of the symptoms of victimhood. For individuals' own peace of mind the important thing is to believe that they themselves are not exposed to the dangers - because the dangers are entirely hypothetical, because they are protected by boundaries, because they have the strength to resist them, or because they are among friends. Sustainable social relationships need to be understood as safe for one or other of these reasons.

E Boundaries, strength, and status

Each distinct social unit - whether an individual person, a household, or a village - must strike a balance between the dangers of communication and the advantages of participation in a wider cooperative community. This balance needs to be struck whether these dangers are thought of in terms of *strias* and the evil eye or, as is now more common, in the less dramatic but still powerful terms of public opinion and evil tongues.

Personal boundaries - men, women, children, and the church

The way individual people strike the balance depends on their personal qualities. While the relevant qualities vary from one individual to another, they are thought to be strongly correlated with age and sex. Men are said to be *dûr* - 'hard' - both in the sense of being physically strong and in the sense of being determined and resistant to social pressure. Men are also said to be *sierât* - 'closed' or 'uncommunicative'. Women are thought to be generally less strong, and less *sierât*.¹⁴ There is a belief that women are both more communicative than men, and more vulnerable to the dangerous effects of communication. Children are the weakest and most vulnerable of all.

Male strength and closedness manifests itself in successful work and obstinate autonomy. These masculine qualities also enable men to resist the malign powers of communication. One elderly woman explained that men are less vulnerable than women, not only because men are stronger but also because they are *mancul cjacaras* - less talkative - and so are less likely to let slip information that would provoke the *invidia* of a *stria*. It also seems that women are more likely than men to transmit the power of *invidia*. Although one woman said that men could transmit the evil eye, because men were as likely as women to feel *invidia*, in practice in all the examples I heard of - except the dangerous glance of the dying man - the harm was attributed to a woman. The women involved could be of any age, though a group of elderly people said that old women had been particularly suspect. They mentioned that widows were believed to have particularly strong *fisics*.

Men tend to talk about their relative invulnerability to

¹⁴Though Carnian women are thought to be more *sierada* than women in general.

such powers in a different way - by saying they do not believe in them. One man told me that he had learnt all he knew of the subject from women, and that he had never heard it discussed in the male environment of the bar. Expressions of disbelief may sometimes be a way of keeping ideas of supernatural influence out of the solid world of masculine activity. This would be consistent with what happened on a couple of occasions on which I raised the topic of spirits and the like at family suppers: what was becoming a lively discussion was cut short by a statement from the man of the house that the topic got on his nerves. (But the discussion did not always go this way. In a third family, the husband was more ready to talk about supernatural phenomena than his wife. On a fourth occasion the husband had no objection to talking about supernatural themes, and serenely expressed his complete - and obviously genuine - disbelief.)

Though women and children cannot simply shut themselves off from the power of *invidia*, there are ways in which they can protect themselves. One way is to find a counterbalancing source of strength. The woman who had 'strong blood', and the woman who wished potential *strias* whatever they might have wished her, were both fortunate in finding this strength inside themselves - but there were also standard symbolic responses which offered protection. One of these was to make a sign with one's hand. The two-horn sign used elsewhere in Italy is not standard in Carnia. The traditional sign in Carnia was made by clenching one's fingers into a fist, and letting the thumb poke out slightly between two of the clenched fingers. (The sign was generally made with hands prudently inside one's pockets or behind one's back.) Some people say that the sign represents the cross, but others refer to it as the *ficja* - which is equivalent to what the same sign is called elsewhere in southern Europe (Pina-Cabral 1986:p184). Other responses were unambiguously religious - as in the case of the woman who placed a blessed olive sprig in her cowshed or the woman

who prayed for protection from the evil eye and evil tongues. The same woman explained that she would pray silently if she passed a potential *stria*. Another variant of the strategy was to attach holy objects to infants' cradles and children's clothes. In extreme cases the victim could go to a priest for a blessing.

The fact that religion is a source of protection against *invidia*, raises the possibility that women's relatively high rate of church attendance is related to their vulnerability to its effects.¹⁵ ¹⁶ This may not just be a question of having more need for specific protective blessings, but also because they find the emotional consolations of church services more beneficial and less threatening than men do. I discussed the reasons for differential church attendance by men and women with the members of one family - all of them good catholics, but in which the father and his son would hang back in church, while the mother and daughter are assiduous attenders. The men did not really have an explanation for their attitude. It was the mother who produced a convincing answer: men do not like attending church because they feel *vergogna* about showing their feelings. In other words, the differing attitudes of men and women to religion are an aspect of their differing relationship to the process of communication and the powers which it brings into play.

The church's message that happiness and security come through renunciation is particularly important for women, since it is women who feel most exposed to the forces of

¹⁵Cole quotes an informant who says that she believes in God because she needs his help to carry on in the face of practical difficulties and of *inveja* (page 113).

¹⁶The same point can be made in relation to the church's authority over the community as a whole. Holmes (pp158-63) argues that in eastern Friuli the church gained a 'parasitic' authority from its willingness to provide protection against witches and the evil eye. This situation lasted into the 1970s.

invidia - and who fear that every success will provoke potentially hostile neighbours. In effect the church, by inviting them to abandon the struggle for personal success and selfish happiness, is telling them to abandon the very struggle that divides them among themselves. By offering women a release from the tension of imagined enmities religion provides them with both psychological relief and a sense of mutual fellowship. This is something which men's supposed¹⁷ psychological strength would make less necessary for them, but it is also something for which they would pay a higher price than women do. The supposition that men are strong is central to the way people think of sexuality, and also to the role of householder, which calls for a degree of straight-forward assertiveness which is incompatible with religious renunciation of the individual will. For a man to admit a need for help by participating too whole heartedly in religious worship, would be to cast doubt on his fitness for his two most important roles.

household boundaries and family well-being

People are careful to show respect for the boundaries of private space. Front doors are often left unlocked when the family is at home, so visitors can let themselves in. But before entering the house, the visitor calls out *permesso* to ask for permission, and waits for the answer *avanti* before advancing beyond the threshold. The procedure is often repeated at the door of the room - generally the kitchen - in which the occupants are

¹⁷"Supposed" because the suicide rate in Carnia is a good deal higher than the Italian average, and most suicides are male (Cozzi pp364,375,378). It is interesting to speculate that this high rate of inwardly directed aggression may be related to the way Carnian society restricts the opportunities for externally directed aggression. But, since the figures cited by Cozzi relate to recent years, an alternative explanation might be that the high suicide rate is a recent response to social dislocation.

sitting. People ask *permesso* even if they have already been invited in. This respect for other people's homes is not just a matter of form. One woman said she felt afraid - *poura* - of going up to the homes of people she did not know well, as if the building itself was imbued with potentially hostile power.

Two rituals that are carried out when the house is built seem to express the power of the building, or to confer power on it. One of these is the ceremony of the *peč* and the *licov*. The *peč* is a pine sapling which is attached just under the eaves of a new house once the roof is finished. This is the occasion for a celebratory meal - the *licov* - which the new owner provides for the builders. The symbolism of the *peč* is discussed in chapter 7, but it is at least plausible to say that its attachment marks the moment at which the energies of the workers who have erected the structure of the building are superseded by the spontaneous life force of the house and its future inhabitants symbolised by the *peč*. By providing the workers with a lavish meal from his own resources the owner is implicitly repaying them for energy they have expended on the house - and hence appropriating it for himself and his family. Taken together, the *peč* and the *licov* link the building to human strength and natural vigour.

A quite different source of power is invoked by a ritual which occurs at an earlier stage of construction - that of putting a holy object in one corner of the foundations of the house. This suggests that the house needs to be sustained by divine grace. In the cases I know of the object was supplied by the mother of one member of the couple who would live in the new house. (One woman also provided her son and daughter in law with some coins to bury under the corner of the house. She said that this used to be the custom.) Another way in which women protect the home is expressed in a saying that *la femina a je tre cjantons da cjasa* - 'the woman is three corners of

the home'. This saying relates to the importance of the wife's productive activities in providing for the family's material well-being but still more to the importance of her character, both as an influence on her children and as a crucial component of her family's reputation. The saying fits neatly with the custom. Both express the importance of work and the values of self-sacrifice, and between them they protect all four corners of the home.

The home is thus protected both by masculine strength, and by christian virtue. Although people did not say why it needs protection, the vulnerability of sexuality and human reproduction to the forces of *invidia* suggests that this protection must be reassuring to people who are starting families. Interestingly enough the house, and the protection it provides against outside opinion, also plays a role in the social placing of illegitimate births.

Though there have always been some extra-marital conceptions, there was pressure for the couple to marry before the actual birth. Outright illegitimacy was very rare. It was also felt to be very shameful. At the beginning of this century illegitimate children were assigned special surnames - referring to plants or farm buildings - which suggested that they originated in the wild rather than inside a proper house. In one case, around the middle of the century, the mother and child left the area for a few years until the fuss had died down.

The ability of the mother and her family to carry the situation off is related to strength and to control over boundaries. One mother said she felt she could cope because she had a strong personality and enjoyed defying criticism. I was told of an old lady in one village who had several children but never married. According to the man who told me about her, she was very beautiful and had the strength of personality to maintain the respect of her fellow villagers. Part of her strategy seems to have been

a determined defence of her own privacy: my informant said admiringly that she never told anybody who the fathers had been. A tragic story from another village confirms the importance attached to preserving the family's control over its own secrets. The incident occurred round about the middle of this century, and was described to me by the sister of the unmarried mother. Because their father had reacted badly when another daughter became pregnant and had to be married in hurry, his children decided to conceal the pregnancy of a second daughter altogether - particularly as there were no plans for her to marry. They arranged for her to leave the valley before her pregnancy became obvious, hoping to keep it secret both from their father and from the rest of the village. But the other villagers came to know about it, and one of them eventually told their father, who killed himself soon afterwards. Apparently he had been very upset that the rest of the village had known the story while he himself had not.

These examples confirm the close parallels between the forces of supposed *invidia* and those of public opinion. Violations of the ideal of legitimate reproduction produce what the village at large would see as justified criticism. The qualities needed to withstand this criticism - strength of personality, and the ability to keep communication within the boundaries of one's own family - are precisely those which enable a person to cope with *invidia*. These qualities are associated with the image of the enclosed *cjasa*, which is ritually reinforced by representations of both strength and purity. The significance of assigning illegitimate children surnames associated with the wild was to make it clear that the *cjasa's* protection should only be granted to children born to legitimate marriages.

dialect differences as symbolic markers

While families must rely on the four walls of the house to shut off unwelcome communication with outsiders, villages can protect themselves by manipulating the form of communication itself. It is something of a local cliché that every village has its own way of speaking Friulian. Though the differences are not always marked, it is certainly true that some villages are clearly distinguished from their neighbours by an aspect of the dialect they use - and that this cannot be due simply to physical isolation. Dialect differences are also felt to be important in their own right, even when they are not associated with village rivalries.

With some exceptions, Friulian forms the plural by adding 's' to the singular ending. The singular form of masculine nouns generally ends in a consonant, while feminine nouns end in a vowel. The most remarked-on distinction between Friulian dialects concerns this vowel. Three different versions are found in the Val Degano - 'o' and 'os' used for the feminine singular and plural respectively; secondly 'a' and 'as'; and thirdly 'e' used in the singular and 'es' in the plural. People using these variant forms are said to speak with the 'o', 'a', and 'e' respectively. Nowadays four broad dialect variants are spoken in the Val Degano area, and recognised as distinct by most local people. Most people in the lower Val Degano, and in the Val Calda speak with the 'a'. The exceptions are three villages in the comune of Ovaro - Mione, Cella, and Liariis - which speak with the 'e'. The inhabitants of the Val Pesarina also speak with the 'a', but have a slower, more sing-song accent which local people find very distinctive. The inhabitants of the upper Val Degano speak with the 'o'. These major differences are partly associated with, partly cross-cut by, others in a way that makes the assertion that each village has its own *parlata* - 'dialect', 'way of speaking' - only a slight exaggeration.

The last part of section C above concluded - on the basis of a discussion of the distinction between evil tongues and the evil eye, and of the role and symbolism of sign language - that one function of language was to bring the power of communication under the control of the community. In the present section I would like to start discussing the way the use of a particular linguistic code links the speech act to a particular network of social control. This is a familiar point in relation to the phenomenon of diglossia - where there are two ranked languages - a superior national or holy language used generally for formal, written, and public contexts, and an inferior local language used in the home and between close acquaintances. This phenomenon exists in Carnia, with Italian in the superior role and the various Friulian dialects in the inferior role.¹⁸ Chapter 9 will discuss the meanings local people assign to this diglossia. But now I would like to look at a different aspect of the social significance of linguistic forms, namely the meaning attached to the fact that a person uses a particular Friulian dialect¹⁹ rather than another.

The 'o' dialect is felt to be the most distinctive, and more than one 'o' speaker has used poetry to express his or her attachment to their local way of speaking. One poem praises both the beauty of the dialect and the quality of the social relationships that it conveys, using the phrase *tra di nô si din dal tu* - 'between ourselves we call each other *tu* [the informal word for 'you']' (Candido). This succinctly expresses the feeling that the use of a particular dialect defines an in-group, a sense

¹⁸Denison, who worked in the valley immediately to the west of the Val Degano, describes the situation of triglossia which prevails there - where the ranking involves (from low to high) the local germanic dialect, Friulian, and Italian.

¹⁹For convenience I will refer to any distinctive speech form as a *dialect*, although only the 'o' dialect and the language of some people in the Val Pesarina is as different from the speech in the lower Val Degano as the word *dialect* would usually imply.

of being 'us', and that this sense goes with the use of informal speech - the kind which goes both with *alegria*, as the rest of the poem makes clear, and with the ability to express direct criticisms which would be harder using more formal speech (a point the poem does not make).

But speech differences do not only set up in-groups, they define social frontiers which are associated with the same, generally but not always mild, aggressiveness that is found with other social boundaries. The author explained to me that the impulse to write the poem arose from an occasion when he and his family were visiting relatives in the Val Pesarina. The local children had made fun of his children for speaking with the 'o', and so he wrote the poem to show that the 'o' dialect was at least as good as any other. The mockery that the 'o' form provokes leads some of its speakers to use the 'a' form instead outside the upper Val Degano. People from the Val Pesarina themselves come in for teasing by people from the main valley. A young man from Ovaro *comune* once introduced me to a girl from the Val Pesarina with the comment that she spoke differently. She was half inclined to accept his implication that the Val Pesarina dialect was not the proper way to talk. She told how she had also been teased about it at a dinner in Ovaro.

This combination of familiarity within the group of fellow speakers and mockery at the boundary between dialect groups makes dialect forms well fitted to express both the solidarity within villages and the rivalries between them. One young couple in which the husband is from Ovasta, where they speak with the 'a', and his wife from a near-by village, where they speak with the 'e', made a joke of the fact when their first baby started to speak - each demonstratively speaking to the child in their own dialect. A middle-aged friend from Ovaro village originally spoke with the 'e', because that was how his mother spoke and also how his relatives spoke to him on their frequent visits to her home village. However once

he was old enough to go to school he soon switched to the 'a' form which is usual for Ovaro - because his school mates made fun of him until he did.

Given this association between dialect, belonging, and rivalry, one might expect marked linguistic differences between neighbouring villages to be associated with particularly acute rivalries - since the more intense the rivalry, the more reason there would be to differentiate one's own dialect from the dialect in which people from rival villages express their mockery and criticism. Although there is no automatic association between linguistic differences and other expressions of rivalry, there are a couple of striking instances in which they do go together.

Within the *comune* of Ovaro, Liariis provides a particularly clear example. The inhabitants of Liariis speak with the 'e'. To the east Liariis backs onto a mountainside, but to its north, west, and south, its land borders the villages of Clavais, Chialina, Ovaro, and Lenzona - all of which speak with the 'a'. None of these villages is more than a couple kilometres from Liariis. The people of Liariis are well known for their sense of distinctness from the rest of the *comune*. One reason for this is their possession of their own wood - regained in a lawsuit in the nineteenth century, and defended by a militant demonstration in the aftermath of the 1940-45 war during the sequence of events that sparked off Ovasta's lawsuit. There is a story that a fire in Liariis, long ago, was deliberately started by people from another village. People from Liariis are said to be arrogant and quarrelsome and to keep to themselves. I was told that their children used to fight those of nearly all the neighbouring villages, and that until recently they were particularly likely to choose their marriage partners from within the village.

An equally spectacular instance is the double village of

Cercivento, in a neighbouring valley. Cercivento is divided into an upper and a lower half - separated by a few meters of clear ground. The people of the upper half speak with the 'a', while those of the lower half speak with the 'e'. The two halves of Cercivento are famous for their mutual rivalry²⁰, so it is a reasonable inference that the stress on inter-village dialect differences is something to do with village identity and rivalry.

There are some signs that the maintenance of linguistic distinctions is associated with a sense of strength. A middle aged man from one of the villages bordering Liariis, after recalling how they all used to gang up on the Liariis children, asked me to admire the strength of character that had enabled the Liariis children to hold their own. Some people who looked positively on the 'o' dialect commented on the pride some 'o' speakers had

²⁰There is a rhyme about *Čurčuvint*, the local name for *Cercivento*, which goes '*Čurčuvint, Čurčuvint / buina cjera, trista int*' - '*Čurčuvint, Čurčuvint / good land, spiteful people*'. But people's attitude to the rivalry between the two halves of the village is, as ever, ambiguous. The following joke was told by the daughter of a family of Friulian autonomists. She obviously found it hilarious, and the whole family laughed at it appreciatively. It affectionately associates the sense of local rivalry with the high idea Friulians have of their own importance. My comments are in square brackets.

A man from *Čurčuvint* had been working in China [a reference to the far-flung activities of Friulian emigrants, which are a source of pride]. When the time came to return home, he went to the station in Beijing and asked for a ticket to *Čurčuvint* [ridiculous, because how could anyone in Beijing be expected to know of *Čurčuvint*, but also an example of local pride with which the listeners could identify]. Fortunately, the man behind the ticket window was Friulian too [more local pride, but also ridiculous because Friulians were never *that* ubiquitous], but he found the request too vague and asked the traveller whether he wanted to go to Upper or Lower *Čurčuvint*. [This was the punch line. Ridiculous because *Čurčuvint* would never have rated two stations, but also a source of ironic pride because the ticket-seller's attention to these ultra-local distinctions showed that he was a true Friulian.]

demonstrated by using their dialect in Udine - the main city of Friuli, where even local Friulian dialects are little spoken. This must have been a very exceptional occasion, but it fits in with the idea that sticking to your dialect in the face of potential mockery calls for strength of character. The amount of ridicule to which the 'o' dialect is subjected may itself be due to the fact that using 'o' to end feminine nouns inverts the rules of the most powerful speech form around - namely Italian, in which 'o' is the standard ending for masculine nouns.

5 PROPERTY, PROVISION, AND SACRIFICE

A Property and social assertion

rivalry in a unitary system

Both the symbolism of shared experience and the discouragement of factional links make certain forms of assertion hard to carry out or perhaps even imagine. Violent feuds are not a feature of Carnian society. Nor do Carnians go in for the rivalrous exchanges of poetic insults that are found in some mediterranean societies.²¹ Nevertheless, the ritualised expressions of sympathy and the power of public opinion are merely ways of controlling rivalry - they do not abolish it. With violence and rhetoric ruled out, how can status be asserted, and ambition pursued? The answer is to find statuses that give a *legitimate* right to control others, and means of assertion that are also acts of cooperation.

property and authority

One status which closely involves authority is that of ownership. From the point of view of legal anthropology it is of course a truism that property is a relation between persons in respect of a thing, and not simply a relationship between a person and a thing. The point I want to make here is that for Carnians this social relationship is not merely a matter of the allocation of use rights. There is an assumption that ownership of land or a house brings with it authority over any people that the space in question contains. This assumption is expressed in the way people talk about ownership. For instance, on one occasion when I was clambering across a

²¹For instance the Cretan shepherds described by Herzfeld (1985). Carnia does have a place for wittily insulting verse but, as with so much else, it is used to express group authority not individual rivalry - see chapter 6.

wooded hillside with two companions who were trying to work out who was the owner of which bit of land, one of them announced '*achi comanda X*' - 'X is in charge here' - as a way of saying that X was the owner.

Rights to ownership are closely linked to the sense of identity. The reason people give for property being left to sons rather than daughters is that sons carry on the family name. In other words the family's sense of identity is inseparable from control over its property. The continuing presence of male descendants conserves both the family surname in the village, and the names of individual male ancestors. It used to be the custom to name sons after their grandfathers, or uncles.²²

Home ownership, which is seen as a central aspect of the adult male role, expresses both identity and authority. Men are expected to express their personalities through their houses. The male pride in home ownership is a local cliché. Men are said to suffer from "*mâl di pieras*" or "*mâl di modons*" - literally stone or brick sickness - meaning an obsession with building and embellishing their homes. Until recently only the head of household participated in the village assembly²³. That is no longer so, but there is still a sense that a man has not achieved full social maturity until he owns his own home. The need to finance the construction of their own homes

²²The very real sense in which this naming practice was felt as a way of carrying on the personality of the child's namesake was brought home to me by a conversation with a church-going man who had been named after his FB - a convinced anarchist and *mangiaprete* - 'priest-eater'. Despite this choice of name, the boy's mother was a practising catholic, and his father did not object to her taking my informant's siblings to church. However, the father absolutely forbade my informant himself to have anything to do with religion, so that when he eventually decided that he wanted to take part in christian worship, he and his mother initially had to make secret arrangements with the priest.

²³This still holds for meetings of Liariis's *consorzio*.

was one of the motives of the seasonal migrants. Nowadays some couples put off marriage while they save to buy and furnish their home. In the old days possession of a separate home was not a precondition of marriage - it could not have been considering the prevalence of patrilineal extended families - but even so a man who had built his own home was considered a particularly desirable match.

Even if a man did not build, or pay for, his own home, his relationship to a forbear who did give him moral rights in the building. The position of his wife is quite different. The formal way of giving a married woman's name (common to all Italy I think) neatly encapsulates this difference. If Lucia Soravito marries Alberto Timeus she becomes Lucia Soravito *in* Timeus. She is living in another family's house and hence under their authority. The proof that home ownership matters in this way is what people say about the minority of marriages in which the husband moves in with his wife's family. By moving into another family's home he forfeits the authority that comes with home ownership.

An important aspect of ownership is that it confers the right to control boundaries. In the case of the house this means the right to decide who enters and leaves the home. One old lady whose late husband had come to live in her family's house, explained smilingly that she was in charge since it was she who could threaten to throw him out of the house (though I do not know whether she ever actually uttered this threat to him). But I did once hear a (home-owning) husband jokingly threaten to throw his wife out of his house if she misbehaved. There is an expression *feminas a cjasa* - literally 'women at home' - which is sometimes used by men with the implication that home is where women ought to stay. Some women told me that it is common for jealous husbands to try to confine their wives as closely as possible to the house - to the extent of quizzing them about spending too much time

shopping or forbidding them to join the local church choir. Sexual jealousy comes into this - both women and men told me that Carnian men are very afraid of being cuckolded. But at least as important is men's fear that their wives will gossip. Either way, the crucial point is that female communication with outsiders violates the boundary between the household's internal communications and outside communication networks - and hence the authority of the husband.

Women who stay at home may not simply be doing so out of respect for their husbands' wishes. There is also the fear of *invidia*, and the protection afforded by the four walls of the family home. From this point of view women's fear of *invidia* must reinforce male authority.²⁴ By the same token, the religious ideology of renunciation and the abandonment of mutual envy must help women to feel freer of male authority. But these points are my own deductions. No-one actually said so.

authority within the household: strength, provision, and sacrifice

One of the best known tenets of anthropological theory is that property becomes a source of authority, and a way of imbuing others with something of the owner's identity, by being given away (Mauss). An implication of this is that property owners should be represented as providing for the subordinate members of their social units. Within the household, authority rested directly or indirectly on the deployment of strength. But strength was not enough in itself to confer authority. For authority to be accepted the strength had to be used to provide for the other members of the family. This applies both to relations between husband and wife, and to relations between parents and children.

²⁴cf. Cole's (p124) argument that *inveja* divides women and so weakens their collective power.

The male role in sexual intercourse is thought of as an assertion of power. The casual assumption, by men at least, that sexual intercourse is an act of domination is illustrated by the following incident. Talking about threats to local identity an activist with autonomist sympathies told me that he wasn't a *mona* - slang for vulva - and would defend his culture from those who wanted to destroy it. Implicit in the remark is the idea that the female role in intercourse is the epitome of submission. The idea that the dominant husband should also be a provider is expressed in the anti-marriage verse quoted earlier - in which the stingy husband is represented as giving his wife only polenta and bean pods to eat. The rest of the verse makes a point which is also worth pointing out - though at the risk of stating the obvious. In the evening the mean husband beats his wife with a piece of wood - an act of pure physical domination. The implicit contrast with sexual intercourse shows that even though intercourse is seen as an act of domination it is also something more which the husband provides for the wife.

Parental authority was based partly on the direct assertion of strength. Overt physical force was used to discipline children. Middle-aged people recalled physical punishment at the hands of both parents. Most punishment seems to have been inflicted by the mother in the form of minor slaps, with the father - if he was present at all - being called in to administer more severe punishment. What made parental strength a legitimate source of authority was that it was not just directed at their children, but used to provide for the children - indeed passed on to the children in the form of food. As everywhere else mealtimes are, of course, also rituals of family unity - reinforced by standard ways of doing things. When polenta - which used to be the staple form of starch and is now a sentimentally valued food eaten about once a week and on special occasions - is served, the circular yellow slab which is placed on the table is

first divided by making two cuts in the form of a cross. This initial cross cut was pointed out to me as the traditionally right way of cutting polenta. The kitchen fire is also a symbol of the household's identity, indeed the word for fire - *fouc* - is used in some contexts to mean household. A proverb says that '*Dula ch'a si naš, al e simpri paš*' - 'where one is born there is always pasture'. The idea is that people always have a favourable image of their home area. The way the proverb makes this point confirms that food is an essential part of the image of the good home.

The role of provider also underlies the authority of the parents as individual people. One situation in which this is apparent is the supposed contest between the parents to dominate the home and their children's affections. One middle aged man, who told me that the woman always won in the end, attributed this success to the fact that her children had seen her as an ever-present provider - a role which she was able to continue into old age. Her husband, who would be away much of the year, based his authority on force and on his earning power, receiving obedience but not love or respect from his children. Once his strength and earning power had declined his wife was left as the victor in the struggle for their children's loyalty. Clearly not all marriages were like this. If anything it is more typical for adults' accounts of their parents to stress the sense of awed respect they felt for their father. But women do gain on their husbands during the course of married life - as is shown by the more flexible allocation of authority between older partners.

And parental claims to authority are expressed in terms of what they have done for their children. People talk of the *sacrificis* that parents make for their children. The word *sacrifici* seems to crop up particularly often in the accounts which elderly women give of their lives. The tone in which the women recount their tales of hardship and privation is interesting: as they emphasise the

harshness of conditions and the sacrifices they had to make, an unmistakeable note of pride enters their voice - so that what is formally a lament becomes in effect a boastful account of the physical strength and moral fortitude which enabled them to make a success of their lives under such difficult conditions. In doing so they are reminding the listener of their main claim to authority - that they have transferred their own strength to their families.

This claim to parental authority can continue even after the parent's death. The point is illustrated by the response I received when I asked a villager whether he would ever consider selling his home or land. The answer was that he would not, because they were not really his. The real owner was his deceased father who had made so many sacrifices to increase his holdings. The implication was that the father's commitment of energy to his possessions was the source of the moral right of ownership and control.

The answer implies something more - that this gift of energy did not merely give the father a right to continued control of his property after his death, but also a right to control the actions of his son. There is a parallel between the two claims. People use the same rhetoric of sacrifice to talk about the duties of parenthood as they do to talk about work in general. The implication is that parents have a similar claim on the products of their parenting, as they do on the products of other kinds of work. Thus children are in a sense the property of their parents, even after the latter's death. Morally the relationship of my informant to his land is not one of ownership but one of joint ownedness - they are jointly the property of his dead father who invested his life force in them. His *sacrifice* was in effect a form of *purchase*.

The idea that parents purchase their children is made

explicit in the slang expression for pregnancy. If a woman says *cuant ch'i compravi* - 'when I was buying' - she means 'when I was expecting a baby'. People I asked could not explain the expression, but it fits in well with the notion that the gift of a person's own vital energies entitles them to a form of ownership.

provision and the assertion of village identity

Questions of property and provision also played their part in the definition of village identity. Chapter 2 described the strong feelings aroused by the disputed ownership of Ovasta's wood. There is also a set of customs which used to connect the images of work, food, and control over the village territory.

One way in which the rivalry between villages used to be expressed was by name-calling. As people from each village worked their way up their own hay meadows they would shout across at people from neighbouring villages using insulting village nicknames. These nick-names were often based on food. For instance the people of Ovasta were known as *mestârs* - people who eat a particular kind of *polenta* - while people in a neighbouring village were known as *sopârs* - broth-eaters. People I asked could not explain to me why these names were insulting - indeed both *sopa* and *mesta* were part of the diet in all villages. Perhaps part of the reason was an idea that if a particular village could only afford one of these dishes, it would mean that it was poor. From a structural viewpoint, it is interesting that while village solidarity is expressed in ritual commensality - for instance in the last stage of the fire-throwing sequence - the opposition of neighbouring villages is expressed via an implication that they eat different foods.

The same insults that were shouted by adults at harvest time were used by children as a pretext for inter-village

fights. These seem to have faded out some time in the last twenty or thirty years - but they are recalled with pleasure by the adults who took part when they were children. The fights would take place at the boundaries of the villages, or on the way home from school. Sometimes the little boys of a village would throw stones at people who came to their village for a ceremony. One example was the ceremony - inherited from the pre-war period - in which the school-children of the comune all assembled for the ritual planting of a tree. A friend from Liariis remembered that when they visited Cella for a tree-planting the ceremony became the pretext for a fight. Boys might also throw stones when people from other villages visited their own village for a religious ceremony. Although I do not know how common incidents of this kind were, the fact that they are remembered as extreme instances of a more general pattern shows that childrens' fights, like the transgressive behaviour at harvest time, were incorporated into the schema of inter-village rivalry.

The emotional tone of all this is quite interesting. As well as genuine, and even intense, dislike for villages that were thought to be trying to set themselves above the rest, there is a sense of good humoured mock aggression between neighbouring villages. It is as though the mutual insults, like the stone throwing of their little boys, were often ways of providing each other with opportunities to demonstrate their strength and assertiveness rather than serious attempts to put each other down. The form of the stereotyped insults - in which neighbouring villages associated each other with different parts of the standard diet shared by all - suggests an underlying sense of wider unity.

The sense of wider unity seems to be associated with the church. When Luincis held its festival for the Madonna of health, it was an opportunity for people to come from other villages to take part in the service. The family

from whom I rented an apartment gave lunch to relatives from the Val Pesarina. Until the 1960s, some of these festivals were occasions for formal processions from other villages in the valley. Christian symbolism is also associated with rituals of unity that link different valleys. The ex-servicemen's associations of the *comuni* of Prato in the Val Pesarina and Rigolato in the upper Val Degano have recently erected a cross and a bell on one of the summits along the ridge which divides them from each other. A member of the Prato association said that this was a site where the two communities used to confront each other at harvest time, and where the young men used to fight. Now a notice proclaims that one is approaching the 'bell of friendship' and the two associations hold combined religious services at the spot. At a higher level of unity is the purely church ceremony of the 'kissing of the crosses' at which crosses brought from the main churches in Carnia, to the church at Zuglio - believed to be the oldest - which stands on an outcrop overlooking the Canal di But. The crosses, all bedecked with flowers, are made to bow towards each other so that they appear to be kissing.

B Provision, gifts, and sacrifice

Food and force

By now I have mentioned several instances in which prestations of food have been linked with the definition of bounded units. The apparent meanings of the food prestations have included...

Commensality as togetherness: the family meal; collective village meals; food given to *coscrits* and to children asking for *sops*.

Different food as an expression of distinct identities: the insults shouted between villages when

reaping grass for hay.

Appropriation: in the case of the food given to the house builders in the *licov*.

Assertion of authority: provision of food to children; metaphorical reference to male sexual role.

All of these examples fit a basic symbolic model in which sharing food within a bounded unit implies shared identity; failure to share food implies the existence of a boundary between autonomous units; and using food to penetrate someone else's bodily boundary implies dominance. This model is very similar to the model linking power to communication, set out in chapter 4. Those chapters showed that communication conveyed power; that open communication within a boundary implied shared identity; that barriers to communication implied autonomy and distinct identity; and that breaching the barriers to communication is an assertion of power.

The analogy between food and communication extends to the way people think about the forces involved - in the sense that both involve something that could be described as *life force*²⁵. In the case of food this is true virtually by definition: food produces physical vigour. In the case of communication the outcome of an act of hostile communication depends on the '*fisic*' of those involved - a word that combines the senses of physical vigour and strength of personality. The isomorphism of the two models shows that the *gift* of life force in the form of food has the same implications for authority and identity as the *assertion* of life force in the form of communication. There is a difference however which is clear from the emotional tone of the two situations: gifts

²⁵The argument that the notion of 'life' has an organising symbolic role has a long history in anthropology and continues to inspire ethnographic accounts and theoretical developments - see Bloch and Parry.

of food generally feel friendly, while criticism - expressed or implied - does not. This is associated with a difference of timing. The direct assertion of strength attains (or fails to attain) its objective straight away. A gift sets up a moral relationship in which the recipient surrenders some of his autonomy and identity to the giver, until the debt is cancelled by an appropriate return. Because of this, gifts anchor power relationships into a wider system. Their implications for power depend on the rules that structure gift relationships in that particular society. A crucial issue in this context is the relationship between assertive giving and sacrifice.

boundary maintenance and assertive giving

A situation in which the connection between generosity and the assertion of superiority emerges with particular clarity is one where every man has enough money to take part - namely that of offering and paying for drinks in a bar. For a man to pay for another's drink is a friendly gesture - but two facts show that it is also a competitive assertion of status. The first is that arguments about who should pay for a round of drinks are common, with each party asserting that he wants to be the one to pay. The second is that the recipients do not thank the giver - simply saying "salute" ('health') as they take the first sip. Thus each man finds himself successively asserting his status through the offer of a drink, and resisting the status assertions of his companions by converting his acceptance of a drink into a mutual pledge of good health. Both the insistence on giving and the avoidance of expressing thanks derive from the implicit assumption that the act of provision is an assertion of superiority. In fact everything possible is done to distance the consumption of the drinks from the act of payment. Drinks are not paid for at the time. The usual rule is to pay as you leave the bar, and you can easily find that your own drinks - or even a round that you thought you had

bought - have been paid for by someone else. This fits well with the ideal of spontaneous sociability described in chapter 4. It can also make it hard for someone who is considered a guest to buy his own drinks, and it was a long time before I was able to pay anything like my share.

Commenting on a similar experience in Naxos, Stewart (p48) argued that this generosity reflected the local determination to place him as an outsider - and that, in effect, the local community was so generous precisely because it was also closed. In broad terms this analysis fits Carnia too - but it might fit both societies better if, instead of characterising the community as 'closed', it was described as 'determined to maintain its own autonomy'. Closure would be one way of achieving this. But simple closure would be inadequate to deal with the situation in which a stranger had succeeded in penetrating the boundary of the community, and installed himself however precariously on the inside. As he arrived uninvited this is essentially an act of domination, but it is not one that can simply be denied. Instead the strategy is to compensate for the breach in the community's boundaries by placing things from the community within the personal boundaries of the intruder-guest.

This strategy is carried out literally in the case of paying for drinks at the bar. But the analysis only needs to be extended slightly to account for a charming custom that pleased and puzzled me when I first went to Italy to investigate possible fieldwork locations. Almost every time I made an initial visit to a local academic - whether in their office or at home - I left clutching a gift, often quite a substantial book. Once, eating on my own in a village restaurant, I asked the landlady about a poster which advertised a *sagra delle castagne* - a chestnut festival. The result was that when I left I was carrying a few handfuls of chestnuts wrapped in newspaper. I asked an ethnomusicologist, who had just presented me with a

tape of music from the valley she was studying, why everyone was so generous. She answered that she did not know, but perhaps the reason was that people wanted me to have something to remind me of them when I got back home. In other words, these gifts were a way of balancing my entry into their physical and mental space with a corresponding entry into mine.

constrained giving and the idea of sacrifice

In the context of these assertive boundary-maintaining gifts no reference is made to the idea that the giver is giving anything up. The impression conveyed is rather that drink or whatever is plentiful and so there is nothing to hold back the generosity of the giver. This is quite different from another and more important category of gift - that of self-sacrifice. The essence of a *sacrifici* is that it involves renunciation - typically in the context of hard work for no immediate return. This renunciation may be made on behalf of other people - parents talk about the *sacrificis* they make for their children - but the same word is used to describe efforts that are directed at a future benefit for the sacrificer themselves: for instance studying hard in order to qualify for a good job. What both situations have in common is that the sacrificer gives up some of their own energy, and that this gives them some right to a future return - whether in the form of consideration from their children or increased earnings in future. *Sacrificis* are moral actions, in that they involve the voluntary surrender of something of oneself, but they are not free actions. The very structure of reality imposes the need for sacrifices. Parents impress on their children that they must make *sacrificis* if they want to get on in the world - because, basically, you cannot expect to get something for nothing.

This goes with an idea that external conditions can impose moral behaviour. There is a saying '*San Scugnî al e un*

gran sant' - 'Saint Must is a great saint' - which conveys the notion that one of the main causes of good behaviour, particularly when it involves hard work, is being in a situation where there is no other choice. The same point emerges in the rhetorical treatment of the past. Because work in the old days involved greater *sacrificis*, it meant that people were better. Once two old men were complaining to me that some people no longer bothered to reap the grass in their fields - leaving them with a messy appearance. When I pointed out that many people still did reap the grass, and cited in particular a family who used a mini-tractor for the purpose, the response was that this did not count since it did not involve real effort.

People use the expression '*massa pašut*' - 'too well fed' - to refer to children and young people in a way that corresponds exactly to the English use of the adjective 'spoilt' to describe badly behaved children. The implicit idea, that if people no longer need to worry about food they cannot be disciplined, indirectly confirms that in the right state of things the provision of food would be a means of imposing authority. But people who use the expression do not only mean that young people have plenty to eat. They are also referring to young people's access to cars, videos, and other benefits of modern life. The point is that young people are no longer subjected to the constraints that used to provide the preconditions for moral action.

But in what sense can action that is generated by external constraints be experienced as moral - given that moral actions, including the notion of sacrifice, always imply an act of will? The point is that constraint is merely the precondition for sacrifice. It may be necessary to make *sacrificis*, but one could still choose not to and instead spend one's energy on enjoyment without thinking of the future. Similarly providing for one's family in the old days called for great *sacrificis* - but it would always have been possible to skimp on the work and provide

less well for one's children. *Sacrificis* are moral because they involve an act of self-dedication.

This interaction between external constraint and voluntary dedication is at its most acute in the context of relations between the generations. Older generations are obliged by the facts of biology to relinquish age-specific roles, and eventually life itself. Given the underlying sense of limited good, it appears that the old actually yield their vigour to the young. The question, implicitly posed by the contrast between the *sops* ritual and the *gir dal païs* of the *coscrits*, is whether this inevitable transfer between the generations is experienced as a forcible seizure by the young or as a voluntary exchange between the generations. When older people talk of the *sacrificis* they have made they are pointing out that they accepted the situation and actually did more than merely yield their position by actively providing as much as possible for their children.

Another situation in which people are virtually obliged to be self-sacrificing arises when they have no control over their own boundaries. In contrast to assertive giving - which is about breeching and reconstituting boundaries which are generally felt to be fairly secure - weak personal boundaries expose an individual to pressure from others' opinions and so virtually oblige them to devote some of their energies self-sacrificially to objectives valued by others. This is the situation that women face on joining their husbands' families, and is one reason why the rhetoric of self-sacrifice is used particularly by women.

But the role of the wife and mother only involves a relative lack of control over boundaries - in which the boundary of the individual is given up, but the boundary of the family unit remains. There is another reason why self-sacrifice should be associated with lack of control over boundaries *in general*. This is because the absence

of boundaries leaves people exposed to *invidia*, and hence requires them to identify with the most unfortunate members of the community - and so renounce their own good fortune. It may be better to be envied than to be called 'blessed' - but envy is only tolerable if there are boundaries to shut it out. If there are no boundaries, a straight-forward strategy of working for one's own benefit would put a person under great stress. Self-sacrifice avoids this stress. So shared sacrifice is the logical consequence of a degree of openness that expands the range of sympathetic identification to take in the *biâts* - since otherwise the relationship between the fortunate and the unfortunate would be one of dangerous *invidia*.

Since the *sacrificis* set up a relationship of exchange, they imply the existence of an 'other' who receives the sacrifices of the faithful and gives something in return. In the case of the family it is perfectly clear who the exchange is with - namely the sacrificer's own children. But the wider the social unit the less easy it is to think of the transaction as an exchange between specific individuals, which poses the problem of who is to fulfil the role of 'other'. The ritual drama of the mass solves the problem by making it clear that this 'other' is Christ. Mass enacts an exchange in which the faithful consume Christ while pledging themselves to a christian life - and is therefore a member of the wider set of identity-bearing food transactions listed at the start of this section. This exchange happens in an environment which makes it impossible to shut out the suffering of others - since all the imagery in the church is to do with suffering. But it is suffering transfigured into something valuable by being voluntarily accepted. In this sense mass sets the tone for the way *sacrificis* are understood in more mundane contexts.

C The practical and social meaning of work

The idea of work is central to Carnians' view of themselves. They work hard now, and they used to work extremely hard in the recent past. Intense physical efforts used to be needed to make a success of life in their harsh physical environment, but work was also important as a way of coping with tensions in the social environment. Work provided a way (virtually the only way) of asserting particularistic status in the face of the encompassing system of collectively oriented communication and control.

It is clear from the previous section that the concept of sacrifice is closely bound up with the way people think about work - and that it provides a way of dealing with the fear of *invidia* which successful activity is likely to provoke. The protection is twofold. Giving things up reduces the signs of good fortune which would provoke envy. At least as importantly, sacrifices constitute an exchange with divinity and so enable the sacrificer to call on divine protection. At the same time they provide the sacrificer with social status in the form of recognition of his or her virtue and a claim on the gratitude of the family members in whose interests the sacrifices were made. In this way the notion of sacrifice makes work a way of claiming personal status without risking the disruption of social unity.

But work is not always experienced as self-abnegation. It can also be seen as a way of increasing the stock of property - in the form of buildings, land, or people - under the autonomous control of oneself and one's group. Consistently with the association between property and the sense of family pride, older people feel that it is shameful to sell property. Buying property on the other hand is something to be proud of. In this context remunerative work is an act of assertion, and of corresponding separation or withdrawal from the wider

community - and so the rhetoric of sacrifice, with its appeal for moral support and implicit admission of a degree of dependence on the community as a whole, is not appropriate. If work is to be seen as an assertion of independence the stress needs to be placed on the hardness and determination which the work has demonstrated. The worker would need to be confident of his ability to block out or withstand envy, because successful endeavour could give rise to accusations of egoism²⁶. This suggests the image of the *dûr* Carnian pursuing his own and his family's interests while closing his ears to the claims of the rest of the village. But it can also be a basis of solidarity of a particular village in opposition to other villages - as is shown by the harvest-time combination of hard work and insults shouted at rival villages. In both situations the point about the solidarity associated with images of strength and hardness is that it is about unity within a limited group in opposition to the world outside. This contrasts with the symbolism of wider unity which is associated with christianity and self-sacrifice.

What is at issue in the opposed images of work-as-self-sacrifice and work-as-assertion is not the particular form of work to which people commit their energies. The point is the way that commitment is interpreted socially. The *dûr* person who overcomes obstacles and resists opposition on his own account acquires authority and respect but is not seen as particularly good. The self-sacrificing person places energy at the disposal of others and does not receive a return at once. The return comes later and depends on others' recognition of the person's virtue. Which meaning is salient depends on the context. Thus a

²⁶It is symptomatic of the contrast referred to earlier between Carnian society (along perhaps with society elsewhere in Italy) and the situation in Crete, that the Greek word *eghoismos* refers to an admired form of aggressive self-assertion (Herzfeld 1985), while the Italian word *egoismo* denotes anti-social greed. Carnians at least have no need for a term corresponding to the Greek sense of the word, because that kind of self-assertion is not admired.

man describing his working life might often chose to emphasise the strength and hardness which had enabled him to overcome obstacles and opposition, but within the family these efforts would be viewed as sacrifices in the interests of his descendants.

The apparently contradictory images of assertion and self-sacrifice fuse when people talk about their common struggle against Carnia's harsh physical environment. They emphasise how hard most Carnians work, and how they used to work even harder in the past. People were delighted to recount their work histories, stressing both their achievements and the hardships that they had undergone. They were very keen to point out that they had built their house themselves, or that the village school-house, bell tower, or dairy was the result of the community's own unaided efforts. By recounting feats of collective effort, they were able to emphasise both strength and fellowship.

There are thus two ways - one sacrificial and one jointly assertive - in which work can be seen as a manifestation of solidarity. This does not remove the conflictual notion of work as a means of rivalry for the limited good - but it makes it more acceptable than other means of self-assertion such as violence or overt verbal conflict would be in a system based on the ostentatious sharing of experience and avoidance of factional conflict. To that extent work can be seen as the form into which Carnian social structure channels rivalry.

How far should the emphasis on work and the ideology of sacrifice be seen as a response to the rigours of the environment itself? Acceptance of external necessity is fundamental part of the notion of sacrifice. In emphasising the role of social pressures in producing the dedication to work, and looking at the way the environment figures in rhetoric, this account may seem to understate the determining role that the environment played in the

practical context of economic activity. But concentration on environmental factors alone would be a mistake. Work was of course a condition of survival. And, given the limited natural resources and the important role of subsistence production, the density of population that Carnia attained in the earlier part of this century could not have been sustained without extremely hard work. But population densities are not the product of material conditions alone, but also of the social systems which organise people to exploit them. And with a lighter population the Carnian environment would seem less harsh. In this situation people who were willing to work extremely hard would tolerate a higher ratio of population to land than would people who were unwilling to put in the extra effort to extract the maximum return from all available resources. So it is arguable that the ideology of sacrifice, and the real hard work that accompanied it, were pre-conditions rather than results of the local balance between population and resources.

D The traditional elite - *siôrs* and priests

Although the stress on social unity obliged people to channel their rivalry into self-sacrifice and economic competition, these activities themselves created status differences within local society - associated with the economically successful *siôrs* and the self-sacrificing figure of the priest. In fact the expression 'within local society' is not quite right - since both priests and the rich, however necessary to local life, were partially excluded by the very fact of their special, and hence unequal, positions. The point was implicit in the way these positions were referred to. Collectively the local elite were known as the *sorestans* - literally 'those who stand above' - distinguishing them from everyone else, and contrasting them to those who had to work *sot paron* - 'beneath a boss'. Both priests and the rich were faced with the problem of how to anchor their special position in a system of relationships and values shared by the

community at large. Neither was totally successful, and the related but distinct problems they faced throw light on the social and political meaning of church authority and anticlericalism.

the siôrs

Used by itself the plural form *i siôrs* refers to the rich. Their wealth derived from economic enterprises, particularly those connected in one way or another with the timber trade. Their economic position gave them the power of hiring and firing those men who sought work locally. But it was also the basis of a more general social authority. Rich men have contributed according to their resources and inclination anything from funding a technical school, to organising festivals or a band for young people, to serving on local committees. They were helped to play this role by their access to higher education and hence to professional qualifications - members of rich families were often also doctors or lawyers.

But the social position of the *siôrs* did not derive simply from these legitimising good works. Their wealth was not seen merely as a matter of practical power to be used for good or ill. The *siôrs* were special. People seem to have been in awe of the rich, and they say that the rich tried to reinforce that feeling. When I was discussing the topic with a group of young people in the bar at Comeglians - which used to be known as the *paîs dai siôrs*, 'the village of rich people' - a 30-year old man said that his parents used to talk about the *siôrs* in a special way, as if they were in awe of them. In the *comune* of Ovaro a man in his mid forties remembered how people would drop their voices when the *siôrs* walked into a bar. Others say that the *siôrs* tried to control the social life of other members of their communities. In Comeglians a man of about 50 remembered that there was never much

boisterousness - *baldoria* - in the bars in Comeglians because the *siôrs* disapproved. The rich family of Mione were very grand indeed. They owned much of the wood on the western side of the lower Val Degano, had an official aristocratic title, and once had the king of Italy to stay. A village woman in her sixties remembered that in her youth this family did not like the local girls to wear fashionable clothes - because they wanted to stand out as the only fashionable ones themselves.

The families of *siôrs* were separate in other ways. Their houses were sometimes much larger than other peoples'. They also spoke Italian, or Veneto, at home, instead of Friulian. This expressed their attachment to the dominant national culture, and corresponding separation from the intimate life of the local community - but it was not necessarily chosen for that reason. Rather the switch to Italian was something that happened naturally as a family raised itself up the economic and social scale. If a man made a fortune, he could afford to send his adolescent sons away to boarding school - where they would speak Italian, as they would if they went on to university. While away from home they would make friendships through which they might meet their future wives, who as a result would not be Friulian speakers. The next generation would grow up in households where only Italian was spoken, and the linguistic switch was complete.

This analysis only applies to a few of the very richest families, while other families combined (or at least do now) a certain level of prominence and social leadership with speaking Friulian and playing cards in the village bar. All the same, it reflects a system of pressures which removed prominent citizens into a separate sphere of social life and endowed them with glamour and prestige. This must have made it easier for them to withstand the criticisms that are directed at anyone who tries to take on a leadership role. It is less certain that it made their leadership legitimate - when I was there many people

still talked bitterly about the time when the *siôrs* had been powerful.

priests

Priests too gained legitimacy from the good that they did for their parishioners. Their role could extend to school-teaching, as well as to acting as leaders of social life in the villages in their charge. They also derived legitimacy from the *sacrificis* that were involved in the long studies needed to prepare for their role. Like the *siôrs* they are external to the communities in which they live, though for an opposite reason: while the *siôrs* are marked out by wealth and the connections it brings, the priests are marked out by austerity and the renunciation of the ordinary pleasures of family life and masculine sociability.

In effect the priests embody in their own persons both the qualities of purity and renunciation - identification with Christ and the *biâts* - and the transfiguring power that comes with the willing acceptance of this identification. In everyday life priests wear dark clothes, and tend to behave in a quiet and dignified way. They are, or should be, celibate. The other side of this is that on special occasions they can reveal the joy and glory that follow from willingly accepted self-sacrifice. Inside the church, and on religious processions, they are dressed in resplendent robes, showing - as does the religious art in the churches - that renunciation and suffering hide within themselves the possibility of grace and salvation. Priests did not only embody renunciation, they also enforced it. They were allowed to strike disrespectful children. Earlier this century they campaigned against dancing. They also denounced sinners by name during religious services - an activity which was referred to metaphorically as 'throwing the person down from the church'.

priests and the secular hierarchy

Powerful as they were and are, the role of priests has never been entirely accepted by local people. This is partly to do with their relationship to secular power. Some priests are criticised for being too close to the *siôrs*. The alliance between priests and *siôrs* seems to have operated in both practical matters and the wider enforcement of decorum. A priest who enjoyed a close relationship with a major local employer was able to recommend his parishioners for jobs - thus acquiring power himself and protecting the employer from disruptive employees. And the priests' desire to promote a sober life-style among the ordinary people coincided with the *siôrs'* desire to prevent assertive behaviour. This is in line with the more general association between the church and the political right in catholic Europe (Wolf 1984). While it could perhaps be explained in terms of a natural tendency of the powerful to stick together, Christian has suggested a stronger connection. His argument - based on fieldwork in northern Spain - is that the religion of purity involves the believer in hierarchical relationships with divine beings which take the same structural form as those in secular society - with the result that each provides psychological support for the other. It is therefore in tension with the egalitarian tenor of the relationships between fellow villagers.

However the Carnian data suggests that the association between the priest and the social hierarchy is potential rather than necessary. It is possible for practical arrangements to place this power within the control of the local community. On a couple of occasions during my stay, when a priest came into conflict with his parishioners, the point was made that the priest was subject to the local community. One of these occasions occurred in a

village which used some of the proceeds of its collective property to pay for the priest's services. This practical link between the priest and the village community is consistent with symbolism which stresses his place in village life. In some parts of Carnia at least the priest used to be incorporated in the framework of fictive god-kinship by being referred to as *siôr santul* - 'sir godfather'. This linked him with the local midwife who is known as the *santula* or *comari* - terms which denote the relationship of a godmother to the child and the natural mother. Both priest and midwife were thus incorporated into the relationship of quasi-god-parenthood which unites all village adults in relation to the village children.²⁷ The implied equivalence between priest and midwife suggests that the priest's role is also one of service to the village in the process of physical and spiritual reproduction - a perspective which downplays the possibility of hierarchical domination over the village.

This suggests a crucial difference between the position of the priest and that of the *siôrs*. Although the priest's position is external, it is central to the symbolism by which the community constructs its sense of internal unity. He may sometimes be unpopular, but he is necessary. The *siôrs*, on the other hand, did not actually help to constitute the community. They could impose themselves because of the symbolic power embodied in their wealth, and they might also acquire legitimacy through personal service and the use of their wealth in good works, but ultimately the community could imagine itself without them. The community could be imagined without priests as well. The anarchists of the Val Pesarina, where one village - Pradumbli - dispensed with priests altogether, are a case in point. In rejecting religion they were simultaneously removing the symbolic support for the position of the *siôrs*. But this degree of radicalism, which was thought to be very extreme, was not necessary.

²⁷See the discussion of *sops* in chapter 3.

It was possible to oppose the rich, while still conceptualising the local community in christian terms. Despite the shared interests of *siôrs* and priests, the *siors* needed the church more than the church needed them.

E The ideology of purity

The role of embodier and enforcer of the ideology of purity and renunciation itself posed problems for the priests' legitimacy. As Brandes points out, failure, or suspected failure, threatens clerical legitimacy - whether the failure involves too much association with the wealthy, or whether it involves failure to keep the vows of chastity. I heard of a couple of occasions in which a priest had been subjected to the *purcita* (see next chapter) because of a relationship with a village woman. There was also an incident in which a priest stirred up controversy by his opposition to both of these shortcomings. In the 1960s some of the villages were placed in the care of a radical priest who wanted to give people a greater sense of their own worth, and to lessen what he saw as their excessive respect for priests and other *sorestans*. He seems to have had a talent for stirring up controversy - which eventually led to his dismissal by the ecclesiastical authorities. At one point he published a pamphlet making allegations about the sexual lives of other priests in the neighbourhood. But the absolute breaking point came when he started to arrange for ordinary parishioners to hand out communion. This departure from the most basic principles of catholic ritual was too much, and he had to go. His innovations appalled many pious people, but he also seems to have had a good deal of support - particularly among the young.

However in the first part of this century resentment seems to have centred less on priestly shortcomings, than on their attempts to fulfil their role by enforcing sexual morality. I was told of a priest who had been thrown in

the village water trough by a resentful youth, as well as of a priest being knocked off his bicycle by means of string that had been stretched across the road. The young men of one village called out a dedication to their particularly strict priest in the fire-throwing ceremony, with the words 'to the priest and his suitcase' - indicating that he should pack his suitcase and go. (In fact he stayed.)

The apparent conflict between the ethic of renunciation and chastity, and the masculine values of assertiveness and sexual virility has been emphasised repeatedly by students of southern European societies. It raises the question of where the ideology of purity comes from, and why it is felt particularly strongly by the women. In one sense the answer is clear. The ideology is embodied in the texts and rituals of the christian religion, and therefore must have arrived either with christianity itself, or following some later redefinition of christian ideals - such as the Council of Trent. Christian argues that the ideology of purity was imposed by the church, and is essentially distinct from the practical religiosity involved in the celebration of local identity and the practical exigencies of agriculture. But this 'supply side' theory of ideological propagation fails to explain why the ideas are taken up by local people, and by some (such as women) more than others (such as men).²⁸ In his analysis of religion in a Spanish valley Christian identifies a number of factors which correspond closely to the situation in Carnia: women spend more time in the village and get caught up in its disputes, they are

²⁸It does not explain the genesis of religious ideas either. What we are left with is a one-sided version of Redfield's distinction between Great and Little Traditions in which all innovation appears to come from the great tradition - because the church which carries the great tradition carries out the writing and formal propaganda. Marriott has argued that the decentralised structure of hinduism shows clear signs of a two-way traffic between great and little traditions. The absence of written evidence for such a process in Europe does not mean that it did not occur.

brought up to be more emotionally receptive, the society is dominated by men. But he still places the major emphasis on the propaganda of the church.

In this chapter I have emphasised many of the same factors, but suggested a different order of causation. Purity offers protection against envy, at the price of internalising it via a process of identification with the unfortunate. Women are particularly exposed to envy, and therefore attracted to purity, because of their emotional receptiveness. It is the process of social interaction, essential in a cooperative village community, which exposes them to envy. In this view, unlike Christian's, the religion of purity is an intrinsic part of the religious affirmation of community. It also implies a different explanation of the identification of sexuality as impure: it is not the result of religious propaganda but a consequence of the fact that sexuality and reproduction are major targets of envy. Their rejection as impure results from the internalisation of the envier's point of view.

Davis (1984) too concludes that religious doctrines cannot explain the sexual division of religious labour, since contrasting patterns on the christian and muslim shores of the Mediterranean are not matched by a corresponding difference in the views of men and women presented by the sacred texts. But he also rejects explanations in terms of wider cultural conceptions of masculine and feminine natures and social roles, on the grounds that these are very similar in southern Europe and north Africa. He does not consider the possibility, advanced in the last two chapters, that a specific social structure could interact with conceptions of male and female natures to produce a particular pattern of religious needs and behaviour.

The argument here has been that the village community as a whole exerts pressures on the individual people, and the patrilineal households, that make it up. Given the need

for cooperative interaction these pressures are hard to resist, but must be dealt with if individual and household identities are to be maintained. In this situation men's supposed strength fits them for the role of resistance to public opinion and external authority; while women's supposedly weaker and more open natures predispose them to a code of behaviour that avoids provoking envy, by identifying with potential enviers. The difference between the male and female attitudes to religion is an expression of these orientations.

The relationship between family and community is conceptualised differently in north Africa, where stress on extended lineages combined with the ideal of FBD marriage can be thought of as an attempt to subsume community relationships within an over-arching structure of patrilineal kinship. In such a situation tensions between individual households and the community at large might well be experienced very differently than in the villages of southern Europe, with corresponding differences in the respective stresses experienced by men and women - even given a common conception of male and female natures. It seems very likely that a different pattern of social stress would generate a different distribution of religious needs.

In his account of moral ideas in Naxos, Stewart argues that the tension between the assertive values of masculinity and the values of religious purity associated with priests and women operates within an overall symbolic structure which is dominated by christian values. He draws on Dumont's (1970) idea of 'encompassment' to argue that religious values are hegemonic in the sense that actions which embody other values have as their ultimate purpose the attainment of spiritual goals. Opposing values are reconciled to christian ideals of purity and renunciation as parts of an encompassing whole. Something similar can be said of the relation between the two ideological poles in Carnia - at least to the extent that

they are related within a single encompassing system. This system will be further explored in the next two chapters. The reader may like to consider whether christianity is truly hegemonic, or whether the system matches and opposes the values of christian renunciation and masculine assertion at a number of different levels, without giving ultimate priority to either.

6 MARRIAGE AND VILLAGE UNITY

A Endogamy

Table 6.1 sets out the geographic pattern of marriage in Ovasta - based on the marriages of men who were living there in 1991.

Table 6.1 Marriages of ever-married men living in Ovasta in 1991

Date of marriage:	Ovastan men married to Ovastan women	Ovastan men married to non-Ovastan women	Non-Ovastan men married to Ovastan women	Total
1930s	2	0	0	2
1940s	4	4	0	8
1950s	4	4	1	9
1960s	2	7	0	9
1970s	3	5	0	8
1980 on	1	4	3	8
Total	16	24	4	44

Source: own interviews.

Of 44 ever-married men living in Ovasta in 1991, 40 were born into Ovastan families, and 4 had moved in when they married. Of the 40 who were born there, 16 - that is 40% - had married Ovastan women. But the rate of village endogamy has been changing over time. Of the 10 men who married in the 1930s and 1940s, 6 married Ovastan women. In the 1950s, 4 out of 8 Ovastan husbands married Ovastan wives, and one non-Ovastan husband moved into the village.

The rate of change speeded up in the 1960s and 1970s. Of the 17 couples who married in those two decades, 12 united an Ovastan husband with a non-Ovastan wife; and in only

five - 29% - were both partners from Ovasta. The 8 marriages that had taken place since 1980 show no trace of the earlier pattern of village endogamy. Only one of them united an Ovastan man with an Ovastan woman, 4 were between Ovastan men and non-Ovastan women, and 3 were between Ovastan women and non-Ovastan husbands who came to live in the village.

So the pattern earlier this century was for about half the men who remained in the village to marry Ovastan women, and for very few outside men to marry into the village. Though this does not amount to rigid village endogamy, it is quite a high rate of in-marriage for such a small community. Relative isolation may well have played some part in this²⁹, but it was not the only factor.

One of the other factors was the relationship between the young men and young women of the community - which is recognised in a custom which still takes place, though rather sporadically. When an Ovastan girl marries a man from outside the village, the young men demand a payment - known as *entrastalas* - from the bridegroom, for the right to take away his bride.³⁰ Round about the time I was

²⁹Partial data which I collected for the village of Luincis, on the valley floor directly below Ovasta, showed that almost all the current residents had married exogamously. The parish register for the *comune* of Comeglians showed a similar relationship between altitude and endogamy. Until about 1960, most of the marriages in the double village of Tualis and Noiaretto - at 400 meters above the valley floor the highest in the *comune* - were between partners from the double village. The rate of endogamous marriage in other villages of the *comune* was much lower. Ferigo's studies of Comeglians parochial archives show that even in previous centuries a substantial majority of marriages in most villages were exogamous.

³⁰So far as I could discover, this was the standard procedure - and the analysis below will proceed on that basis. However, there seem to have been variations. An Ovastan man who married an Ovastan woman in the early 1970s paid for a small celebration by his comrades, although he was not an outsider. In another village I was told by a man in his late thirties that the payment could be collected by young women as well as young men.

there one bridegroom paid 150,000 lira (about 70 pounds) and another paid 100,000 lira (about 45 pounds). The older villagers remember that if a bridegroom refused to pay, the couple would be treated to a *sampognada* - a ringing of cow-bells - on their way down from the village after the wedding.

The sums asked for in *entrastalas* are clearly not enough to put anyone off, but they are enough to make a point. People express this by saying that the young men thought that the village girls belonged to them. The young men demonstrated this attitude in other ways. Although they did not try to keep other young men out of the village altogether - indeed they would be pleased to have outside visitors at some village dances - those they took exception to risked being attacked. Ovasta was not unusual either in asking for *entrastalas*, or in making some outside suitors unwelcome. Although the impact of the active discouragement of outside suitors cannot be measured quantitatively, it is clear that the young men's sense of ownership was more than symbolic - and it is likely that their actions did contribute to the high level of village endogamy.

Was all this an attempt to keep ownership of land and houses in the hands of village families, as some accounts of endogamy would suggest? The fact that endogamy effectively ended at about the same time that village agriculture collapsed, supports the argument that it was connected in some way with economic factors. And there certainly was a strong feeling that property should be kept in existing male lines. A man who moved in with his wife's family - which would only happen if she did not have married brothers to inherit the family property - was said scornfully to have married *in cuc* ('as a cuckoo'). This stigma would have applied particularly to husbands

These variations may be related to changes in recent decades in the way traditional rituals are perceived - see the discussion in chapter 8, section D.

moving in from outside the village, since within the village the young couple could help to support her parents, and eventually inherit their land, without actually moving into her parental home.

But there are difficulties in seeing inheritance considerations as the main motive for Ovasta's endogamous marriages. The six men who formed endogamous marriages before 1950 all married women whose brothers also married and set up home in Ovasta. So none of their brides would have been her family's main heir. Even if such women had married outside the community, it is unlikely that their inheritance would have stayed in outside hands - since it was usual for such women, or their heirs, to sell the land back to Ovastans, sometimes offering it first to the present generation of her own family.

The idea that most endogamous marriages resulted from explicit calculations about property is also at odds with the way older people talk about marriage in general, and endogamy in particular. Although it is recognised that a few people did marry for economic motives such marriages were said to turn out badly. The choice of partner was meant to be based on love, or at least on knowledge of the personal qualities of the prospective partner. Talking about endogamous marriage people quote the Italian saying '*mogli e buoi di paesi tuoi*' - 'wives and oxen from your own villages'. They explain that this means you should marry someone who you know about. And they offer the same justification for marrying someone closely connected in kinship terms, such as a first cousin. When I asked one old lady who was telling me about a marriage between cousins whether the real motive was to keep property in the family, she was quite clear that it was not - since in those days women inherited very little.

Nor do people ever refer to inheritance prospects when explaining young men's assertion of proprietorship over the village girls. They attribute it to sexual jealousy,

or to the general feeling of comradeship uniting all the young people of the village. One woman said that the young people of the village were like one family, and the payment of *entrastalas* was to compensate for the loss of a member of this 'family'.

So the data about endogamy seem rather paradoxical. Endogamy persisted as long as agricultural property mattered, people did care about keeping the ownership of property within the village, and yet the available information suggests that inheritance calculations were not the main motive for endogamous marriages. Does this mean that endogamy was not connected with economic factors, or is the connection less direct? I will argue that both marriage itself, and the symbolism of marriage and courtship, reflected and reinforced the social structure of the cooperative village community.

B The ritual enactment of endogamy

the wheels

I will begin by describing a ritual that appears to assume that love affairs and marriages take place between fellow villagers.³¹ This is the ritual of *las cidulas* - the 'wheels' or 'disks'. The first part of the ritual is the *gir dal paîs* - the tour of the village houses by the *coscrits* and their companions on the day of the ceremony - which was described in chapter 5. It is now time to describe the other parts of the ceremony which comprise the bonfire and the actual throwing of the burning *cidulas* in the early evening, then a dance for the whole village

³¹This account is based on full or partial observation of *cidulas* ceremonies in half a dozen villages. Descriptions of how the ceremony was carried out in earlier decades are given by D'Orlandi, Straulino, and Zanier (pp49-52). Perusini provides a review, from a folklorist's viewpoint, of variations in the way the ceremony is carried out in Carnia and surrounding areas, and of other Friulian fire-rituals.

later that same evening, and finally a supper for all the unmarried adults in the village.

The fire-throwing requires a good deal of preparation. Enough wood has to be collected on a slope above the village to keep a bonfire burning for a couple of hours. The *cidulas* themselves - small disks about 10 centimetres in diameter - have to be cut from the trunk of a small tree. In some villages they drill holes in the *cidulas* and attach wire handles, so that they do not have to pick them out of the fire with their hands. The young men also buy rockets to set off at the same time that the *cidulas* are thrown. They also lay in meat and drink to keep them going through the fire-throwing itself.

The fire-throwing proper begins after dark. The bonfire is lit, and the *cidulas* are placed round the edge until they catch light. Before each *cidula* is thrown an announcement is read out dedicating it to a supposed courting couple - sometimes a couple who are really involved with each other, but usually a pair whose relationship is imaginary or would even be ridiculous. In several of the villages the dedication takes the form of a short verse about the couple. (In Ovasta, exceptionally, the dedications and verses are to individual unmarried people. The dedication wishes them well with their love life but does not suggest a partner.)

Once the dedication has been read, the disk is thrown with a great shout - accompanied by a rocket, and perhaps by other explosions. For people watching from the village below the effect is impressively mysterious. The young men on the hillside are completely invisible. The first thing noticed by spectators in the village would be the bonfire, followed by a loud disembodied voice announcing the couples and then a rocket surging into the sky and a burning disk coming towards them - first rising into the sky and then falling and extinguishing itself on the hillside above the village.

The pronouncements made by this disembodied voice from the wild contain elements both of transgression and of the assertion of order. The public announcement of love affairs is itself a kind of transgression in a society where many people prefer to keep such things secret. The making public of what is secret is emphasised by sexual double-entendres in the dedications.

Nowadays those genuine couples which are referred to by the fire-throwers involve relationships with people from other villages. When this happens the outside partner is often referred to by their village - for instance 'the girl from Muina' - not by their own name, as a way of emphasising that the ritual is really concerned with relationships inside the village. Normally both members of a *cidula*-couple are from the village itself. In the past there would have been several genuine romances between fellow villagers. Presumably they would sometimes have been called out together, as some genuine relationships with outsiders now are. But I am not sure that this would necessarily have been the case. Certainly most couples would always have been imaginary, and now nearly all of them are. This in itself makes possible more symbolic transgression by inventing spectacularly inappropriate love affairs.

Formally the dedication takes the form of a respectful good wish to the couple concerned, beginning with a phrase such as "*chesta biela cidulina a va in onôr e in favôr di ...*" - 'this beautiful little *cidula* goes in honour and favour of...'. But in several villages this is accompanied by a rhyme which can give a different twist to the dedication. A few specimen rhymes will give an idea of what is involved. The person from whom I took down the verses also explained the circumstances which inspired each of them.

The first is simply a friendly comment on two young people.

*[His name], che di fa baldoria a nol piert ocasion,
ch'al toli [her name], e ch'a si proiodi una buina
sigurazion.*

[He] who never misses a chance of revelling, may he
take [her], and be sure to buy an insurance policy.

He really does enjoy celebrating. She is an attractive
girl who could make any boy lose his head - the reference
to an insurance policy is just a way of emphasising this.

The next verse criticises the two protagonists in a
pointed, but non-malicious way.

*[His name], ch'al e in guerra continua cu la
žoventût, e [her name], che par colpa dal lavôr a sta
trascurant che ata virtût.*

[He], who is continually at war with the [other]
young people, and [she], who because of her work is
neglecting the other side of life.

He is a young man who for the last year or more has been
behaving as though he no longer knew his friends. He does
not even greet them. She is a woman in her twenties who
is so committed to her work that she has no love life.

The third example is malicious.

*[His name], che finalmenti al a cjapât il coragjo di
tornâ besôl a Parigji, e [her name] ch'a no viout
l'ora di scosolâ il bagigji.*

[He], who has finally plucked up courage to return to
Paris on his own, and [she], who can't wait to shell
his nut.

He is a man in his thirties who is very attached to his
mother. The verse criticises his unwillingness to leave

her for another woman. The fire-throwers have coupled his name with that of a woman in her in her sixties.

Some of the villages still hold dances after the fire-throwing. Mostly these are open to the whole village, so that young and old dance away the evening together. The dance is the element of the whole sequence which involves most preparation, and young women are as involved as young men in organising it - in decorating the hall, laying in food and drink and so on. In one village the young people even sent out printed invitations and provided their guests with little souvenirs to take home. There used to be a rule that each young man had the right to escort to the dance the young woman he was linked with in the *cidula* dedication, and to dance with her for much of the evening - even if her parents did not like him; and for this reason there was some scheming to get oneself partnered by the person one wanted. This used to be an important point, but is now completely a thing of the past. People simply turn up at the dance, without any formality.

Finally, there is the supper of the unmarried people of conscription age and over. This doesn't seem to have a fixed time or place. In one village it was held in the village *osteria* before the dance got going. In another, the supper was held some time later in a restaurant in another village. The suppers I went to were notable for the large quantities of food and drink, and a jovial, friendly atmosphere.

fire-throwing and the authority of young men

The announcements made when the *cidulas* are thrown are intended to raise a laugh, and are the culmination of a day of deliberate transgression - marked by the entry into what would normally be private family space, drunkenness, mild obscenity, and noise. One might therefore interpret any pronouncements by the *coscrits* and their companions as

part of a counter-world, designed to reinforce the *status quo* by its own evident absurdity. But such an interpretation misses important facts, both about the symbolism, and about the way the rhymes are composed and received.

The crucial symbolic point is that the *coscrits* are not at all presented as absurd figures. Quite the contrary, their very name - together with the fact that they may be wearing neck-kerchiefs from the *visita di leva* - associate them with the army, which traditionally plays an important and positively valued role in local life. The element of transgression and satire does not take the form of an inversion of the everyday order of things; the leitmotif is rather the revelation of *truths* which are normally kept politely concealed: private love-affairs, the reality of sex, and the harsh criticisms whose open expression in ordinary circumstances would disrupt the harmony of village life.

The business of composing the rhymes is meant to be approached with some seriousness, as well as with a sense of mischief. When they get the balance wrong, for instance if the rhymes are too overtly obscene, the fire-throwers are criticised. For this reason the *coscrits* and their companions are often helped with the rhymes by one or two older people. As the examples above show, the criticisms can be references to genuine problems, designed to give the recipients a nudge in the socially approved direction. Not all the jibes are made in this constructive spirit. The rhymes also include unfounded accusations that are simply designed to annoy. Sometimes, as in one of the examples above, *vedrans* - single people who have passed the age at which they are likely to marry - come in for particularly harsh comments. However, people also said that *vedrans* could play a respected role as organisers of the ceremony.

The announcements do seem to have some impact. One man

told me that he finally decided to marry his girlfriend after the firethrowers in her village had criticised him for keeping her hanging on. People sometimes lose their tempers as a result of the criticisms - in fact one rhyme I was shown criticised the person concerned for having lost his temper the year before. One incident indicates that the choice of the couples is itself felt as a kind of power - even though it no longer has any practical consequences. This occurred at Comeglians, a village which by and large excludes satire and mockery from the fire-throwing proceedings. One year the fire-throwers decided to liven things up by pairing people with unlikely partners - in particular pairing young things with *vedrans*. They received so many protests that they decided not to try the idea again.

There were two other rituals - practised occasionally until about 1950 - in which young men took a leading role in exerting informal authority. One, which has already been mentioned, was the *sampognada* carried out when the bridegroom had refused to pay *entrastalas*. *Sampognadas* were also occasionally carried out to mark disapproval of inappropriate marriages - for instance a marriage in which the wife was much older than the husband. The second ritual was known as the *purcita* - 'the sow' - and was a punishment for couples involved in illicit affairs, for instance adultery or an affair between a priest and one of his parishioners. Sawdust and other rubbish was spread between the houses of the offending couple, and satirical verses would be sung or stuck up on notices. Although participation in the *purcita* was kept strictly secret, it seems that young men played a prominent role.

We can now see the full meaning of the claim that the girls belong to the young men of the village. The young men are the ritual controllers of marriage. But what does their control accomplish?

C The implications of the 'wheels' ritual

setting the context for marriage

Some people say that the purpose of the *cidulas* ritual is to wish each other well in the search for marriage partners. So it is interesting to see how it relates to the popular rituals that used to surround marriage itself.

Since marriage involves moving the bride from one domestic unit to another, it inevitably breaches the boundaries of the units concerned and so exposes them either to loss or to the intrusion of dangerous forces from outside. The bride herself is also in a perilous position, because for a transitional period she belongs properly to neither household and so is exposed to the forces of *invidia* - which earlier examples suggested are particularly concentrated on sexuality and successful reproduction. It is not surprising to find a number of rituals which appear to counter these threats - though they tend to be explained as protection against bad luck rather than *invidia*.

At the wedding the clothes of the bride and groom should be protected by sewing in something holy, as should the wedding mattress. The actual business of moving home was subject to specific rules. The bride was not allowed to see the marital bedroom before the wedding. So she stayed at home when the *corredo*, duly protected by sprigs of blessed olive, was carried to her new home by women friends in the *geis* - back-baskets - that are very much a symbol of women's work role. This ritual, which continued into the 1970s, took place *sora sera* - 'in the evening', either at sunset or after dark. Two different people in their thirties suggested that this might have been to avoid the evil eye, but when I put the question to women whose *corredi* had been delivered in this way they said it was simply the custom. Although they did not say so, there is a kind of dramatic consistency in combining one

transition, from original home to married home, with another from day to night.

One preparatory ritual implicitly denied the possibility of envy. One of the main items of the *corredo* was the mattress for the marital bed. This used to be completed at a special work session to which the bride invited her women friends - including many if not all of the young women of the village - in effect to help her prepare for the sexual side of her marriage.

The boundaries of the *cjasa* do not only protect against misfortune and physical harm, they also protect the pattern of order and authority within the home. A detail of the delivery of the *corredo* alluded to this. When they arrived the leader of the delivery party would ask the groom's family if they were content to accept these goods *e dût ce ch'a ven devôr* - 'and all that comes after' - thus asking the future parents-in-law to accept all the consequences, good, bad, or merely disruptive, that would follow from the marriage.

Nevertheless the ritual associated with transferring the *corredo* and setting up the marital home contained plentiful reassurances that the proper order of authority would be respected. The very way the goods were carried to the bride's new home emphasised women's subordinate labouring role. The husband's contribution to the marital bedroom was to provide the bed itself and other wooden furniture. Apart from some table linen for the mother-in-law, and a spinning wheel for her own use, the main contents of the *geis* were the bride's own clothes and the mattress and sheets for the marital bed. Given the association of wood with hardness and strength, it seems reasonable to see in the partners' respective responsibility for the hard and soft furnishings of the bedroom an allusion to their sexual roles and the status relationship which they imply.

Elements of the *cidulas* ritual relate to both these themes. It is a way for the young men to enact a shared concern for each others' success in courtship - and as such another example of the way that the ostentatious sharing of experience can create an expectation of fellowship in a situation where rivalry and envy might otherwise be expected. It also emphasises masculine control of the process by which the symbolic boundaries of existing families are breached and new couples are formed. This is consistent with the emphasis on male supremacy in the context of the bride's move to her new home. The general message seems to be that though marriage inevitably violates the integrity of particular family units the principle of male dominance remains intact.

limiting the power of existing households

The *cidulas* ritual does not only set the scene for the formation of future families, it also limits the power of existing households: firstly by transgressing their boundaries and secondly by denying parental control over the children's selection of marriage partners. This would have prevented parents from using the marriages of their children as a means of perpetuating factional alliances to the detriment of the village as a whole. It fits the emphasis on young people's role in promoting village unity in the face of their elders' quarrels.

Though most people are clear that free choice of marriage partners has long been the usual rule, the impulse toward parental control was alive enough for the affirmation of young people's freedom to be worth making. One aspect of this was a preference for close marriage which applied to close kin as well as to fellow villagers. Marrying a close relative may have been associated with the maintenance of parental control - or at least with a lack of independence on the part of the young people concerned. An elderly woman discussing the marriage of her uncle to

his cousin, explained that the match had been arranged by his parents as he had not been forceful enough to go out and find himself a wife. An old man maintained that the better off parents would try to ensure that their daughters married someone of comparable status. The ability of both parents and the peer-group to influence the choice of partner is illustrated by an example in which both were united in wanting a girl to marry a young man from the same village. The story was told me by an old woman whose son considered it to be an example of an arranged marriage. She was pressured by her family into giving up an affair with a young man from a local town, and her village friends joined with her parents in encouraging a match with the young man from the village.

There are also stories of parents trying to prevent their daughters going to dances, and not wanting them to marry children of rival families. A comedy staged in Luincis's *latteria* by a drama society from the next valley dealt with this theme and its relation to village unity. The enthusiastic reception it received suggested that people thought that its story rang true. Afterwards the people I was staying with said that life used to be just like that.

The play's title '*Cui ese il bec?*' - 'who is the billy goat?' - shows that its underlying message is that trouble results when male potency fails and women are not properly controlled. In Carnia, as elsewhere in southern Europe, the billy-goat has connotations of cuckoldry and impotence (Blok). Impotence in both a specific and a general sense is the point at issue in this case. The play is about a quarrel between two neighbouring families. The parents of the families are *coparis* - god-parents of each others' children - and the son of one family is engaged to the daughter of the other. So the families are depicted as united by the ties which the *sops* and *cidulas* rituals attribute to the community as a whole. The two wives quarrel because a billy goat belonging to one of the families has failed to impregnate the other family's nanny

goat, and attempt to nag their rather mild husbands into taking sides. Through a series of ridiculous developments the women end up going to court. The bitterness that develops leads the women to oppose the forthcoming marriage of their children, which is also threatened by a lovers' tiff. Eventually, through the efforts of the husbands and of the priest, things are sorted out, the young people announce their reconciliation and the quarrel about the goats is resolved.

At one level the play is about women's involvement in *invidia* and the forces - masculinity, young love, and the church - which counteract it. But it also shows that *invidia* sets households against each other in quarrels over property, and that parental control over marriage would risk perpetuating the resulting divisions. The play shows that young love was seen as an aspect of social unity, and why it needed ritual support.

kinship, affinity, and generational oppositions

The *cidulas* ritual uses two apparently opposed metaphors to convey its message of village solidarity. One is that the villagers are all *kin*: like the children who ask for *sops*, the young men are fed by all the households in the village. The other is that villagers of the same generation are all potential *affines*. Combining these two metaphors strengthens the symbolic ties between fellow villagers, but at the same time poses a symbolic problem: how can the two metaphors be combined without conveying the implication that the village is incestuous?

The problem is linked to the passage of time. The opposition between kinship and affinity is not absolute but depends on the order in which the two states occur. Relationships of affinity in generation 1 produce kinship relationships in generation 2, but prevent further affinal ties in generations 2 onwards. If the second generation

could temporarily break the previous kinship ties during the time it took to set up affinal relationships, kinship ties could then be resumed reinforced by a new generation of marriages.

The *cidulas* ritual accomplishes this symbolic task in two stages. The first is the radical separation of successive generations. The message that erotic relationships are the business of the young and no-one else is expressed in the words of the song '*l'alegria a je dai žovins*'. The generational separation is reinforced by the announcement of the couples outside the village, after dark, in a context which generally sets aside the conventions of the normal social order of the village. The second stage is the reconstitution of the young people as a kin-like commensal unit in the final stage of the ritual - conveying the implicit message that the phase of affinal relationships sets the scene for the resumption of kinship relationships in a strengthened form. The new generation's establishment of kinship-like ties is the final stage of a symbolic process that involves the forceful breach of the kinship and affinal ties of earlier generations.

time, force, and fertility

The *cidulas* ritual brings about this symbolic separation of the generations by evoking the violent power of the army and the wild. This is one example of a more general symbolic relationship found in many societies between time, growth, and violence. In the Carnian context the association with violence can be seen as a consequence of the zero-sum view of life which is implicit in people's fears of *invidia*. According to the zero-sum view, any process of natural growth or increased well-being must be at the expense of someone or something else, and so one's own success is always an implicit act of aggression against others. Conversely, aggression - at least in mild

forms - is a necessary component of success and therefore has connotations of fertility and prosperity. This explains the good humour attached to people's memories of childhood *dispiets* and of the insults shouted at neighbouring communities during hay-making.

Since the passage of time inevitably leads to the success of the young and vigorous at the expense of the old, the rites that celebrate it must deal with this tension: either by making a violent break with the past, or by sympathetic identification with the suffering of the elderly and the dead, or - more usually - by both at once. Other Carnian examples of the association of symbolic violence with the march of time include men throwing fire-crackers on new year's eve (something I once saw done on the eve of a village saint's day while people were listening to the *cidulas* dedications); and the firing of rifles at weddings (perhaps the hooting of klaxons by cars carrying the wedding party should also be counted as an expression of violent strength). Both new year's eve and weddings are also of course marked by religious symbolism - Te Deum's in one case, and the marriage service in the other - and so implicitly related to the opposite approach of self-sacrifice and submission to the divine will. So, in these two examples, the expression of violent assertion and of christian submission are both linked and contrasted in ceremonies that mark the passage from one year to the next and from one stage of the life-cycle to another.

The *cidulas* ritual is based on symbolically violent assertion by the young, not on submission to the divine will. But it too is both linked, and opposed, to christian rituals. It generally take place on occasions with a religious meaning, such as *epifania* or the eve of the village saint's day. The dedications often incorporate ironic references to the church. One example was the dedication to the priest and his suitcase quoted in the last chapter. Another was an ironic 'message from the Pope' which was read out at the close of one *cidulas*

ceremony I attended. After a greeting to his 'dear sisters and brothers' the 'Pope' announced that he had introduced the ritual in the Vatican, and that it had been a stupendous success - all the priests had wanted to be paired with the most attractive nuns! In Luincis and Liariis worshippers leaving the church on new year's eve, after a Te Deum to give thanks for the blessings of the old year, were greeted by the spectacle of the burning disks and the sound of a raucous voice claiming to announce the courting couples that would become known in the new year.

This juxtaposition of the raucous *cidulas* ritual with christian services is an example of the way calendrical rites virtually everywhere combine episodes of marked solemnity with other episodes of socially approved transgression (Leach 1961). In Carnia, at least, these can be seen as expressions of the two parallel, but opposed, ways of dealing with the tensions between those who gain, and those who lose, as a result of the passage of time - a reconciliation which is essential to the continuation of the social structure.

There is some evidence that the role of violence in calendrical and life-cycle rituals is related to the way in which the relationship between social continuity and the passage of natural time is conceived. Gell (p91-2) identifies two basic forms of calendrical ritual - the ritual reversal of natural processes, and the cyclical model in which the passage of time leads to the continuous reconstitution of relationships. Bloch (1977; 1982) argues that the ritualisation of time in hierarchical societies symbolically replaces time with the image of a permanent state in which life and death are merged.

In the *cidulas* ritual, in which the passage of time is accepted, the violence is inflicted by figures identified with forces from the wild. In the Umeda cassowary ritual, which Gell offers as an example of ritual time-reversal,

the violence is inflicted on the wild by the orderly figures of the red bowmen (p46). Similarly Bloch argues that the whole complex of Merina calendrical and life-cycle ritual involves the placing of natural fertility under violent control. So both the time-reversal and permanent-state models of community locate ultimate power inside the community, whereas cyclical rituals like the *cidulas* locate it outside. This relationship to natural forces matches the social situations of the societies concerned. Both the Merina empire and the Umeda village were fully autonomous communities acknowledging no superior external power. The Carnian village on the other hand ultimately locates both practical and symbolic authority outside itself (see chapters 2 and 5).

The division of symbolic labour between the *cidulas* ceremony and christian ritual is broadly in line with Bloch's argument. The christian notion of self-sacrifice is an example of the merging of death and fertility - and the church is, in some circumstances at least, connected to the hierarchical structures of the wider society. The *cidulas* ritual on the other hand uses natural imagery to maintain a partially egalitarian social structure within the village. However, although this fit does support Bloch's basic argument, the actual details of the Carnian situation are more complex. Christian imagery invokes violence in the context of voluntarily accepted self-sacrifice - which is not quite the same as the violent assertion of control. On the other hand the symbolism of the *cidulas* ritual links it to the army, which itself embodies hierarchy in the world outside the village. The relation between the symbolic themes of nature, violent assertion, and self-sacrifice, is explored further in chapter 7.

the ownership of the village offspring

Finally it is time to return to the topic with which this

chapter began: the meaning of village endogamy and of the payment of *entrastalas*. Chapters 3 and 5 showed how the sense of family identity was embodied both in its human members and in its continuity as a unit of property - and how the children of the family both continued the identity of their parents and were in a sense their property. The 'wheels' ritual has enacted the formation of a new quasi-kinship identity of the village *gioventù* in a two-stage process: first the coming together of the young men as an independent power, and then the symbolic transfer of the girls from their parental homes to this new group. It is consistent with the parallel between identity and property at the level of family that the incorporation of the girls into this male led youth group should be accompanied by the feeling that individual girls are a kind of property - of the group as a whole, but more particularly of the young men. In their attempts to limit contacts with outside suitors, and in their demand for a compensatory payment of *entrastalas* when a girl marries out of the village, the young men are therefore following the logic of the relationships set up by the ritual of the 'wheels'.

A Society and nature

European peasant ideas about natural forces

Local people often remarked that life in Carnia is lived close to nature, and earlier chapters have given several examples of the practical and symbolic connections between social life and the natural world. At the practical level both families and villages were organisations for exploiting natural resources. The processes of food-production and consumption are also means by which identity is defined: village identity in the process of reaping, and both family and village identity in the process of eating. We have seen that sexuality is linked to wild nature - both in the fact that the burning disks of the 'wheels' ceremony are thrown from the wild to the village, and in the belief that illicit dancing could bring on a hail storm. The custom of attaching a pine sapling to a newly constructed house suggests a possible affinity between family homes and natural forces.

In this chapter I will focus directly on Carnian ideas about natural forces, and about the relationship between human society and wild nature. The results are relevant to several different, though related, academic debates. The last couple of decades have seen the publication of three notable studies of ideas about natural forces held by European peasant communities in Greece, Portugal, and France (Du Boulay, Pina-Cabral, Verdier). All three authors stress the association between natural and human fertility, and the tension between biological processes and the principle of stability and order. In all three societies the moon is associated with both fertility and disorder, while Du Boulay and Pina-Cabral stress the association of the sun with the principle of order. Pina-Cabral expresses the fundamental ideas as follows (p124).

'The soul and the body, men and women, the sun and the moon, and urban and rural peoples, represent complementary but contrasting principles whose differentiation is predominantly characterised by a perceived opposition between restraint and fertility respectively....Fertility is desired, but it must be shifted from the disorder of female fertility to the order of household fertility. Peasant society is not merely concerned with the procurement of a bountiful life, but rather, of a bountiful and orderly, 'social' life.'

Pina-Cabral's text makes the point, which writers from Frazer onwards have stressed, that the ritual regulation of fertility is linked to the affirmation of social order and places both within a wider cosmic order. The question is how we should think about the system of relationships which these representations invoke.

'nature', 'culture', and cosmology

One issue that has already been discussed in the last two chapters is the well-known problem of fitting non-social actions and processes into a scheme of social relationships. This is one sense of the opposition between 'nature' and 'culture' that is stressed so much in anthropological literature. In this sense it is arguable that the relation between 'nature' and 'culture' poses genuine problems which must be dealt with in any society at all, because there will always be a degree of mismatch between cultural schemes and the reality which they are meant to interpret. And it is also arguable that all cultures need to incorporate mechanisms for dealing with this mismatch.

From this it seems a small step to the proposition that each culture includes a conceptual dichotomy corresponding to the anthropologists' own dichotomy of nature and

culture - and to identify 'nature' with disorder and 'culture' with order. But it turns out not to be true. 'Nature' and 'culture' may not be present as concepts in other cultural schemes (Strathern 1990), and even in Western Europe and North America where at least the concept of 'nature' really is part of the general cultural scheme, the nature:non-nature distinction does *not* correspond to the distinction between order and disorder. As Schneider (1968) showed in his analysis of American kinship, supposedly natural 'blood' ties are felt to be one of the factors on which the order of kinship and marriage rest. Western culture, like many others, includes a category of the 'wild' which does partially line up with the opposition between disorder and order, but the notion of the 'wild' is not coterminous with 'nature' precisely because it excludes those natural forces - such as the 'natural' affection between members of the same family, or the benign power of the sun - that are represented as part of the encompassing social order.

Indeed the weight of ethnographic evidence is that non-human nature and human society are usually seen as part of a single cosmological scheme in which human actions are governed by natural forces, and people are linked to non-human nature by such social ties as shared identity, reciprocity, and conflict. In this situation it would be absurd to place 'nature' as a whole in opposition to 'society' - since nature is conceived of as permeated by social relationships that link it to human society. Anthropologists have suggested three main reasons why non-human nature should be incorporated in social schemes.

The earliest, advanced by Frazer, was that social relationships with nature - whether of identity as in 'imitative magic', or of exchange as in 'religion' - were an attempt to influence the course of natural phenomena. Although Frazer's evolutionary framework - leading from magic, through religion, to science - was soon abandoned, there is abundant evidence that people do intend their

ritual behaviour to influence the course of natural phenomena. In doing so they treat natural phenomena, or associated supernatural beings, as social personalities with whom they can interact.

Levi-Strauss (1964) suggested an alternative viewpoint, in which natural species are associated with social units as signs - in such a way that the relationship between the natural species reproduces certain formal properties of the relationship between the social units to which they are linked. A Carnian example of this kind of association is that between houses and pine-saplings, which will be discussed further below.

Recent analyses of cosmologies place particular emphasis on the issue of order and authority - and this is the line I want to pursue here. I will argue that the key to Carnian ideas about the relationship between human society and non-human nature is the fact that the authority and integrity of all social units is felt to depend on their strength and biological vigour. Ideas of sociability must therefore be extended to the natural world from which that vigour derives - partly as a way of justifying specific rights, and partly to ensure that the relationships that derive from interactions with nature support rather than contradict those of the social order. Natural entities, such as the sun, moon, and fire - and various plants and animals - play parts in the resulting scheme that are related both to the kind of energy they embody and convey and to characteristics that make them signs of particular kinds of social relationship.

B Life-force and order

sun, moon, and growth

Many specific ideas confirm the central point that humans are felt to share the same kind of life force as plants

and animals.

One highly suggestive piece of evidence is in fact more indicative of past than of present attitudes - but it is so striking that it is worth reporting all the same. In the local speech children are referred to as "*fruts*", a word with the same derivation as our "fruit" and the Italian word "*frutto*" which also means fruit (Frau). The implication is that at one time the Latin stem could refer to either human or vegetable fruitfulness. However the equivalence is not drawn in contemporary speech - since the local word for fruit is "*poma*".

But the contemporary sense of the equivalence of human and plant life is shown by parallels between the forces that are believed to govern both - those connected with the sun and, particularly, the moon. I am not sure how much it matters whether these parallels are seen as figures of speech and how much they are seen as literally true. But, for what it is worth, the influence of the sun on plants seems to be linked to human sexuality by a figure of speech, while ideas about the influence of the moon on human, animal, and vegetable biology seems to be taken as literally true. One form of fire was once seen as an embodiment of vital energy, but people now prefer a scientific interpretation.

The parallel between human biology and the sun's effect on plants is expressed in a charming phrase that is used of plants at the time their leaves are growing and buds are appearing in the spring. They are said to be *in amôr* - that is in love.

A wide range of biological processes are thought to be affected by the phases of the moon. Local people do not think of this as in any way a symbolic or religious matter, but as a simple question of fact. When I told one informant that I had not heard people in England talk about these phenomena he found it very strange: since the

English are famous for their scientific ability he would have expected them to be more observant. In fact, though I obtained the ideas that follow from local people, similar ideas are set out in special calendars such as *Barba Nera* - 'black beard' - which people use as guides for planting and other agricultural work.

The waxing moon is associated with biological vigour. Hair and beards grow faster. Wine bottled when the moon is growing will be fizzy, while wine bottled when the moon is waning will be flat. Sap is thought to rise when the moon is waxing, which means that fruit and vegetables should not be picked at that time - since being full of life they will not come away easily from the plant and afterwards may sprout shoots. A similar point applies to pigs. If a pig is butchered during the waxing moon its vital forces will be too strong and the meat will quickly go bad. This association between natural vitality and impurity meant that in the days before washing machines sheets were washed when the moon was waning. This fact, which I was told with embarrassed laughs, was because the dirt - presumably stains from bodily fluids - was more vigorous when the moon was waxing, and so harder to get out.

Other examples of the moon's influence seem to embody a different principle - a contrast between things which grow upwards, and things which grow downwards. Thus corn should be planted when the moon is waxing because it grows upwards, but potatoes should be planted when the moon is waning because they grow under the soil. Beans appear to be an exception to this because they should be planted when the moon is waning - but the reason for this conforms to the general principle. If they were planted when the moon was waxing all their vitality would go into flowering; planting them when the moon is waning ensures that the growth goes into the downward-hanging pods.

Strictly speaking my use of the terms 'waxing' and

'waning' in the last few paragraphs is not quite correct. The phase that I have described as 'waxing', does not start immediately after the moonless night, but rather a few days later when the growth of the moon is well established. Similarly it continues a few days after the full moon. It seems that the influence of the moon does not depend purely on whether it is waxing or waning, nor on how full it is, but rather on a combination of the two.

The moon is also thought to influence human reproduction, though ideas on this point do not appear to be fully consistent. There is a belief that babies tend to be born at a particular time - or perhaps particular times - in the lunar cycle. Hospital nurses are said to know this from observation. The elderly woman who provided the most complete account of lunar influences said that conceptions that occurred when the moon was waxing were more likely to produce boys, while girls were more likely to be conceived when the moon was waning - which suggests that births would follow the same pattern. However other informants appeared unsure about exactly how lunar phases relate to the pattern of births, and it is possible that there are alternative theories.

No-one said directly that the moon influences women's cycles, but there is clearly an association of ideas since people would go on from the topic of lunar influence to talk about the damage that menstruating women can do. They are believed to cause metal to tarnish, and plants to wither. They must also not be allowed near pork butchery or sausage making since they will cause the meat to go bad. (Pigs' sexual biology is thought to have analogous effects on the quality of their meat. Sows are not slaughtered when they are on heat because their meat would rot. I was once told that meat from an uncastrated boar was so strong that it gave off smoke when it was cooked.)

The elderly woman who provided the fullest account of the influence of the moon insisted that all its effects -

whether on humans, animals or plants - followed from a single principle. At the time I was puzzled by this, since half the examples seemed to relate to growth and vigour as such, while the other half seemed to refer to the direction of the growth. However these contrasts could be reduced to a single dimension if what I previously glossed as 'biological vigour' was thought of instead as 'outward movement'. In that case there would be a single contrast between upward-and-outward movement, and downward-and-inward movement.

A belief about the best times of year for felling timber suggests that the seasonal influence of the sun may also be seen in terms of this contrast - so that autumn and winter are not merely times when things fail to grow, but are part of a movement of contraction. I was told on a number of occasions that February and August were the best months for cutting trees, because in those months there is least danger that sap will cause the wood to warp. Wood cut during the autumn would be more likely to warp than wood cut in August. This would make no sense if the contrast was between times when the sap is rising and times when it is not. But it would make sense if the idea was to find a time when the sap is not moving - a still point between the spring phase of upward movement, and an autumn phase of downward movement.

If this interpretation is right it might mean that people conceive the growth promoting powers of the sun and moon according to the same model. But there is a problem: in terms of the lunar cycle the time for felling trees, like the time for picking fruit and vegetables, is the *luna vecja* - which usually means when the moon is waning or absent, not the moment of transition between the waxing and waning phases. It may be that the influence of sun and moon are thought of in terms of two different models, but it is also possible, and perhaps more likely, that we are in the presence of a single implicit model which is not elaborated consistently in all its details (Bourdieu

1977:140-143).

The moon is also thought to influence the weather. Here the idea relates to the successive quarters of the lunar cycle: the principle is that if it rains, or is fine, at the beginning of the lunar quarter the weather will continue in the same way for the next seven days. Though this is clearly a different model from the one that applies to living things, the two models do share the underlying notion that the moon controls the fluids necessary to life - whether sap, blood, or rainwater.

sun, moon, and order

A second symbolic association of light is with unity and order. Indeed this association is just as strong as the association between light and fertility.

These associations are particularly strong in the case of the sun. I once heard departures referred to metaphorically as "*tramonti*" - "sunsets". Zanier, a local writer, quotes a traditional verse in which a young woman imagines that the sun is weeping at the sight of so many young men leaving to work abroad (1977:p113). I once heard a political speech in which the speaker, stressing the unity of all parts of Friuli - eastern, central, and western, said something along the lines of "there is Friuli of the sunrise, and Friuli of the mid-day sun, and Friuli of the sunset - but it is all one sun!".³²

Flowers are obvious symbols of the life-giving power of the sun which are also associated with innocence and goodness. There is an expression *rose e fiori* - 'roses and flowers' in Italian, though in Friulian *rosa* simply

³²The point he was making was far less obvious than the vivid natural metaphor suggests. He was speaking in Gorizia, a town on the Slovenian border - and seeking to rebut a previous speaker who had asserted that the town was historically a centre of German and Slav culture.

means flower - which is used ironically to contrast people who the speaker thinks rather disreputable with others who are even worse.

The moon is associated with *disorder*. The influence of the moon on potentially disorderly natural processes has already been described. There is also an association with disordered emotions. The word "*lunatico*" is used to describe someone who is moody - with the underlying idea that his personality varies with the moon. But, although I once heard a woman claim that her moods were affected by the full moon, this is usually no more than a figure of speech.

sun and moon as natural symbols

What is it about the sun and moon that makes it possible for them to play these symbolic roles - first as joint symbols of a life-force that permeates the entire human and biological world, and secondly as distinct symbols of order and disorder?

As we will see later, the sun and moon share the property of embodying life force with fire - which suggests an inherent association of heat and light with a sense of vitality. This seems intuitively obvious, and probably needs to be understood in terms of human physiological reactions to light and heat. There is also an observable empirical correlation between plant growth and the increase and decrease of solar energy during the annual cycle. Taken together these two facts make sunlight a natural symbol for a kind of energy that is shared by people and plants.

The moon is a suitable symbol for human biological vigour both as a source of light, and because its periodicity corresponds to that of the menstrual cycle. This might have made it a symbol of specifically feminine vitality,

but it does not seem to have done so in practice. It is true that a waxing moon has the same effect on pork butchery as does a menstruating woman. On the other hand, one account associates the waxing moon with the conception of *male* children. The implicit association seems to be between the increase in lunar light and outward and upwards motion of all kinds: the bringing forth of babies or of menstrual blood, or men's physically external sexuality - not to mention parallel phenomena in the vegetable domain. Despite local insistence that the moon's affect on vegetable growth is a matter of observation I tend to doubt it - and suspect that the attribution of this kind of influence to the moon is entirely derived from a logically prior belief that human and plant biology are governed by common forces.

Why should the sun and the moon - both sources of light, energy, and growth - receive such different moral evaluations? One possibility is the role of light in facilitating communication - and so setting up a system of mutual communication and control. This makes the sun - which creates a situation of full mutual visibility - a more obvious symbol of order and unity than the moon which shines without dispelling much of the darkness.

Middle-aged people emphasised how as children they were brought up to fear the night. The night was also the time at which spirits and various malicious supernatural beings were abroad. Zanier evokes the emotion in a poem entitled "*Ogni sera*" - "every evening".

*Il di ch'al clopa
al trascina i siei ros
su pas monz di Cjanal
e sot
la not
a glot las vals
e impia la poura dai oms.*

The limping day
drags its red glow
over the mountains of Cjanal
and below
the night
swallows the valleys
and ignites men's fear.

(Zanier 1977:p27)

But, as earlier chapters showed, communication can also be a vehicle for dangerous envy - so one might expect that darkness might be experienced as a protection as well as a source of threat. This is consistent with the local idea that owls and black-cats are bringers of misfortune. A friend explained the menacing character of owls by referring to their staring eyes. Though he did not say so, both owls and black cats have eyes that see in the midst of darkness - and so have the capacity to see things that should remain hidden.

The symbolic roles of the sun and moon may not depend entirely on the quantity and quality of the light they produce. Their shape also appears to be important. Earlier chapters suggested that circularity was a symbol of unity. This may help to explain instances in which the sun appears to represent wholeness and transcendence. It may also explain why fruit can be separated from the plants on which they grow when the moon is waning - i.e. becoming less circular. The mere fact that the moon changes its shape also makes it an obvious symbol for mood swings.

The notions of a universal life force, and of a contrast between orderly and disorderly life, arise directly from the importance of 'strength' in social relationships and the difficulty of fitting biology into social schemes - and therefore do not derive directly from the physical properties of the sun and the moon. However, those

properties - with some modifications that improve their conceptual fit - do enable the sun and moon to be used as key elements of a symbolic scheme that assigns all biological processes a socially appropriate role.

C Animals and disorder

Sunlight, snakes, and the control of disorderly nature

This symbolic scheme also lends a moral tone to agricultural work. Although all growth appears to be controlled by some form of light, it is only partly under the morally beneficial control of sunlight. Its dependence on the moon - a comparatively weak source of light nearly always seen at night - suggests a link between natural growth and the disorderly powers of darkness, and hence the need for natural growth to be controlled. Indeed the references to the power of the moon are almost always made in the context of efforts to control nature. The idea is that if human intervention is not carried out at the right time, the natural processes will not lead to the desired result - leading instead to insufficient growth, misdirected growth, or putrefaction. From this point of view human beings and the sun appear as allies in the struggle for orderly growth.

It is clear from the way people refer to reaping that they see it not merely as a matter of obtaining hay, but also as the imposition of a kind of order. A piece of land that has been reaped is described as *net* - 'clean' - and there is a good deal of criticism of neighbours who fail to reap, and so leave the land looking untidy. Reaping also prevents the advance of scrub and trees. This may not have been an important consideration in the days when a good supply of hay was economically crucial to most families, but it is now seen as the main motive for reaping. One of the reasons people give for wishing to

keep the woods at a distance is that this keeps the space round the village 'open' to the light.

Another is that it keeps snakes - a real, if minor, danger - away from the houses. So there does indeed seem to be a de facto alliance of humans and the sun against disorderly nature. The following belief suggests that the struggle with disorderly nature, and the alliance with the sun, are also a matter of felt experience.

Three people I knew had been frightened on different occasions by the sight of a small snake known as the *codâr*. This snake is said to be very short - about 30 centimetres - and fat. It paralyses its victims either with the hypnotic power of its eyes or by spitting poison at them. I am sceptical about the existence of this creature: one man who had seen it was unable to identify it among the photographs of snakes in a book of alpine fauna. However, it may exist: another friend told me of a doctor who used to keep a preserved *codâr* in a bottle. But even if it does exist it has been associated with magical beliefs. The man who failed to identify it in the natural history book described a traditional cure for someone who had been paralysed by a *codâr*; this consisted of making a furrow in the ground beside the victim and covering him or her with a white sheet.

The word *codâr* has another sense - it is the wooden sheath attached to the back of the belt in which one keeps the whetstone used to sharpen the scythe after every few strokes of reaping. Many households have a decorative *codâr* painted with flowers, and containing flowers, hanging on the wall as a reminder - or so it seemed to me - of people's capacity to appreciate and appropriate the fertility of summertime.

The snake is said to have the same name because of its shape. But the two senses of *codâr* have more in common than that. Both represent the power to appropriate life

force - in the one case humans appropriating the life force of the land, and in the other the land appropriating human life. The detail about the mock burial confirms that this is the significance of the power of the *codâr* as snake. The result is a balanced system in which human power over the land is matched by a dangerous reciprocal power of land over human beings. The fact that ornamental *codârs* are decorated with flowers associates them, and hence the activity of reaping, with the power of the sun.

An interesting feature of this is that the power of the sun is associated with an attempt to deny a certain kind of social relationship with the land - one of equal exchange - in favour of another in which the land is dominated by its human cultivators. The snake represents the inappropriate social relationship, symbolised by its use of a power that resembles the evil eye. Between humans of course, social relationships generally are appropriate, and so we find animals symbolising ways in which appropriate social relationships can break down.

pigs

One situation in which this occurs is that of pig killing. Killing a pig used to be a major festive occasion - in part because it produced a supply of ham, salami, and other sausages which might last the family for a whole year. A hint that pork butchery and human sexuality might be symbolically linked was given by a wooden decoration hung on the wall in one home I visited.³³ The decoration, carved by a local man, consisted of a board in the shape of a pig, on which was written '*a maridâsi si sta ben un mêș, a copâ il purcit si sta ben dûț l'an*' - 'when you marry you feel fine for a month, when you kill the pig you are set up for the whole year'.

³³Minnich provides a detailed analysis of the way practical and symbolic meanings interact in the case of pig-killing in a Slovenian village.

Several things suggest an identification between pigs and female sexuality. The first blood to spurt out when the pig's throat is cut is captured in a bucket and later mixed with grapes/raisins and sugar to make a delicacy known as *mulas*. Another meaning of '*mula*' is 'girl'. Another delicacy made from pigs' fat is known as *fričas* - and '*friča*' is also a slang term for vulva. We have already seen that the *charivari* that used to be carried out to shame illicit lovers was known as the *purcita* - the 'sow'. One man told me how an ancestor of his, who was rumoured to be having sexual difficulties with his wife, one day received a parcel containing the eyes of a pig.

All this suggests that the killing of a pig by men might somehow be identified with male domination of women. The allocation of roles during the two pig killings I attended was consistent with this. Once the carcass was ready for butchery the men stood at tables to cut it up, while the women sat on chairs washing the intestines in basins placed on the floor. During the proceedings the women fetched and carried for the men who shouted loudly at them for being too slow. When the men shouted they did not call the women's names but simply called out '*feminas*' - 'women'.

So it does make sense to think of pig-killing as an act of dominance over both women and the forces of disorderly nature. But the domination is not done in the name of order. It is not a solemn but a festive occasion at which a good deal of wine is drunk. At one of the sessions I attended to the owner of the pig was blaspheming copiously - something that his wife cheerfully pointed out to me. All in all, pig-killing seems to be a triumph, not of abstract order, but of masculine vigour over disorderly femininity.

Pigs are also symbols of unfastidious greed. Someone who eats everything that is put on their plate is known friendlily as a '*purcit a buina bocja*' - 'a pig with a

good mouth'. Someone who always turns up where there is food to be had risks being told he is like the '*purcit di Sant Antoni*' - Saint Anthony's pig. This seems to refer to a custom, once carried out in at least one local village, of leaving a piglet free to wonder round the village to be fed on scraps by all the families and eventually slaughtered to provide meat for the priest.

So the association of pigs with female sexuality expresses an underlying analogy between eating and sexual intercourse in which the woman's role is that of consumer. This fits well with the evil-eye-like powers of menstruating women, since the evil eye is also considered a manifestation of greed. I do not think this means that women are thought to be inherently greedy. The point is rather that their sexual energy is receptive and that, if it were not controlled, this receptive energy could turn into greedy anti-social lust, rather than socially legitimate marital sexuality. Women can be too receptive and open. This departure from the norms of exchange within marriage is the opposite of that of the stingy husband lampooned in the song for feeding his wife on *polenta* and *been-pods* and beating her with a stick - suggesting that a risk with men is that they will be too closed.

bears and mačarots

The animal which embodies the quality of closedness and unsociability is the bear. Since it lives in the woods it is also associated with the idea of wild nature. So, as we will see later on, it is an apt symbol of the rather a-social independence which is part of the image of Carnian men. In this sense the bear is the masculine counterpart of the pig - a domestic animal which is all too open.

Bears are a-social rather than actively disruptive, unlike another set of wood-dwelling beings - the *mačarots*.

Almost no-one now believes in *mačarots*, but people still know what they were supposed to be like. They were little men who were capable of transforming themselves, particularly by suddenly growing to a huge size, and were tricksters. They lived in the woods and used to hammer on tree-trunks with wooden sticks. Two accounts seem to link *mačarots* to fire and sexuality. Gortani (p147) recounts a tale collected in the last century. Some girls were resting in the evening after cutting the grass for hay. From the other side of the valley they heard some beautiful music. After a while the music stopped, there was a burst of laughter, and they saw a *mačarot* in the form of fire shooting down the hillside on the other side of the valley like a rocket. The other account was produced by an old man who I asked about *fouc voladi* - literally 'flying fire' - flames that seem to hover in the air though nothing appears to be burning³⁴. He said that pine trees need to fertilise each other, which they do by knocking their trunks together. This produces *fouc voladi* which turns into a *mačarot*.³⁵

The material is really too sparse to be sure, but it seems possible that *mačarots* were a symbolic embodiment of uncontrolled male sexuality. As such they form an interesting contrast to the ideas surrounding female sexuality. They are aggressive rather than receptive, and they themselves embody a form of light, rather than being associated with an external source of light such as the

³⁴ *Fouc voladi* seems to correspond to both *ignus fatuus* and St Elmo's Fire. People talk about seeing the flames hovering above graveyards, due to phosphorescent gas given off by decomposing bodies. I was told by a priest (not a local man) that people used to believe that *fouc voladi* was a manifestation of the spirits of the dead.

³⁵ This suggests that the analogy between human and plant reproduction may focus on pine trees in particular, which seems to fit the fact that a male baby is referred to as a *pin* - one of the words for pine tree. But this is no more than a suggestion, and not one that received a positive response from local people I asked - who tended to say that the two senses of *pin* were unrelated.

moon. But the most fundamental point is that both male and female sexuality are potentially associated with disorder; it is not a case of orderly male authority being opposed to disorderly female sexuality.

D Plants, light, and the definition of social units

the malleability of natural meanings

These relationships between life-force, light, vegetation, animals, and order or disorder are treated as givens: they are not explicitly *constructed* by ritual. But they can be *used* by rituals in order to define particular social relationships: specifically those of household and village. These units can be symbolically represented both as the embodiment of natural vigour, and as means by which it can be conquered and controlled. This is done by associating these units with trees and flowers, and with the domination of potentially disorderly aspects of nature such as pigs and of meadows which need to be kept *net*.

It is also done by the ritual use of fire. A couple of people remarked that fire seems somehow to be alive: it keeps you company when it is crackling in the *spolert* - the wood-burning stove found in virtually every kitchen. However fire is morally ambivalent. In some contexts it represents a morally approved - even holy - force, but in others it is the expression of evil.

Fire could be used to counteract the powers of *strias*, as is shown by a practice which people say used to be carried out, though not within living memory. If the process of making cheese failed people used to suspect that a *stria* had intervened to spoil the milk. The solution was to take the chains used to tether the cattle in their stalls and beat them with burning embers from the family's hearth. This would cause the *stria* physical pain - and the idea was that she would come knocking on the door to

ask to be released from the pain, freeing the cattle from their enchantment in exchange.

However fire can also represent an evil power, as is shown by a traditional story which a three year old child was encouraged by her parents to tell me. Many years ago a young woman was walking along the road in the Val Pesarina, when a stranger drove by at the reins of a horse-drawn carriage and offered her a lift. She was about to accept when she saw his face - his eyes were as red as fire. Frightened, she turned down the offer. The man drove on, but a few meters further on horses, driver and carriage all burst into flames and vanished. The stranger had been the Devil.

However the crucial point about fire is that it is open to manipulation by human beings. It resembles the sun and moon in being a source of light and hence an embodiment of life-force, but unlike them it can be used as an embodiment of the life-force of particular social units. The fact that it can also stand for individual, a-social energy - as in the case of the *mačarot* - makes it a particularly suitable symbol of the fusion of individual vigour and intentionality into wider social groups.

representations of the household

Fire is a very important symbol of household unity, indeed the word *fouc* - fire - is traditionally used to mean 'household'. The focus of the family's internal communication is the kitchen - and the associated image is that of the kitchen fire. Nowadays the standard kitchen is equipped with a *spolert*, which provides room heating and is used for slow-cooking foods such as polenta, and a canister powered gas stove. However neither of these has the same place in popular affection as the traditional *fogolâr* or open hearth. The *fogolâr* is now only found in the richest houses and in inns, but was standard until

about the turn of the century. It consists of a brick platform slightly above floor level, over which cooking pots can be suspended on chains. (Nowadays a kind of hood is placed above it to channel smoke and fumes into an air vent, but I am not sure that this hood is traditional).

An important feature of the *fogolâr* is that it is placed so that people can sit round it, not just in front of it. It was a place round which family and visitors could gather in the evening - both a practical and a symbolic focus of unity. The association of Friulian emigrants is called the *Fogolâr Furlan*. A picture of a gentle looking couple in traditional dress sitting beside a *fogolâr* adorns the outside wall of one of the local inns, and a similar picture of a young woman forms a full page plate in a critical study of Antonelli - a somewhat sentimental photographer of Carnian life in the early years of this century (Cacitti et al. 1979). In the Antonelli photograph she is sitting, slightly off the centre of the picture and in the shadow, gazing at a pot suspended over the fire which is in the centre of light to which the eye is drawn. The impression is that the active principle is the fire and that her activity as cook is somehow that of an assistant. Her role of food provider seems to be taken over by, or at least shared with, the fire.

In effect the *fogolâr* is to the small group of family and friends what the sun is to the world at large: a source of light, heat, and nourishment - associated with unity and in a vague way with loyalty and morality. I suspect it is this combined association of visible fire with cooking and togetherness which is responsible for the continuing appeal of the image of the *fogolâr*. Certainly open fires are still popular: recently built houses generally have a large open fire-place in the sitting room, but these fire places do not yet form part of local iconography. The *spolert* has perhaps more sentimental appeal - I once heard a local politician say that Friulian should be learnt *dongje dal spolert* (near the *spolert*) - but lacks the

glamour of visible flames. So neither sitting room fire nor *spolert* can really replace the *fogolâr* as an evocative image of the family and the life force that animates it.

Both flowers and pine trees figure prominently in the symbolism of houses. Women place great emphasis on decorating their window-sills with flowers, which they say gives a feeling of life. As mentioned in chapter 5, the pine is central to a ceremony that takes place as a new house is nearing completion. When the roof has been placed on a newly built house the builder attaches a pine sapling, the *peč*, to the front of the house just under the eaves. When this is done the owner-to-be sits down with the building workers to a ceremonial meal known as the *licov*.

I first became aware of this when I saw a *peč* attached to the front of a new house and asked the building contractor what it was. After being told of the custom of the *peč* and the *licov* I asked whether they were important - and received an emphatic answer that they were. But the contractor did not have any answer to the further question of why they were important - apparently for him they were an important custom and that was that. Other people were almost equally uninformative on the point - except for two suggestions, each made by one informant only. The first was that putting up the *peč* was a sign that the house was now closed.

The second was that the sapling represented the idea that the family that moved into the house would grow like a tree. The image of a tree is one of the standard metaphors for kinship. One says of people who are believed to be distantly related that they come from the same *čoc* or *čoca* - 'tree stump'.

A further possible meaning can be discerned in the general associations of trees. The woods are very much a male area - lumberjack being an occupation with a particularly

stressed masculine identity. And *mačarots* too are associated with trees.

Combining these various associations we can interpret the rite of attaching the *peč* to the eaves of the house, as an identification between the life force exerted by the closed house, and the vigour and fertility of the male lineage who will continue to inhabit it. In doing so it implicitly associates the house with the wild a-social energy of the woods - in direct contrast with the decoration of window sills with flowers, which seems to emphasise their openness to the benign influence of the sun. This ambiguity matches exactly the doubly ambiguous symbolic position of the household - which is both a unit that is defined by the life-force derived from shared consumption of natural products and a unit that struggles to dominate nature - and also, as chapter 5 showed, both a component of the wider community of the village and a separate unit attempting to assert its interests against those of the village as a whole. In both cases the reconciliation of the household with the outside - whether natural or social - involves the symbolic invocation of the sun.

macs di San Žuan

The association between flowers and the sun is central to a custom which seems to express a link between the forces associated with the sun, the moon, and domestic fire. On St John's Day - 24 June, which is thought of as marking the solstice - people take bunches of wild flowers and herbs, which should ideally have been picked at dawn, to be blessed in church. The bunches, which are known as *macs di san Žuan* - 'St John's posies' - are then dried and kept. Later in the year when there are storms some of these flowers are burnt by women to drive the storm away - ideally standing in the doorway so that the smoke can rise.

I heard two different local interpretations of this rite. One was provided by local women when I asked whether they really thought it could be effective - the answer was that belief in its effectiveness was part of their christian faith. The educated opinion, shared by local priests, is that it is a survival of pagan ritual. The priests react to this in different ways. In one half of the comune of Ovaro it is seen as a popular tradition to be cherished; in the other it is frowned on, and people are encouraged to burn blessed olive twigs instead.

In terms of the ideas developed in this chapter, it seems clear that the flowers are associated with the power of the sun, and one interpretation might be that burning them invokes this power to counteract the destructive power of the storm. It can also be seen as a restoration of the balance between natural fertility and social order which together are embodied by the sun. To the rain, associated with the moon, fertility, and disorder, is added fire, associated with community and order. There is a saying '*il fum al va su e l'aga a ven ju*' - literally 'smoke rises and water falls' - which is used to indicate that something is what would be expected, or that all is as it should be. A woman, standing in the doorway of her home, burning some flowers from the *mac* as the rain comes down, would seem to be the very embodiment of this saying.

The rite also seems to transcend several binary polarities: the flowers, which were picked at the point where night became day, bring together fire and water, earth and sky, and inside and outside. The fact that they were picked on St. John's day links them to the power of the sun and suggests that the sun is not only linked to the positive value of the day-order::night-disorder polarity, but also evokes a sense of totality within which both aspects of each contrast have a place.

village unity and the sun

Earlier chapters identified two contrasting expressions of village unity - one based on the shared assertiveness of the *coscrits* and other young men, and the other based on shared self-sacrifice and the church. Both expressions of unity are linked to solar symbolism.

Many local people believe that fire-throwing dates back to pre-Roman times and is connected with worship of the Celtic sun god *Beleno*. The origin of this idea seems to be an article published at the beginning of the present century by Leicht. This view was contested a quarter of a century later by Vidossi who argued for a German origin of the rite, and suggested that the fire might be interpreted in terms of the protection of prosperity and fertility from evil spirits, rather than in terms of a link between fire, the sun, and fertility. Either idea seems to be perfectly compatible with the evidence for the distribution of the rite - which has been reported in many parts of the German-speaking world, as well as in Slovenia (with occasional reports from further flung areas as well).³⁶ Though this distribution is clearly consistent with a German origin, the areas concerned are thought to have been inhabited by Celts during antiquity.

Burning disks thrown from hillsides are among the fire rituals mentioned by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (p802). Frazer (who Vidossi cites in support of his views) was concerned to weigh the relative merits of two competing theories about the original significance of fire in European folk rituals (p839-51). One, which he attributed to Mannhardt, was the solar theory - according to which the use of fire was intended to imitate the sun, and so magically promote fertility. The other, attributed to Westermarck, was the purificatory theory - according to which the fire was intended to drive out evil influences.

³⁶Matičeto, Pellizzari, and Vidossi all discuss the geographical distribution of the rite.

Frazer leans towards Westermarck's view, while remarking that the two theories are not mutually incompatible - a point of view strongly supported by this chapter's analysis of the sun as a symbol of both life-force and order.

However, in the Carnian case, there is a problem with both these views - namely that the ritual itself contains no explicit reference either to the sun or to the protection of fertility in general from evil influences. Vidossi notes that invocations of fertility do form an explicit part of the ritual in Switzerland and Tirol and argues that the lack of this feature in Carnia suggests that the rite was imported from elsewhere.

Nowadays those local people who link the *cidulas* with the sun always cite Beleno in support - implicitly appealing to scholarly legitimation. Are there any other grounds for supposing that the disks really evoke the image of the sun? The symbolic connotations of the disks are not precisely the same as those of the sun. The dedications often refer to them with a diminutive - *cidulina* - in contrast to references to the sun, which generally stress its power. The unity evoked by the *cidula* - that of the couple - is also on a small scale compared with the overall unity and order which sunlight imposes. Indeed the *cidulas* are thrown after dark, in a scene of mild transgression. Finally there is only one sun, but there are as many *cidulas* as there are potential courting couples in the village.

Nevertheless, I think the answer must be 'yes'. The disks look a bit like the sun. They go through the sky like the sun. The couples to whom the disks are dedicated are proposed, however ironically, as lovers - and the sun sets the flowers and trees *in amôr*. Earlier this century, the hats of *coscrits* setting off for the *visita di leva* used to be garlanded with flowers. Since they are the leading actors in the ritual, this provides another link with the

sun. Finally the circular form of the *cidulas* - 'wheels' - has connotations of wholeness which are also shared by the sun. Whether or not the *cidulas* were actually thought of as solar symbols before Leicht's article, they and the ceremony of which they form part draw on so many of the same symbolic themes that it does seem legitimate to say that the fire-throwing ceremony evokes the image of the sun to create a village unity that transcends the divisions between separate households and successive generations.

The church too links its power symbolically to that of the sun. The "Ave Maria" is rung out at the beginning and end of each day, separating the day from the physically and morally dangerous night. In summer time the crosses carried in religious processions are garlanded in flowers. The symbolism is made explicit in the recently produced tourist guide to Santa Maria di Gorto - the most important church in the valley - in which an extended passage compares the east window of the church to the Virgin Mary through whom the light of Christ reaches humanity, just as the window transmits the sun's rays to the interior of the church.

Fire too plays a prominent role in church symbolism. Burning a candle in church is, according to one of the local priests, the symbolic offering of a life to God. On Good Friday all the candles in church are extinguished. They are later re-lit from a large candle which has been lit from a bonfire outside the church. The same priest explained that this bonfire should itself be lit by sparks caused by striking two stones together - as a symbol of Christ's stone tomb. Here light is being used to symbolise, not the natural life associated with sunlight, but the purified power associated with christian self-sacrifice. In the decoration of the church the haloes of the saints, and the depiction of the cross as giving off rays of light, emphasise the point that light can express a higher form of power. Like the sun, religious light

expresses the transcendence of self and family - but self-interest is transcended in the interests of an absolute ideal, not merely in those of village unity and generalised fertility.

Thus the divisions between village households can be transcended both by young men in a ritual that links the evocation of the sun to fire and sexuality, and by the church which uses sunlight and firelight to evoke the idea of a purer divine energy. In the former case the young men embody the natural force generated by the sun, in the latter the faithful sacrifice their own physical vigour in return for divine aid.

strength, sacrifice, and the conquest of the land

This tension between assertive strength and christian self-sacrifice also runs through the village community's relationship with the external world - both its natural environment and neighbouring communities. The aggressive side of the collective relationship to the land was shown most clearly in the symbolism of reaping the meadows on the mountainside. It was an act of assertion, both against neighbouring villages - expressed in shouted insults - and the land itself - expressed in the symbolism of the *codâr*. On the other hand control over the land is also enacted in christian symbolism - in the prominent positions of churches, and in the placing of crosses on the mountain tops. In this context the values of aggression and self-sacrifice appear to be complementary rather than opposed.

This complementarity is most vividly expressed in a Friulian language song written after the 1915-18 war which local people say is almost their national anthem. The song, which celebrates their identity as mountain people in a context which links it to the image of Italian patriotism is entitled *Stelutis Alpinis* - 'alpine stars' - the local name for the white star-shaped flowers called

edelweiss in German. It is sung as if by a soldier who had died in battle on the mountains along the frontier with Austria. The words are

*Se tu vens ca su tas cretis
La che lôr mi an soterât
Al e un splaz plen di stelutis
Dal mio sanc l'e stât bagnât.
Par segnâl une crosute
Je scolpide li tal cret
Fra ches stelis naš l'arbute,
Sot di lôr jo duar cuiet.*

*Cjol su, cjol une stelute
Je'a riguarde il nestri ben.
Tu i daras 'ne bussadute,
E po platila tal sen.
Quant che a cjase tu ses sole
E di cûr tu preis par me,
Il mio spirt atôr ti svolle:
Jo e la stele sin cun te.*

If you come up here among the rocks
Where they have buried me
There is a space full of little stars
Which has been bathed by my blood.
As a sign a little cross
Has been carved in the rock
Among these stars grows (lit. is born) the moss,
Beneath them I sleep peacefully.

Pick, pick a little star:
It recalls our love (lit. good thing)
Give it a little kiss
And then hide it in your bosom.
When you are alone in your home
And you pray for me with your heart,
My spirit flies around you:
I and the star are with you.

I grasped the importance of this song one evening when I heard people singing in a bar. I went in and found five people: the barmaid and four men, two or three of whom were trying to show how strongly they could sing. They offered to sing me something typically Carnian, and launched into a couple of comic songs. After a bit, I asked if they could sing *Stelutis alpinis*. At first they seemed rather reluctant, but the second time I asked they did sing it. Suddenly the mood became solemn, and there was a short pause after they finished singing before conversation started and the atmosphere returned to what it had been.

Both the symbols and the theme of the song are absolutely central to Carnian culture. Natural and spiritual strength - blood and the cross - feed and protect growing plants in a space dominated by 'little stars', i.e. by light which represents both natural and divine life force. Sexual love is linked to death in a way that seems to purify both, and to return the soldier and his beloved to a state of idealised childhood - with a little cross and a little kiss. At the same time the song offers a resolution of the tension between the opposed ideals of forceful assertion and self-sacrifice which run through Carnian culture - a soldier who has died in battle perfectly incarnates both. Finally, by being buried up among the rocks near the mountain top he demonstrates that his patriotic self-sacrifice is the ultimate fulfilment of his identity as a mountain dweller. This resolution of the most fundamental tensions within village life involves the assumption of a wider social identity - not merely of Carnian but of Italian patriotism.

8. STABILITY AND CHANGE - CARNIAN SOCIETY AS A FEEDBACK MECHANISM

A Forces for change

Carnia underwent some severe shocks in the fifty years before 1990 : partisan rebellion and military occupation in the second world war, a major earthquake, and economic transformation. What impact did these events have on local society?

The partisan struggle against the German occupation in 1944-5 is remembered by most as a disaster. Talk does not focus on the initial successes of the *partigiani*, when they established a partisan 'republic' covering Carnia and neighbouring zones, but on the months between its defeat and the end of the war in which partisan activity led to reprisals by the occupying forces - particularly the final partisan action in the Val Degano in the closing days of the war. The reprisals this caused are thought of as a pointless sacrifice since the occupying forces were already retreating.

The partisans are also remembered by many as ill-disciplined bands of young men, often no better than robbers because they demanded food from local peasants who were themselves suffering from shortages. They provoked resentment by exercising authority over their elders, for instance by requisitioning guns belonging to older men. They also, though people were less ready to talk about this, killed some local people themselves. Some people still feel intense hatred for the partisans. When I raised the topic in one bar, they mentioned a particular old man from another village who had been drinking there, an ex-partisan, and said that people would kill him if they thought they could get away with it.

This view is not universal. In one conversation on the subject a man from the Val Pesarina - where support for

the *partigiani* had been strong - dissented from the general condemnation and instead recounted with pride how when he was a child he had stood up to occupying troops who had tried to coax him to tell them where his uncle, a partisan, was hiding. But this very divergence of views adds to the tensions generated by the memories of those days.

The 1976 earthquake also disrupted local life - both because of the immediate physical damage, and more lastingly because of the knock on effects of official help with repairs. While the resulting building boom arguably strengthened local society by providing employment, the feelings of resentment caused by perceived unfairnesses in allocating funds are blamed by some people for contributing to the decline of community spirit in recent years.

However there is strong evidence that neither the war nor the earthquake were major causes of the decline of the sense of community. The essential point concerns timing. Measurable indicators of social change occurred too late to be attributable to the war, but too early to be blamed on the earthquake. For example the decline of village endogamy in Ovasta started in about 1960 (see Table 6.1). Table 8.1 shows that the 1960s also saw the great wave of once-and-for-all emigration from Carnia. It had slowed to a trickle in the early 1970s and did not change greatly either way following the earthquake. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the 1960s and early 1970s was the time in which people's willingness to abandon local culture was greatest.

The wave of permanent emigration, and the subsequent collapse of local agriculture occurred because the terms of trade between agriculture and the manufacturing and tertiary sectors of the economy had moved decisively in favour of the latter. The social changes also coincided with various changes in communications and mobility. The

1960s onwards saw the spread of ownership of motor-bikes and cars. They also saw the spread of television, and the rapid rise of the legal and de facto school-leaving ages. It was these changes in the economic, technical, and institutional environment that accounted for the transformation of local society.

To understand how they generated this process of social change their impact needs to be analysed from two points of view. The first of these is basically economic - in the sense of focusing on rational choice. The changes provided individuals and their families with a new range of choices, and changed the costs and benefits attached to choices that had always existed. Patterns of action changed to take advantage of this new configuration of incentives and constraints. But productive activity was never simply a question of attaining consumption goals. As earlier chapters have shown, it is also a means by which strength is demonstrated, and individual and group identities are defined and tested. If we look at the changes that affect the relationship between individuals (or specific families) and the community as a whole, certain points stand out. People are better off and more easily mobile than they were. As a result they are less reliant on the local environment and on help from their neighbours. On the other hand they are more dependent than they were on relationships outside the immediate community - and more exposed to external ideas, as a result both of education and of television. In relative terms people are *stronger* than they used to be in relation to their immediate community, but *weaker* in relation to outside society.

The next section of this chapter looks at those social changes which can be seen as directly motivated by individuals' desires to adapt effectively to the pattern of rewards and costs offered by the changed economic environment. The new environment also creates a new context for the elaboration of relationships of rivalry

and solidarity, and the resulting changes are explored in section C. Section D describes local people's own, largely negative, evaluation of these changes and the efforts being made to resuscitate the sense of community. Taken together these processes of adaptation and readjustment help to clarify the causal links between different aspects of the social system, showing how each change feeds into other aspects of the system. The final part of section D asks whether the cumulative aspect of these feedbacks is to change the system fundamentally, or whether the feedbacks operate to preserve the existing model of community - at least at the level of ideology.

B Economically motivated responses to change

permanent emigration and changed employment patterns

Permanent emigration is among the social changes that is most closely linked to economic factors. Table 8.1 shows the pattern of net migration from (and occasionally into) Ovaro *comune* and Carnia as a whole during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s the figures for Ovaro closely parallel those for Carnia as a whole, though the proportionate outflow is greater in the case of Ovaro. The net outflow for Carnia as a whole is lower because the figures include the urban centres of Villa Santina and Tolmezzo, which were net gainers from migration, unlike the population in the Val Degano and the other non-central valleys. The population in the upper valleys suffered even more emigration than Ovaro.

Permanent emigration was high during the 1960s - amounting between 1961 and 1970 to 10% of the 1961 population of Carnia and 15% of the population of Ovaro *comune*. This was the time in which the Italian economy was growing rapidly, and there were ample opportunities for permanent urban employment outside Carnia. The outflow of population rose to a peak in 1968, but then slowed down ,

and has remained substantially lower in the less economically dynamic 1970s and 1980s. Between 1981 and 1988 Carnia lost only half of one per cent of its population through permanent migration, though Ovaro lost around 4% in a continue drift away from the non-central valleys.

Table 8.1 Net permanent migration from the *comune* of Ovaro, and from Carnia, between 1962 and 1988 ('+'=immigration, '-'=emigration)

Year	Ovaro	Carnia
<i>population in 1961:</i>	3,873	57,562
1962	-77	-537
3	-30	-218
4	-58	-333
5	-63	-489
6	-22	-860
7	-59	-738
8	-199	-1384
9	-61	-779
1970	-24	-699
1962-1970	-593	-6037
1	?	?
2	-16	-356
3	-28	-121
4	-41	-124
5	-25	-210
6	-9	-205
7	-16	-311
8	-27	+62
9	+7	+43
1980	-14	-113
1972-1980	-154	-1335
1	-7	+3
2	-34	-38
3	-1	+45
4	-28	+26
5	-15	-110
6	-10	-106
7	-6	+27
8	-12	-80
1981-1988	-113	-233
<i>population 1988:</i>	2,477	43,770

Source: background material for plans of *Comunità Montana della Carnia*

Economic factors also help to explain why the net outflow of women from Ovaro has been greater than that of men - as implied by the distribution of current population given in table 2.2. One aspect of this is that employment opportunities for women are scarce: table 8.2 shows an overall unemployment rate of 18% for women, compared with only 6% for men in 1995. Another reason may be that migration to the rapidly expanding towns offered women a chance to 'escape from agriculture - something which might be thought to appeal particularly to women since the burden of farmwork fell mainly on them, while the ownership of the property remained largely with the men. This differential tendency of women to quit the land, leaving behind a population of bachelors, is a phenomenon that has been observed throughout western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century - and several studies have confirmed that women are motivated by the desire to escape from lives of hard and subordinate physical labour (Delamont pp97-100).

Table 8.2 Employment and unemployment by sex in Ovaro *comune* in 1991

	Males		Females	
	No	%	No	%
looking for first job	12	2	16	5
unemployed	28	4	38	13
employed or self-employed	592	94	240	82
Total (all in paid occupations or seeking work)	632	100	294	100

Source: ISTAT census figures for 1991

The collapse of agriculture in the Val Degano is not due only to women's desertion of the valley: the younger women

who remain do far less agricultural work than their mothers and grandmothers did (or than many still do). This cut-back on agricultural work, which is less marked in Ovasta than elsewhere, has not been motivated by the existence of alternative sources of income in the valley: the high unemployment rate for women (table 8.2) shows that, though many women would like to find work outside the home, paid employment is hard to find. In economic jargon, if women did more agricultural work than they now do many of them would not incur any *opportunity cost*. Essentially the younger women who have remained in the valley are doing the same thing as those who have left altogether - escaping from the physical burden of agriculture. The point is not that there are other ways of earning income, but rather that the amount of income which could be generated or saved by agricultural work is no longer felt to justify the intense physical efforts which were once the rule.

age and authority in the family

The changes in external sources of income have implications for relationships within in the family and within the village community. Many of these changes can be understood by assuming that those concerned are revising their relationships in the light of economic self-interest. The next few pages will consider how far such explanations can be taken.

The end of seasonal emigration and of the joint cultivation of the family farm means that the extended family is no longer an important productive unit - even though three-generation families still occupy the same, or neighbouring structures, and lend each other an informal helping hand in many ways. The authority of the oldest generation has also diminished - both because they no longer have a coordinating role and because they are no longer in a position to hand on an economically important

inheritance.

The relation between the middle and the youngest generation is also said to be much less authoritarian than it used to be. This too is in line with wider social changes. People talk about the influence of television and mass media in promoting youth culture and more liberal ideas of parenting, but the changes are also consistent with alterations in the practical context of parent-child relationships. The great increase in the number of years children spend at school mean that they cannot realistically be expected to help earn their keep. Nor is parental authority so important from their point of view, since it is school rather than their parents, which provides them with many of the skills they will need in adult life.

family size

Like the rest of Italy, Carnia has suffered a declining birth rate to a point well below that needed simply to reproduce the numbers of the parental generation. Local people are very conscious that this decline threatens the continuity of many of the village communities. The fact that births seem to have declined rapidly in the 1970s, following the legalisation of contraception in 1971, suggests that new methods of birth control may have played an important role. But there had been a substantial decline in births during the decades before 1970, so the availability of contraception is not the whole story. We also need to ask why parents want fewer children than they once did.

One reason is that the balance of economic costs and benefits has changed. Earlier this century children spent few years at school - three to five years of primary school was normal for girls, who were then available to help with light agricultural tasks and housework. Since

the war, the increased years of compulsory schooling have lengthened the time for which children were dependent on their parents. This imposes a substantial cost on the parents which has been increased by two factors - the fact that most children continue their studies for several years beyond the age of compulsory education, and the obligation parents feel to provide their children with the best in clothing and equipment, and the need to ferry them to extra-curricular activities. Parents I spoke to stressed the cost in money and time that the modern way of raising children imposed on them, and said it was one reason why they could only cope with a small family.

Another reason may be that children are no longer such a good long-term investment as they were before. With the decline in agriculture, there is less to tie children to living with their parents and looking after them in old age. Although many sons and daughters still do so, some do not, and it is possible that present day parents feel less sure of this than their parents and grandparents did. There is also the point that the existence of state and occupational pensions makes assistance from one's children less important than it would have been in the past.

It is arguable that the decline in family size is an economically rational response by parents to the economically induced weakening of their power within the family - and that the importance of contraceptives is that they have enabled potential parents to implement this response more thoroughly than would have been possible before.

cooperation and authority in the wider community

The same economic and institutional changes that have undermined parental authority have also transformed power relationships in the community at large. The decline of agriculture meant that the formal and informal cooperative

work on which it had partly been based also became less important. This led to the closing of cooperatively owned dairies, and to the end of collective work to maintain and clear the paths to the upper meadows. The rising cost of labour led to the decline of forestry all over Carnia, since the steep slopes of the mountainsides are ill adapted to mechanisation. Those villages that possessed collective woods found them less important as an economic asset. In practical terms individual families became more independent of the village community than they ever had been before.

They also had less need of the local *sorestans*. Those local *siôrs* whose fortunes had been based on ownership of forests and sawmills found their local influence greatly reduced. Recent changes have also affected the priests' powers as practical patrons. The church once had an important role as a provider of secondary education, which has now been eclipsed by the massive expansion of state secondary education - ending one area in which the recommendation of the parish priest would have been important. Similarly priests' links with the local *siôrs* are no longer a source of patronage in the way that they would have been when the *siôrs* were major employers.

the end of village endogamy

Can the decline in village endogamy, shown in table 6.1, also be explained in terms of the changing economic interests of those directly involved? Chapter 6 showed that inheritance considerations were unlikely to have been a major factor before 1950, since the women in the six surviving marriages between fellow Ovastans all had married brothers living in the village and were therefore unlikely to receive much inheritance. Paradoxically, there is some evidence that economic interests may have been more important factors in endogamous marriages contracted after 1950 than they were before.

Table 8.3 Brothers of Ovastan women who married within Ovasta*

	Date of marriage		Total
	1930-49	1950-73	
married brothers living (lived) in Ovasta	6	0	6
married brothers living elsewhere	0	1	1
adult brothers have not (yet) married	0	6	6
no adult brothers	0	2	2
Total	6	9	15

* Marriages in the first column of Table 6.1, excluding the one that took place in the 1980s

Source: own interviews.

Table 8.3 shows the situation for all surviving marriages between partners from Ovasta that took place before the effective end of village endogamy. There is a clear divide between the pre-1950 situation in which all wives had (or would later have) married brothers living in Ovasta, and the post-1950 situation in which none of them did. One reason for this was that after 1950 more potential brides were in this situation. Declining family sizes meant a higher probability of all-female sibling groups. Where there were brothers - as there usually were - the higher net emigration rate among women meant that more of these brothers would be obliged to remain unmarried than had previously been the case.

But that does not explain why *all* the post-1950 endogamous couples (at least all those who have not left the village altogether) involve women in this situation. It is unlikely to be a chance effect. Although a number of

women without married brothers did marry and leave the village, the fact - that no woman whose brother set up his married home and remained in Ovasta has chosen to do so herself - strongly suggests that endogamous marriages were more attractive to women without married brothers, or that such women were particularly attractive to Ovastan men. Was this because the women's inheritance prospects made them want to stay in the village, and provided local young men with a way of increasing their land holdings?

There are several reasons for doubting that this was a major factor. One is the fact that marrying for property is contrary to overt local ideals. Secondly it is doubtful whether even calculating young people would have thought such matches a particularly good deal. At the time of the marriage it would not necessarily have been clear that the brother was going to remain single. It also seems to have been a time when some families were beginning to confer equal inheritance rights on sons and daughters, making the presence of a married brother far less of a factor in calculating inheritance prospects. Finally, it would have been strange if these women had been very concerned about their future control of village land at a time when all the other young women in the village were choosing to leave altogether - in part to escape from the burdens of agricultural life.

Fortunately there is an alternative explanation which fits the facts better. Although endogamous marriages are now rare, since 1980 four women have chosen to remain in Ovasta after marriage - 3 bringing outside husbands to live in Ovasta, and 1 married to a fellow Ovastan. All four have parents still living in Ovasta, and none has a married brother in the village. There are also some single women in their thirties who have remained in Ovasta to look after sick or elderly relatives - again none of these women has a married brother living in the village. It looks as though the need to care for relatives has been a major factor keeping these young women in the village.

In the past marrying within the village would have been a way for such women to set up their own families without abandoning their parents. The pressures on them to stay would have been at least as strong as they are now. Besides the caring role that is as important as ever, women's responsibility for agricultural work used to be much greater than now. Young women sometimes had to leave school before they wished because their parents required their help with agriculture or with the care of younger siblings. For young women whose brothers - sometimes a good deal younger than themselves - had not yet married, leaving to marry someone in another village would have meant not only abandoning their aging parents but also deserting a labour-intensive agricultural enterprise without any immediate prospect of a sister-in-law arriving to take their place. In this situation it would not have been surprising - given the strong emotional ties between parents and daughters - if they felt under intense pressure not to leave the village.

So it looks as though in the years from 1950 to the mid 1970s marrying a young man from the same village was a way in which a daughter could reconcile marriage with her caring role towards her parents. But why did women in the third quarter of the century choose to do so by marrying within the village, while in the late 1970s and the 1980s they have usually done so by marrying an outsider who moved into Ovasta *in cuc*, or by remaining single?

The change may partly have been due to the reduced isolation of Ovasta. Villages near the valley floor seem always to have had a lower endogamy rate than the higher villages such as Ovasta, and a plausible reason is that they were simply easier to get to. The advent of motor cycles and cars obviously made the higher villages easier to visit. They also made such visits less necessary, since both sexes can now travel to dances and discotheques anywhere within driving distance. Another factor may have been the raising of the school-leaving age in the 1960s.

Secondary education meant that adolescents went to the middle school in Ovaro, and so widened their circle of acquaintances outside the village - which must have made it easier to get to know potential partners from other villages. Education beyond the age of fourteen involves half-hour bus trips to Tolmezzo, to schools where people can make friends from all over Carnia.

However village endogamy was never merely a matter of isolation: it was also an expression of the solidarity of the young people and the claims of the young men. A full explanation of its abandonment needs to take account of changes in the significance of such expressions of internal solidarity and rivalry with outsiders.

C Rivalry and solidarity in a changed context

family life and changes in the basis of social status

Earlier chapters have shown how status used to be measured in terms of agricultural prosperity and the qualities needed to produce it. Agricultural fertility was a manifestation of a generalised strength that inhered in humans and the natural world alike. Fertility of all kinds was desirable, not merely as a way of providing for oneself materially, but because it was an affirmation of status, and of the strength which underlay it. The recent revolution in economic relations has changed this radically by ending the link between prosperity and agriculture. Whereas once prosperity and agricultural fertility went together, now they are seen by many as alternatives. Some older men expressed this by saying that in the old days young women wanted to marry husbands who owned several cows, but that now such a man would be a very undesirable husband indeed.

Since human and agricultural fertility are so closely linked within the symbolic scheme, the devaluation of

agricultural fertility may have undermined the automatic presumption that human fertility too was desirable in itself - and so have contributed to the declining birth rate. Though there is no direct evidence of this, there is evidence that fertility has been lowered by the adoption of the new equation of status with material prosperity and with the accompanying contemporary life style. The cost of having children - cited as a reason for small families - is as high as it now is because of parents' enthusiastic adoption of modern ideas about the standards of education and material care. The status of good parent depends on the ability to meet these new and expensive requirements. So the impact of recent changes is not a simple matter of economically rational reactions to external circumstances - the impact of the changes is refracted through social mechanisms.

Social, as well as instrumental, factors may also have played a part in changing the pattern of relationships within the family. The previous section pointed out that the reduced importance of agricultural production had affected the relationships between the generations within the family - and tentatively interpreted these in terms of self-interested calculation: the idea being that if agricultural knowledge and land now matter less, there is less need to defer to the older generation who hand on the knowledge and will eventually provide an inheritance of land. But the same result could be predicted from the relationship between self-sacrificial gift-giving and status. If providing valuable goods is a source of status, then a decline in the importance of the goods concerned reduces the status of the givers. The younger generation who receive these gifts are placed under less of a burden of obligation than they once were.

The role of gifts (in the sense of self-sacrificial provision) in defining the status of the giver may help to explain the rejection of agriculture by women who remain in the valley. The fact that agricultural labour often

has no opportunity cost poses the problem of what motives women could have for drastically cutting back on it. The obvious answer that it is hard and unpleasant is put forward by older people, who feel that younger women have lost the qualities of their mothers and grandmothers. This is thought of as both a moral and a physical deterioration - one man attributed the strength which women used to show to a process of natural selection. A similar point is made from a different point of view by younger wives who complain that the burdens of bringing up children, looking after the house, and coping with their remaining agricultural commitments are themselves very tiring.

These explanations do not really make sense. If women do not work as hard as in the past, it cannot be due to any physical deterioration - since the younger women are from the same genetic stock and have benefited from modern nutrition and health care. The idea that hard agricultural work is unpleasant in itself is undermined by the fact that the older women obviously find it very satisfying - and seem to be at least as happy with their lives as their daughters and granddaughters are. This suggests that the reason for abandoning agricultural work lies not so much in the work itself as in a change in the social rewards attached to it. From this point of view the reasons for abandoning agriculture become clear - not in terms of the expenditure of effort itself, but of the recognition that women could obtain for it. In the old days the wife and mother could use her productive role to appear as the main provider - and hence the central figure - for the family. She was bartering her strength for a status which would end by equalling or exceeding that of her husband. Nowadays this would not be an option since, however hard she worked, the economic importance of her agricultural efforts would be far less than the value of her husband's pay - and hence her sacrifice would probably receive less recognition. In effect, by giving her all to agricultural work, she would be defining herself as a

lesser person than her husband.

If women are to attain equal status in a situation where the economic opportunities open to them are limited they must do so by challenging the stress on economic production as the measure of personal worth. This is something which younger women do - vigorously complaining about their obstinate, work obsessed husbands. But even though the association of status with agricultural fertility is in abeyance, the equation between status and a person's economic contribution is still deeply ingrained.

the decline of enforced solidarity within the village

Turning to the community beyond the family, one of the main changes remarked on by local people is that people have become less sociable and helpful. They are unanimous in laying the blame for the decline in sociability and helpfulness on increased personal independence. Many focus the blame specifically on cars and television, while others lay the blame more generally on *benessere* - 'prosperity'. They say that younger people are not community minded, because they all think they are *siôrs* now. As a result *egoismo* - 'selfishness' - is said to be rife. *Ognuno va per conto suo* - 'everyone goes about their own (selfish) business'.

What all these explanations have in common is the point that fellow villagers no longer depend on each other for either practical or psychological support to anything like the extent they once did. Similar points are sometimes put forward by people to explain why they themselves opt out of aspects of local society. One woman explained to me that she stayed at home watching the television in order to avoid contact with envious neighbours. Several young people explained that the village mattered little to them because they were expecting to pursue their careers

elsewhere.

This may be a further reason for the end of village endogamy. Young men who would once have seen each other as life-long partners and potential rivals in the business of wringing a living and prestige from the village land, no longer have the same motive to cement relationships of solidarity. So they have less reason to seek affinal connections within the village, or to cooperate with each other in discouraging outsiders from courting their sisters. This means that the tension between the kinship and affinal metaphors for village unity - which once had to be resolved by the fire-throwing ceremony - can now be avoided by classifying fellow villagers as kin only, and seeking sexual partners outside the village. Some young people do now say that they prefer to look for partners outside the village precisely because the village is like a family - the very reason some older informants give for choosing their partners within the village. The tension between kinship and affinal relations within the village may explain the rapidity of Ovasta's switch from 50 per cent endogamy to virtually total exogamy. Once affinal connections were no longer essential to the system, the metaphor of village solidarity as kinship became a motive for avoiding them altogether.

changed relationships to natural and supernatural powers

Increased prosperity, and the availability of modern techniques makes it less necessary to pay attention to traditional knowledge. This point was made to me in various contexts: attention to effect of the moon on agricultural activities, the decline in the traditional skill of easing sprains through bone-manipulation, and the possession of benign supernatural powers.

It may also apply to fears of supernatural harm. People say that belief in *strias* and the evil eye has greatly

declined. As chapter 4 demonstrated, there are some problems about taking statements of this kind at face value. Some people, including some young people, do still believe in these phenomena, and others express their disbelief in an ambiguous way - along the lines of "I do not believe myself, but my grandmother, who was not a superstitious person, did". It is also possible that saying that people no longer believe such things reflects a reluctance to discuss incidents that are thought to have happened recently. Even so there are good reasons to suppose that these fears have declined substantially. These reasons are implicit in the way people talk about past fears.

There is one story of witchcraft which people are happy to talk about. A bar in the upper valley is known, in Italian, as the *sette nani* - the 'seven dwarfs'. This translates into the reassuring terms of Grimm and Walt Disney, a story which is referred to in local speech as *chei dai cavoi* - 'the people of the small hay stacks'. The factual starting point of the story is that earlier this century the proprietors had several children who suffered from dwarfism. The story was that their mother-to-be had been stealing hay from a neighbour's field, where it was stacked into the small piles about a meter high which are known as *cavoi*. The neighbour was a *stria* and when she caught the thief she retaliated by wishing out loud that none of the thief's children should grow higher than the *cavoi*. An old man telling me about the story remarked that the family had always denied it, and that later people had heard that the true cause was 'something in the blood'. So it seems that the story was once considered as a realistic hypothesis - but that belief gave way in the face of superior modern technical knowledge, and the existence of modern cultural categories according to which such ideas can be classified as topics for children's books and films.

People often attribute the decline in witchcraft beliefs

to increased prosperity. In the old days, they say, people used to imagine such things because they were weakened by hunger. Now that everyone is well nourished the fears have disappeared. An interesting aspect of this claim is that it has almost exactly the same structure as the statements of people who do believe in the powers of *strias*. Both agree that 'strength' - both a physical and a psychological quality - protects a person against harm from *strias*. Where they differ is the nature of the harm - real according to the believers but only imaginary according to the sceptics. Since disbelief is among other things a manifestation of the strength - both physical and mental - that enables a person to resist *strias*, it is not surprising that assertions of greater scepticism should link it to an affirmation of increased physical and psychological strength.

Both explanations - the increased faith in 'modern' explanations, and the end of hunger - are aspects of the changed economic situation in which people no longer depend on local agriculture, and hence on relationships with their neighbours, for survival. Chapters 3 and 4 showed how hard it was to draw a clear distinction between pressures for social conformity and the pressures - including fears of *strias* and the evil eye - which their victims attributed to *invidia*. So it is not surprising that people who are increasingly freeing themselves from the collective pressures of village life have tended to become less concerned about these dangers.

The declining sense of the practical importance of supernatural phenomena may also have affected attitudes to religion. Although there is very little overt disbelief in christianity, there has been some decline in actual religious attendance. I am not certain whether congregations at regular church services used to be larger, but some small-scale local processions no longer take place and others were abandoned temporarily before being resumed. These included processions to intercede

for protection against tempests, and the *rogazions* held in late spring to ask for good crops. With the decline of agriculture these must have seemed less relevant to many people.

The role of priests has also changed. Although priests are still very important figures they now tend to persuade rather than exercising authority in the overt way that used to be common. This probably reflects a number of different factors. The decline of their role as protectors of agriculture may be one, and the declining fear of supernatural dangers is likely to be another. Providing protection against *strias* and the evil eye used to be an important priestly function, so the lessening of these fears may well have contributed to the softening of priestly authority. (Not that the priests I knew well, who deplored such beliefs, would have wanted this particular form of authority.) Underlying both priestly roles is the importance of rituals of shared sacrifice as an affirmation of village solidarity. The most fundamental reason for the decline in priestly power may well be that people feel less need for local solidarity than they used to.

D Salvaging the traditional community

All the changes so far can be seen as the result of individual assertion and decision making - in order to maximise either economic returns or the sense of individual status in the situation created by the changed balance of opportunities and constraints. However the combined effect of these individually rational actions has been a sense of collective loss - which people often express by saying '*si stava miôr cuant che si stava pies*' - 'we were better off when we were worse off'.

One reason for this is the loss of the sense of solidarity discussed above. Another is what they describe as a loss of pride and self confidence. It is not hard to see why

this might have happened. People were, and still are, in a situation to which it was very difficult to give a satisfactory dramatic significance. Although the switch from a strategy based on agriculture and emigration to one based on local paid work was economically rational, in dramatic terms it could only be experienced as a defeat. The old symbolic model was one in which people applied their united strength to wrest a living from the land, and keep the chaotic forces of nature under control. In terms of this model, which is still important to people, the switch to the modern economy was a very obvious defeat. The woods are advancing, many meadows are not properly reaped, there are some signs even that bears may be returning. For people who think in terms of this model it appears obvious that the under-forties are not as strong and hard, nor as self-sacrificing as their parents were.

But the situation is hardly more satisfactory from the viewpoint of people who have identified with the modern economy, and modern Italian society. Until the present generation of school-children and students, they have not been particularly well educated - and so they are entering the new world somewhere near the bottom in economic terms. Culturally things are not much better. They feel that they are different from other Italians - rougher and less elegant - in a world where it has become harder to define these differences as sources of strength. Carnia is also away from the main centres of commercial activity and entertainment. People asked me how I could possibly have chosen to spend my time in somewhere so dull and isolated, *fuori del mondo* - 'outside the world'.

A great deal of organised and of informal ritual activity is devoted to bolstering the sense of solidarity - or at least of sociability - and to remedying this loss of pride. Much of it takes the form of a celebration of the old days when it was still possible to draw a sense of pride and motives for solidarity from everyday productive activities.

sociability at family level

One example of this is the ritualisation of traditional cookery. *Polenta e frico* - maize-dumpling and cheese fritters - used to be everyday food. It is now thought of as a celebration of traditional Carnian ways and served by families on special occasions.

Many houses use spinning wheels and other traditional implements as ornamental reminders of the old way of life. *Comune* authorities sponsor photographic exhibitions devoted to emigration and other aspects of the old way of life. People were delighted to tell me about traditional implements, such as the spiked clogs once used by lumberjacks. I was taken specially to visit an elderly man who had painstakingly built small-scale models of traditional houses, barns, and dairy. When I showed the photographs, which I had rather dutifully taken, to some of the old man's contemporaries, they were so delighted and impressed that they called in a neighbour to look at them as well. Some time later the *comune* decided that his efforts deserved to be exhibited in their cultural hall.

This affirmation of the value of traditional productive activities is not simply a matter of special occasions and household decoration - it is cited as a motive for continuing agricultural production. The older people, who are the most committed, sometimes say that they continue with this work because it is what they were brought up to do. When their children help them they say that they are doing so out of respect for their parents. There still is an economic return, and that is still an important motivation for a few households, but these comments suggest that agriculture itself is now practised for social and symbolic as much as for practical reasons.

A similar process of the loss of practical function followed by redefinition as sociability and ritual has

taken place in the case of mountain huts. Three decades ago these were places where people could stay while working in the high meadows. When the meadows were abandoned the huts were as well, but after a while people started using them again - but now for barbecues and small parties, particularly on occasions such as *Ferragosto* (the Assumption of the Virgin) and New Year's Eve.

sociability at village level

This same change in emphasis from practical to symbolic significance has occurred in the case of the collective property of the village - but in a way which shows how difficult it is to separate the two aspects. The connection between the declining economic role of cooperative action and the loosening sense of village community is illustrated by what happened in a famous quarrel concerning Ovasta's cooperatively owned *latteria* which took place in the early 1970s. It was based on a divergence of interests between those members who owned only a few cattle, and those who owned several. Up to that time the *latteria* had processed milk into cheese on the spot - whether the cheese was destined for home consumption or for sale. However in the early 1970s it became possible to increase the cash earnings from the milk by selling it to a cheese making enterprise in the valley, and abandoning cheese production in the village. This strategy was favoured by the *latteria* members with more cattle. But the members with few cattle still wished to concentrate on producing cheese for home consumption and therefore wanted the *latteria* to process milk into cheese on its own premises. The larger producers won the argument, and it was decided to sell *all* the milk to the enterprise in the valley. This led to the smaller cattle-owners withdrawing from the *latteria* and setting up their own churn in a private house. The dispute became interwoven with other arguments about membership fees, and is still a source of bitter feelings among the older

inhabitants.

One reason for this bitterness was expressed to me by a member of the majority group, who was still indignant that the minority had not abided by the majority vote. The minority felt that they were merely wanting to continue using the *latteria* in the way that had been originally intended. In effect the increased importance of market relations, compared to subsistence production, was exposing divergences of interests between the villagers which could not be handled by the traditional social mechanisms of mutual identification and united action. It was a dramatic moment which, from an external perspective, can be interpreted as a demonstration that the old model which interwove social solidarity with productive activity no longer corresponded to the economic interests of many villagers. But from the internal perspective, which still held that social relations should be based on fellow feeling and everyone working in the same way, it demonstrated to each side that the others lacked a sense of loyalty to their fellow villagers. The quarrel coincided almost exactly with the end of marriages between fellow Ovastans, and together they mark the end of the village as a real cooperative unit.

The administration of the village's collective wood also fell into neglect, partly because the postwar felling had removed much of the valuable timber and time was needed for younger trees to grow, but also because the rising price of labour made forestry uneconomic. Despite this it is still possible to obtain some return from the sale of timber, and this makes it possible for the village administration to carry out some significant functions - such as asphaltting the most important track within the village territory. But now these practical measures are carried out as much to demonstrate the continuing sense of village community as for their own sakes. This point became clear at the meeting described in chapter 2, when speakers cited social reasons - their debt to the *vecjos* -

as a major motive for continuing with their own *amministrazione*. The same point was made to me by the leaders of other village administrations with their own lands. They now see the primary importance of the revenue produced by their lands as being to provide a focus for community action.

Food too can serve as the pretext for shows of village unity - as happened with a new celebration at Ovasta, held twice but then allowed to lapse. This was the *festa da mesta* - which consisted of a large communal supper eaten by virtually the whole village in the assembly room of the old dairy. The centre-piece was *mesta*, the type of polenta which provided the nick-name '*mestârs*' which used to be shouted by people of other villages to provoke Ovastans. In this case the symbolism is a little more complex than in the case of family meals. Both occasions share the use of traditional food to evoke the past and to celebrate identity. But the use of *mesta* in the village celebration refers to an identity that was always under threat, and ironically celebrates it by recalling how it used to be mocked. It recalls the unity of the village in the context of the inter-village rivalries that were expressed in the course of agricultural production.

If the collective aspects of economic life fell into decline and were then taken up again as occasions for social solidarity or reinterpreted as ritual, what happened to those collective activities which were rituals in the first place?

In the case of *rogazions* - the Maytime circlings of the fields to ask for abundant crops - the decline of agriculture initially led to their abandonment. However, in some villages - including Ovasta - they have since been revived by the priests. I was not present at that time of year, so I was unable to judge the atmosphere for myself, but a priest told me that local people were very happy to have the custom revived. This would be consistent with

participation in religious processions which I did attend, and which had a sizeable and serious turnout. Nevertheless it is clear that the ritual is now being done for its own sake, rather than for the specific objective that it once had.

Though the rituals of *sops* and fire-throwing are still practised, they too seem to have had a phase of decline. This seems to have been partly a response to outside criticism - real or imagined. I was told about a Sicilian school mistress who had condemned the custom of young children asking for *sops* as a form of begging. A man in his mid thirties, whose own generation of *coscrits* had held the fire-throwing ritual, told me that the young men a year or two older in his village had not held the ceremony because they felt *vergogna* - 'shame' or 'embarrassment' - at the idea.

Such abandonments of fire-throwing seem to have been very short term - lasting for a year or so before it was taken up again. But the shortness of the break cannot disguise a certain shift in the meaning of the rite. The young people still enjoy circling the village and entering homes where they would not normally be able to go, as well as breaking taboos on what can be said, and generally asserting the status of the young and of young men in particular. They are celebrating village unity, and doing so by reference to kinship, sexuality, and affinity - but they are no longer really attempting to break the taboos of kinship in order to set up love affairs which would continue the network of affinal and kinship relationships that link the village families. Kinship and affinity are still being celebrated as metaphors for village unity - but there is no longer any question of embodying the metaphors in real social ties. Though young people are still happy to assert their autonomy and power, the celebration of the possibility of endogamous marriage - which is the core of the ritual - now means much less to them than it did to earlier generations.

The changes in meaning are reflected in the way the ritual is carried out. One of these is that the impulse often comes from the older generation. In a couple of villages where the young people had abandoned fire-throwing it was taken up again following pressure from their elders. In another the young people told me that they really carried it out for the sake of their parents. In a fourth the proceedings were actually organised by some of their mothers - at least to the extent of providing an assembly point and an initial glass of wine! This happened in Ovaro and the episode was also exceptional in that the proceedings were largely carried out by the young women - who composed the dedications, and also formed the majority of the group who went round the houses because the young men were busy repairing the dance hall. Some of the girls made up for the lack of boys by themselves wearing the *coscrits'* neck-kerchiefs, and it was a very jolly raucous occasion. It was still a celebration of youth and of village unity, but made no sense in terms of the earlier model of confrontation between householders and youths over control of the village girls.

Less blatant violations of the symbolic scheme in some other villages - such as the presence of women and small children around the bonfire - also show that the sense of the ritual as a violent restructuring of village relationships is no longer taken seriously. This is consistent with the abandonment in or about the 1950s of such open assertions of collective power as the *sampognada* and the *purcita*. Present attitudes to the *purcita* are a particularly vivid example of the way the image of the local community had changed. Older people are reluctant to discuss it, either with outside investigators or with their own descendants. Two men in their thirties from different villages had never heard of it, despite the fact that the aunt of one of them had been a victim. Taken together with the shift of village activities from practical matters to social and symbolic manifestations, it demonstrates that the notion of traditional village

society is now primarily an object of sentiment and no longer a means of mobilising power.

Although most village social activity is linked in one way or another to the evocation of tradition, there is one area of outright innovation: annual get-togethers by the village women. In many villages they celebrate international women's day in March by going off together for an evening meal in another village. In the late 1980s the married women of Liariis started celebrating *epifania* (Twelfth Night) with a joint meal in the village hall after which the men were allowed in for a dance involving the whole village. They called this the feast of the *Befana* - a witch associated with *epifania*, a figure I think from Italian rather than particularly Friulian folklore. A *befana* also means an old woman who is no longer sexually attractive. One of the organisers explained that this was a joking reference to the fact that they were no longer young and attractive, but I suspect that the title also gives a feeling of tradition to what is actually an innovation. The point of the festa, like that of outings on international women's day, is to remedy the isolation experienced by many women now that they no longer meet each other working in the fields.

sociability beyond the village

Overtly modern forms of social gathering are more common at the level of *comune*. Sport is particularly important. Gymnastics, basket ball and cross-country running are popular, but the sport which generates most enthusiasm is football. There is a local league for Carnia and other alpine areas of Friuli - with teams representing each *comune*. When there was a home match on the playing field above Ovaro I could hear the shouts of the crowd from Ovasta - 200 meters up and a couple of kilometres away on the other side of the valley. The best attended business meeting I ever went to in Ovaro was the annual general

meeting of the football club.

Music provides the other major focus of general sociability. It can be a way of evoking the past. Many public celebrations the *comune* feature *Chei di Davar*, a group of sixty-year-old men who play cheerful alpine music on accordion and string instruments. *Angelo e Francesco* - two brothers in their twenties from the *comune* of Comeglians - play the same kind of music. Both groups have produced cassettes. They play in traditional costumes and are very consciously trying to continue a local tradition of festive music. This is particularly explicit in the tapes produced by *Angelo e Francesco*, whose songs include one entitled *paisut di mont* - 'little mountain village' - which extols the peace and harmony of a traditional mountain community. They are also very explicit in their encouragement of shared *alegria* - the song titles on the same tape include 'in company', 'village festival', and an expression which translates roughly as 'lets all join in'.

Choirs are another way of celebrating the past. There is a tradition of unaccompanied male voice choirs - once a feature of church services - which is now almost never performed publicly, though serious group singing can sometimes be heard in bars. The priests in the area that includes Ovasta have put a great deal of work into reviving old latin chants, which are sung by a choir which they have organised - including women as well as men. This is one of two choirs in the *comune* of Ovaro. Similar choirs exist in many of the *comuni* of Carnia, and they are brought together in an annual programme of coral concerts. The choir masters are often priests, and the choirs are dressed in 'traditional' festive costume.

This 'traditional' costume is quite interesting. For the women it consists of headscarves, long dresses, and aprons. Photographs taken at the beginning this century (Cacitti et al; De Stales) show that this was standard

female garb and, except that skirts are now shorter, it is not very different from the clothes that women still wear when they are working in the fields. The costume worn by the male singers - and by the groups of traditional musicians - consists of velvet jackets and knee breeches. This represents a much greater departure from everyday clothes, not merely today but at any time in the last 100 years. Photographs taken earlier this century show men wearing standard European working clothes, and ordinary suits on special occasions. So the 'traditional' male costumes must either refer to a more distant past, or to a general idea of alpine folk costume.

But music need not be associated with reverence for the past. Another local group which has produced several tapes of songs is the *Povolar Ensemble*. Although this group is named after a local village, and sings in Friulian, only its leader comes from the valley. The musical back-up is provided by university friends of his. The music is very sophisticated - drawing, among other sources, on latin american music - but is not in the local musical tradition. One song, which created something of a stir, is entitled *Comeglians pičul borc* - 'Comeglians, little neighbourhood' - but, despite the similarity of the title to one by *Angelo e Francesco*, the spirit could not be more different. The song goes on to describe Comeglians as a 'dirty, bastard village', dominated by an ignorant mean-minded elite. Although the *Povolar Ensemble* has now disbanded, its music is popular with many young people.

More straight-forwardly popular however is *Ovaro Rock*, a festival organised in the summer by some young people from Ovaro. There are also, of course, the numerous village festivals which always feature music and dancing - generally ball-room style - which are neither self-consciously traditional nor self-consciously modern.

Finally there is the band. This was founded for the

children of the village of Luincis, and is still directed by one of its leading citizens - a business man whose family has been prominent in the village for centuries. However it now takes in young people - aged between about ten and their early twenties - from all the *comune* of Ovaro, and a few from outside as well. Its members dress in a severe uniform reminiscent of the scout and guide movement, and are also present at many official festivities.

the implications of tradition

It is clear that the sense of community, particularly at village level, is closely linked to what both we and the Carnians would refer to rather loosely as 'traditions'. But this is a notion that has recently been subjected to searching criticism (Hobsbawm & Ranger), so it is important to be precise about the senses in which it is used here. The word is generally used to refer to things which ought to remain constant over time - i.e. to making manifest structural regularities which might otherwise be missed in the flux of pragmatic activity. But in doing so, it covers two very different kinds of phenomenon. The first of these are rituals which, although they date back as far as anyone can remember, look as much or more to the future as to the past: weddings, christenings, and graduation ceremonies are obvious examples. They structure an on-going society. The other kind of tradition consists of the evocation of a past that *should* have continued into the present, but in fact has not. These rituals testify just as strongly as the first kind of ritual to an overall sense of how things should be but, instead of ordering actual experience, they discount it as meaningless and invoke instead an idealised past when things really or supposedly did make sense.

This section has shown that the second kind of tradition - the evocation of a vanished or disappearing past - has

flourished in Carnia over the last few decades, and that what were once traditions of the first kind, such as *sops* and *las cidulas*, are now performed with the self-conscious intention of keeping the old ways alive - so becoming largely, if not quite completely, evocations of the past themselves. On the whole this past is a tidied up version of a time that was actually experienced by people who are now in the second half of their lives, rather than a case of the outright invention of an imaginary past. But there are some instances where the traditions refer to a more distant past as well: these include the traditional costume, the latin chants, and fire-throwing. What implications does the evocation of the past - recent or distant - have for action in the present?

Rogers argues that ideas of past social structure can live on as social principles even during periods when there is little scope for them to be put into practice, to reassume practical importance when economic circumstances render them feasible. In the area of southern France where she worked the *ostal* - or stem family farm - which was thought of as the old and right form of family organisation has actually become more common as a result of recent economic changes. It is at least arguable that the surviving sense of village solidarity in Carnia and the implicit messages of the *rogazions*, *sops*, and *cidulas* rituals provide a vivid enough image of the idealised past to produce a return to local cooperation and endogamous marriage should economic changes make village production once again a viable economic course. However, since there are no signs of a revival of intensive agriculture in marginal terrains and there is no obvious alternative focus for collective enterprise, it is very unlikely that the hypothesis will ever be put to the test.

Nevertheless the persistence of the image of the solidary agricultural village does have social effects. Although this kind of tradition is an attempt to overcome the social isolation and loss of collective pride caused by

economic change, it is arguable that the persistent evocation of the past perpetuates as many problems as it solves. Because this second kind of tradition is an effort to maintain a symbolic system which no longer regulates the most important practical relationships in which people are involved, it is not backed by the same psychological energy, and so lacks the quality of strength by which rituals, and the structures they evoked, once imposed themselves on the members of society. As a result, these traditions carry associations of sorrow and regret. They are supposed to breath new life into the values of the past, but in practice they often become a way of mourning its passing.

At the same time they give rise to a sense that local communities are the victims of external forces which threaten to obliterate what is left of their identity - and so provide potential support for cultural and political movements which aim to resist these pressures.

9 REGIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM

The nation is important to village life - both practically - as the source of law, education, public works, and financial benefits - and symbolically, via the role of the *coscrits* and the way the image of patriotic self-sacrifice embodies and reconciles deeply felt values which inform local life. This chapter looks in more detail at the relationship between really local identity and identification with wider units such as Carnia, Friuli, and Italy. Since recent decades have seen an extension of the role of the state, and a transformation of some aspects of the local community, one might expect the relationship between local and national identity to be reformulated. The following sections consider political developments, the meanings attached to regional identity and linguistic differences, the ways these meanings have recently been changing, and the implications of Carnian developments for theories of nationalism and of post-1960s micro-nationalism.

The central theme is that the old system reconciled - or, more accurately, held in tension - two very different notions of the relation between village identity and wider geographic identities, whose incompatibility has been left implicit in the analysis up to now. In one view the village community and its values are identified with the maximal geographic unit of the nation state. The alternative view looks outward from the village and identifies geographic distance with ever greater departures from the honest values of the local community. The postwar changes have made the conflict between these two perspectives harder to evade - in effect obliging people to choose. The choices they make throw light on the relationship between committed enthusiasts for local culture and ordinary members of local society. They also illuminate the part played by perceptions of economic circumstances in the choice between alternative

identities.

A Patriotism, regionalism, and politics

Italian patriotism

In some ways people see their identities as Carnians and as Italians as complementary. Young men generally do their military service in a unit with an alpine connection, either the *alpini* - mountain infantry - or the mountain artillery. Although some men were exempted from national service as a result of working abroad, many homes - probably most - contain a small photograph of the husband or son in *alpini* uniform. There is also a good deal of publicly organised patriotic ritual. Though there are some ceremonies commemorating the resistance, the A.N.A - the association of ex-*alpini* - is responsible for far more patriotic ritual. Every *comune* has its own A.N.A. branch, each of which holds commemorative parades at war memorials and churches, or reunions high on the mountainsides consisting of a religious service followed by a barbecue for the participants and their families. While I was there, there was also a rally at a war cemetery in Friuli to honour the return of the remains of *alpini* who died during the war in Russia. Locally, another A.N.A. activity is the repair of local shrines that had become dilapidated. But ANA activities only involve part of the population - perhaps as many as are involved in choirs, and fewer than the enthusiasts for football. Apart from detachments of currently-serving soldiers, the great majority of men at the *alpini* activities that I attended were middle-aged or older.

Another way of gauging the felt importance of Italian patriotism is to look at the way people deal with memories of the two world wars - the episodes in which patriotism was directly put to the test. The 1915-18 war is remembered as the supremely heroic episode of Carnian

history. Since Carnia lies along the northern frontier with Austria it was the site of an extended artillery duel from the outbreak of war until the defeat at Caporetto further to the east led to Carnia passing the last year of the war under Austrian occupation. Many of the Italian soldiers were local men. Carnian women also played a part in the war as porters, carrying munitions in their back baskets up to the trenches high on the mountain sides. The image of a woman, bowed under the shell she is carrying in her *gei*, adorns the letter head of the magazine published by the ex-service-men's association.

The 1940-1945 war has left a far more confused and disturbing memory. During the time Italy was fighting on the axis side, the *alpini* were sent to Russia where they suffered horrendous losses. Other local men fought in north Africa, and as a result spent several years as prisoners of the British. But the main source of trauma was the divisive experience of partisan war - which placed ideals of patriotism and social order in stark opposition, in a way that still divides the community. The implications of this were demonstrated during local elections held during my stay.

The outgoing council of Ovaro *comune* was composed of a 'civic list' centred on the socialist and communist parties. It had made itself unpopular through a controversial plan to site a dump for industrial waste on *comune* land. The left thought they would lose control of the council unless they could persuade a prestigious figure, untainted by the controversy over the waste dump, to head their electoral list. The figure they chose was Giulio Magrini, a local communist politician with a seat in the Regional assembly, who belonged to one of the local rich families. Most important of all he was the son of Dr Aulo Magrini, who had been a local doctor before becoming commander of the Carnian brigade of the communist-inspired *garibaldini* partisans. Aulo Magrini died in action while the 'partisan republic' was still in being, and is

commemorated in the name of Ovaro's middle school.

This particular partisan connection was felt to be a source of prestige (probably correctly, because the left went on to win the local elections). This was largely because Aulo Magrini was associated with the time when the partisan rising had been successful. There is a widely-believed story that his death was actually at the hands of fellow partisans who resented his maintenance of proper discipline. This story makes it possible for both supporters and opponents of the partisan struggle to honour his memory, and so salvage some sense of local unity from the divisive memories of those days. The importance attached to the story also shows that Italian patriotism is deeply felt by many people.

autonomist politics

The first organisation with the specific objective of celebrating and furthering a sense of specifically Friulian identity was the *Società Filologica Friulana*, founded in 1919 - after the Italian frontiers had been extended eastward to include some eastern areas of Friuli which had previously remained under Austrian rule. La Filologica was not however an autonomist organisation - the idea was to celebrate a specific Friulian identity within the context of a wider Italian patriotism (Ellero p188). It promotes the study of folklore in all its aspects - language, rituals, poetry, implements, architecture, and economic life. It also sponsors annual Friulian language essay competitions in schools, and awards prizes for cultural achievements to adults as well.

Autonomism as a political movement started immediately after the second world war with a campaign for Friuli to become an autonomous region within Italy. This campaign was only partially successful, and the eventual outcome was that in 1963 Friuli was linked with the - definitely

not Friulian - city of Trieste in the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, centred administratively in Trieste (Ellero pp253-7). The second major occasion for autonomist political activity arose in the 1960s with popular agitation for a university in Udine - the main city in Friuli - and indignation at attempts to concentrate all the region's university facilities in the city of Trieste (Ulliana). Following this the autonomists had some success in regional elections, in 1968 obtaining a vote of over 10 per cent in the electoral districts centred on Udine and Tolmezzo, though this success was not repeated at the next regional elections (Strassoldo and Cattarinussi p127). One of the representatives of the regional assembly constituency to which Ovaro belonged was, for a while, an autonomist who was also a respected local teacher.

Supporters of Friulian autonomy feel the Friulians (including Carnians) are very different from other Italians. For some of them, Friulians are not really Italian at all. The autonomist movement includes people whose ideas derive from 1960s anti-capitalist, pro-environment ideology as well as catholic traditionalists whose ideal is the solidary village, guided by a conscientious priest (Beline). Clergy have played a major role in the autonomist movement (Ulliana). There are a number of priests in Carnia with broadly autonomist ideas who, although they are not directly involved in party politics, are active community leaders, using the Friulian language in church and generally promoting consciousness of Friulian identity.

The autonomist movement focused particularly on questions of language and education - with limited success. One visible result of their efforts is the presence, throughout Friuli, of bilingual road signs - specifically those at the entrance to each town or village. (For instance, below the sign announcing that one is entering Ovaro is another sign with the name *Davar* in slightly

smaller characters.) Udine eventually acquired its own university, but this does not really represent an advance for a specifically Friulian sense of identity since teaching in the university is entirely in Italian.

By the end of the 1980s not only the autonomists, but also some Carnian representatives of the main political parties were advocates of the extension of the use of the Friulian language in official and educational contexts. The use of the local language in school was seen as the crucial issue. However, apart from occasional experiments, nothing seemed to get done. A draft bill for safeguarding minority languages, including Friulian, had been on the agenda of the national parliament for some years but never reached the stage of actually being voted into law. These obstacles had not led to any growth in support for autonomism at local level. On the contrary, by the end of the 1980s the autonomist movement had split into different groups, with only a very sparse scattering of regional representatives and local councillors.

During 1990 and 1991 contacts were taking place between Friulian autonomists and the *Lega Nord* - the Northern League. The *Lega* was a movement that originated in Lombardy as a protest against corruption, high taxes, and immigration. Its principal demand was for a high degree of autonomy for the northern part of Italy. Support for the *Lega* rose dramatically with the mafia and corruption scandals in the early 1990s. When I returned to the valley in 1992 I found that all my autonomist friends supported the league, and so did many other people. By 1994 the constituency to which Ovaro belonged was represented by *leghisti* in both the national and regional assemblies. After many years as a relatively ineffectual minority the autonomists felt that they were now part of a powerful movement. Nevertheless the way other people explained their support for the league was rather different from the earlier autonomist line. They did not talk about linguistic issues, or any other aspect of

culture except their commitment of hard work. Their reason for supporting the league was that they wished to combine with other hard working northerners and free themselves from the parasitic south. This suggests that the relationship between the sense of identity and political support for autonomism is not entirely straight forward.

B Regional identity and the experience of difference

the experience of difference

Carnians do consider themselves different from other Italians, even people from as near as Trieste. They believe themselves to be simpler, less imaginative, less good with words, less superficially friendly - but also prouder, less pushy, more honest, and more genuinely friendly to people they know. They think of themselves as harder - both physically tougher and more determinedly hard working - but also as less cultured. Some of them think of Carnians as less religious.

There are reasons for treating this kind of rhetoric about differences with some scepticism. Chapman (1982) argues that people often attribute major differences in character to the people of neighbouring societies because they misunderstand each others' cultural codes. Barth has argued that members of neighbouring societies stress cultural differences in order to mark the boundary between them, and not because the differences matter in themselves. Earlier chapters have shown that Carnians are enthusiastic Barthians when it comes to noting and stressing differences between the customs and character of near-by villages. But the fact that some differences are trivial in themselves does not necessarily imply that all differences between neighbouring societies are trivial, or based on misunderstandings. If there were real cultural differences between Carnians and other Italians, the

Carnian (and Italian) stress on the importance of mutual sympathy as the basis of social life would make it difficult for Carnians to feel that they belonged to a wider Italian community. This is certainly how many Carnians view the question and, for two reasons, I think they are probably right.

The first reason is simply a personal impression that Carnians present themselves in a different way from people in other parts of Italy. They smile less. They are less forthcoming to strangers. And their dress sense is different. Neither men nor women pay as much attention to style as other Italians.

The second reason is that both my impression and their self-description are in striking contrast with Silverman's account of a central Italian village (physically about as small and isolated as those in Carnia). The awkwardness and unpretentiousness of the Carnians seem utterly different from the ideal of *civile* behaviour held by the inhabitants of Montecastello - with its stress on maintaining the *appearance* of correct behaviour. In fact one of the things that Carnians hold against Friulians and other Italians is what Carnians see as their false projection of friendliness. Another factor which makes it seem likely that this is a real difference in behaviour is that it corresponds to a difference in the social system. Relations in Montecastello were based on patronage ties between individuals and hence encouraged people to present themselves in a way that would please potential patrons. Though the *siôrs* had an important role in Carnian society, the main stress was laid on relations between equals and on doing as little as possible to excite envy - attitudes which positively discourage any attempt to present oneself more favourably than other people.

The supposed difference between Carnians and their neighbours is similar to differences attributed to mountain and plain dwellers in other places as well (for

instance in the Dolomites (Poppi 1983) and Navarra (MacClancy 1993)). In Friuli the stereotype has been tested in a questionnaire-based study which compared a mountain community (outside Carnia) with four non-mountain communities. Among other questions, informants were asked where their friends lived, and how many local people they could rely on for help in various situations. The friendship network of the mountain sample was much the most geographically concentrated, and the average number of people they believed they could count on for help was by far the highest (Strassoldo & Tessarin 1992). It would be possible to collect more detailed and rigorous data on social networks, but these findings add weight to the impression that the Carnians are grappling with real differences between mountain people like themselves and non-mountain-dwelling co-nationals.

godless Carnians

This sense of difference is sometimes expressed in terms of the opposition between religiosity and autonomous strength that is such a feature of social symbolism within the local community. There is an expression *cjargnei cence Diu* - godless Carnians - which I first heard from a man who was explaining why he had not joined an association of Carnians living in Udine - the capital of Friuli. The reason was that he was a godless Carnian who did not believe in giving anyone the power to organise him. He and a companion went on to explain that a godless Carnian was someone who built his own house himself without being beholden to any superior. Other versions of the saying - in which Carnians are also said to lack the Madonna or a *patria* - suggest that this characteristically Carnian sense of autonomy is felt to be at odds with both national and religious loyalties.

There is a folktale on this theme (Faggin and Sgorlon pp37-41) which seems to have originated in the Friulian

plain. The Carnians came to hear that the Friulians had a God who helped them in various ways. They thought it would be a good idea to acquire one of these useful beings for themselves, in order to alleviate their hard-working lives. So they sent some youths to the plain to bring one back. But since they had no idea what a god was they were easily fooled by a man who sold them a hornet in a box. They carried this supposed god back to their village where all the people had assembled in a building that was intended as a church. But when the youths opened the box to show the people their new god the insect simply flew away. So the people had to go back to their hard laborious life.

Similar symbolism appears in the story of the *ors di Pani* - 'the bear of Pani' - a man who lived earlier this century in an isolated hamlet high between the Val Degano and the Val Tagliamento. The 'bear' owned most of the land round Pani, and what he said went. He kept his farm implements in the chapel (thus demonstrating that he thought work more important than religion), dressed untidily, and had a huge unkempt beard. The very fact that he blatantly broke these rules of 'civilised' behaviour makes him a local hero.³⁷ The story goes that when he went to a large city - Venice or Milan according to who is telling the story - the waiters in a restaurant refused to serve him because of his outlandish appearance. His response was to cover the table with bank notes, after which of course he had no trouble being served.

Both of these stories place work (and in the second story

³⁷Wild men are figures with a long pedigree in alpine and European folklore (Poppi, 1986) - and it is tempting to see the 'bear' as a continuation of this stereotype. During my stay I was taken to visit another 'wild man', an elderly individual who abandoned his wife and went to live alone in a house high on the slopes of the Val Pesarina. His fame - and the appellation of 'wild man' - derived from an article about him in one of the regional newspapers. He turned out to be mild and friendly, and seemed pleased to have visitors.

money earned by one's own efforts) *in opposition to* religious submission and civilised values more generally. However they evaluate the contrast differently. In the first tale the Carnian attitude is ridiculed. In the second story, the money-based power to defy civilised standards is a source of joy and pride. Even here however there is an undercurrent of unease, not reflected in the story itself, but present in other things that people believe they know about the 'bear'. The 'bear' was murdered round about 1950. There is a story about the reason which is thought of as a secret, despite the fact that almost everyone has heard of it. This is that he was allegedly living incestuously with his own daughter, and was killed by a younger neighbour who could not stand the idea of their immorality.

The story of the 'bear' challenges the values of Italian society by ridiculing the civilised standards of the big-city restaurant, but a number of factors soften the challenge. The strength of the Carnian mountaineer is represented in terms of work and not of military prowess. Secondly the 'bear' was clearly an outlandish figure by Carnian standards, as well as by those of the plain, and his disreputable reputation also limits the extent to which he can serve as model. Finally there is the point that the Carnians are very far from godless. Though masculine strength is valued, often at the expense of the church, the church has a central - even if not entirely dominant - place in Carnian society. Any representation of Carnian attitudes that rested on godlessness could only be partial. So the story of the 'bear' seems to express a nuanced attitude to Italian society, in which the legitimacy of Italian supremacy is not put in doubt, but the civilised values that go with it are resented though not entirely rejected. It suggests that physical vigour and wealth make it possible to free oneself to some extent from the irksome restraints of civilisation.

the system of segmentary identities

This ambiguity reflects a contradiction in the overall system of segmentary identities. The system described by Marinelli in which families are rivals within the village, the villages are rivals within the valley or part valley, and the different valleys are rivals within Carnia still has some emotional reality - and in fact it extends to wider geographic units. Within Friuli there is a rivalry between Carnia and the plain.

People sometimes refer to the plain in a derogatory way as *Furlania*, suggesting that the plain where the *furlans* (Friulians) live is quite distinct from the mountain area of *Cjargna* (Carnia) where the *cjargnei* (Carnians) live. I was told that during the war, when the shortages were more severe in Carnia than in the plain, Carnian women walked down to the plain with the slippers from their *corredo* in their back-baskets in order to trade them for food - and that the *furlans* drove a hard bargain. A family of *furlans* on holiday in Carnia told me that when their children had thoughtlessly let a ball roll onto a patch of hay meadow the elderly owner had shouted at them that they should go back to Friuli. People attribute to the *furlans* some of the same faults - particularly insincerity - which they deplore in other Italians.

Despite this, when they are thinking of rivalries with other parts of Italy, people tend to see themselves and the Friulians as alike in contrast to other Italians - as more hardworking, more honest, less fanciful than the rest. Sometimes the Italian 'others' are those just outside Friuli - particularly the Triestini - but on other occasions the Carnian/Friulian virtues are seen as shared by all northern Italians in contrast to the people of Rome and the south. So there is a hierarchy of segmentation extending all the way from the family to the regions of Italy in which the in-group is always identified with the values of honesty, self-sufficiency, and hard work while

the out-group embody the opposite of these.

This would pose no problem if the segmentary system operated simply as means of sorting out loyalties amongst otherwise equal groups. This is more or less the position right up to the level of region within Italy. But Italy itself is a unit of a different type. It is much more powerful - in that national laws determine nearly all aspects of local administration. It is also different in kind symbolically. As people's reactions to the song '*stelutis alpinis*' show (chap 7), Italy represents the transcendent level at which all contradictions are resolved. To set oneself against Italy as a whole would therefore be illegitimate in a way that rivalry with another part of Italy is not. The problem is that the symbolic centre of Italy clearly does not lie in Carnia or even in Friuli, but in such places as Rome, Tuscany, and Venice - all of which evoke images of urban sophistication. Because of this image, these places - identified with transcendence as the centres of national culture - are identified as morally inferior 'others' by the system of segmentation. If the two systems of value are to coexist there must be a symbolic break, and the images of the bear and the godless Carnian provide it: they are not legitimate in terms of Italian culture, but they embody strength and so reassure people that their local value system is sustainable - despite its divergence from national standards.

segmentation and diglossia

For several centuries Carnia has been bilingual, with Italian being the language for official written transactions and letters, while Friulian has been the language of ordinary speech. For the last century or so virtually everyone has been able to speak Italian. Italian is often used to lend special dignity to ceremonial occasions. All this is typical of the division

of labour between 'high' and 'low' linguistic codes in a situation of diglossia (Fergusson).

Bourdieu (1991) and Herzfeld (1987) have both argued that the labels 'high' and 'low' are themselves value-loaded, embodying the perspective of the dominant official culture. Bourdieu argues that the underlying distinction is not between the noble and the mundane, but between the power of official institutions associated with the 'high' code, and the subordinate position of the local society which uses the 'low' code. This fits the situation in Carnia, where both linguistic codes link the speakers to sources of power - but neither has a monopoly on nobility. The awe felt towards *stelutis alpinis* is enough to show that Friulian is felt to be an appropriate vehicle for beautiful and transcendent themes. The nobility of *stelutis alpinis* derives from the soldier's self-sacrifice - in effect from his submission to the destiny imposed by the state. The use of Friulian to express this theme does not impinge on Italian's status as the language of state power.

But Friulian is associated with power at another level, because of its association with the boundaries and values of the local community. People who have lived in the valley for years without learning to speak Friulian are criticised for not trying to join in. On the other hand, non-Friulian speakers encounter a certain amount of resistance when they first start to speak it. These reactions are not really contradictory since they demonstrate that speaking Friulian is about belonging to the group - and the status of speaker or non-speaker should therefore be consistent with a range of other attitudes and allegiances. Speaking Friulian involves both a degree of intimacy and the acceptance of some control. One young man told me that Friulian is the language for making heavy jokes - and this view is backed up by the fact that the satirical fire-throwing verses, with their marked element of social control, are always in

Friulian. The same point is implied (though not deliberately I think) in the local poet's claim that fellow speakers of the 'o' dialect address each other by the familiar *tu*. Addressing someone as *tu* does not only show friendship, it also shows that the speaker does not feel bound by the respectful restraint that goes with the formal *lei* or *lui*. Someone you call *tu* is someone you are entitled to criticise.

Even so, the power embodied by Friulian is informal, and softened by the fact that it emanates from a group with which the individual identifies, and whose solidarity is based on the assertion of sympathy. People say that Friulian comes to them more spontaneously, that they feel freer to express their true selves than they could in Italian. In other words Friulian is the language of *alegria*, and the kind of cooperation that is experienced as spontaneous.

Friulian's connotations of intimacy go some way to support the criticism that Herzfeld makes of Fergusson's use of the 'high' and 'low'. He argues that the distinction should be reformulated as one between 'self-presentation' and 'self-knowledge'. But Herzfeld's distinction only works if it is treated as a matter of degree. Chapter 4 showed that some forms of knowledge are not fit for speech at all - even within the local community. In that sense even the village dialect is associated with an official version of the 'truth' rather than with reality itself. The reason why the dialect is a vehicle for a more intimate version of the truth than the national language is to do with the kind of social control it embodies. Because the dialect is associated with the micro-politics of reputation it has to deal with some unpleasant truths, which one would not want repeated outside the village. The specificity (actual or notional) of the village dialect is a way of indicating that this level of discourse concerns only the villagers themselves.

The pride in the specificity of the local dialect is also a way of asserting the superiority of the local community over segmentary rivals at the same level. In this respect there is an interesting contrast between attitudes to Friulian and Italian. Though there is some notion that there is standard 'correct' Friulian - identified with the dialect of San Daniele in the plain - this is only really of interest to the small minority who are concerned with Friulian-language literature. For most people their own local speech is best - so long as they feel able to withstand the ridicule from neighbouring communities. In the case of Italian however there is no doubt that the standard version is considered best. When the television shows interviews with people from southern Italy, it is an occasion for making derogatory remarks about their thick accents - which are thought to show that they cannot speak proper Italian.

So Carnians use both languages as indices of segmentary rivalries: different versions of Friulian in the case of rivalries within the region, and different versions of Italian in the case of rivalries with other regions. But to do this, they need to handle the implicit contradiction between the bases on which they are asserting their superiority: the notion - mainly identified with the specific Friulian dialect - that local is best, and the notion - mainly identified with the use of Italian - that approximation to the national standard is the measure of worth. This is essentially a transposition into linguistic terms of the contrasting values of local pride and Italian 'civilisation'. The link was made explicit in a remark by a middle-aged woman in a family with autonomist sympathies. She claimed to find it hard to speak Italian (though she seemed entirely at ease in the language), and followed this with the remark '*siamo leoni nel bosco*' - 'we are lions in the wood'. When I asked what she meant, she replied that she had intended to say that they were *orsi* - bears - in the wood: i.e. that they were uncivilised. (The unintentional substitution of

lions for bears shows a sense of the value of local speech that may be partly due to her autonomism - but it also expresses the ambiguity inherent in the general attempt to make both the local and the national as standards of worth.)

There are two ways of handling this potential contradiction. One of these is to keep the spheres of the two clearly separate: the key distinction here is between written and spoken language. Friulian is hard to read - because it is not taught, and because there is no agreement on standard spelling conventions - but there is also little demand for Friulian reading matter. People explained that although they preferred speaking Friulian they preferred reading Italian, in a way that suggested they saw this as a curious paradox but not something to worry about. On a couple of occasions people remarked on this division of roles between the two languages in a more forceful way. When they were preparing Friulian language menus for a conference of *la Filologica*, Ovaro's chief administrator and the councillor for culture had to call in a student who was a committed Friulian autonomist to help them with the spelling - although both of them speak Friulian most of the time. The chief administrator remarked that Friulian *should not* be written, as it was a language for spoken communication.

The written/spoken division makes it possible to use Friulian to assert local identity without challenging the supremacy of Italian in the sphere of official culture, but it does not turn the Italian language into a way of affirming a specifically Friulian identity against other Italian regions. In order to do this, some people (mainly those with autonomist sympathies) make the claim that people who speak Friulian at home actually speak better Italian as a result. In support of this claim they point to the inhabitants of the neighbouring region of Veneto whose dialect is much more closely related to Italian. Because of this, my Carnian friends claimed, the people of

the Veneto often imagine they are speaking correct Italian when what they are speaking is actually Venetian dialect. Carnians and Friulians on the other hand, provided they speak Friulian at home, are introduced to Italian at school - with the result that they learn to speak it grammatically. This may or may not be true, but it is obviously a convenient way of reconciling the competing claims to legitimacy embodied by the two languages.

C The abandonment and recovery of regional identity

the changing language situation

The same changes - in economic life, institutions, and communications - that undermined the basis of village solidarity, also disrupted the uneven balance between the opposed values of segmentary particularism and Italian national identity. All these changes undermined the tacit separation of the Friulian-language and Italian-language spheres of life: more years of schooling meant more years exposure to Italian, and the arrival of television - often left on continuously - brought Italian into every home for several hours a day. The relative decline of the Carnian economy compared to that elsewhere in Italy (including latterly lowland Friuli) has undermined the sense of strength-through-wealth which underlies the story of the bear of Pani. The result has been a loss of self-confidence both as Carnians vis-a-vis Friulians and as Friulians vis-a-vis the rest of Italy. In the 1960s, as local life came to seem less important, and success in the Italian-language educational system more so, many parents responded by bringing up their children to speak Italian as their first language, and it looked as though the use of Friulian would go into rapid decline.

So far, however, Friulian has largely held its ground as the language for informal communication. Most of the first generation of children raised to speak Italian at

home have adopted Friulian as the language for conversation with their friends. It is also the language of most business conducted in the town hall. And many, though not all, families still speak to their infant children in Friulian. But Italian has registered some advances. It is assumed to be the language of television - even when the audience would have no trouble understanding broadcasts in the local language. As well as receiving national TV channels, Carnia and neighbouring valleys have their own TV station - *Tele Alto Friuli* - which is entirely in Italian. Although the vast majority of the audience speak Friulian most of the time, I never heard anyone complain about their local TV station being in another language.

Italian is also the language for the assertion of individual identity. The association of Friulian with control by the local community might suggest that Italian would be the language for the assertion of any power that potentially divides the individual person or family from the group as a whole. And indeed it is. When entering someone else's home one asks in Italian *permesso* - 'may I' - and receives the Italian reply *avanti* - 'forward' i.e. 'come in'. People's given names are all Italian, and Friulian versions are very rarely used. Even swear-words, the quintessential expression of individual a-social force, are usually in Italian.

Some of this may go back a long way, but there are indications that Friulian had more of a role in defining individual identity in the past. The fact that individual names that have become *nons da cjasa* are all either definitely Friulian or diminutives (see chapter 3) suggests that the local Friulian-speaking community played more of a role in defining identity in earlier generations. In the past Friulian was also more often a vehicle for formalised authority. Some of the oldest inhabitants recall a time when children, and even wives, used the formal mode of address to the husband and father.

There clearly has been a long-term weakening in the degree to which Friulian can be used to embody both formal and informal authority, but the data I have collected does not make it clear whether this decline was a postwar phenomenon or whether it happened earlier.

the active promotion of the Friulian language - efforts and obstacles

The continuing preference of young people for Friulian as the language of casual sociability seems to be a spontaneous phenomenon, but there are also a number of organised efforts to promote the use of Friulian.

One of these is support for literature in the Friulian language. There is a good deal of Friulian language publication, but almost none of it through ordinary commercial channels. Funds are provided from the cultural budgets of various local authorities and via commercial sponsorship from banks. The reason the literature needs to be subsidised is that not many people read it. But it has a significance in providing recognition for local writers, and enabling them to feel that Friulian is worth serious attention. A recent anthology of contemporary Carnian writing included poems and short prose compositions from 37 authors. A literary meeting in Ovaro's *Centro Socio-Culturale* attracted an audience of about 100 people. Though poetry has a limited audience drama does better. Friulian language performances by a drama group from the next valley (described in chapter 6) and by a drama group from outside Carnia both attracted substantial audiences. In one case the audience seemed rather detached, but the other provoked gales of appreciative laughter.

There are also efforts to promote Friulian as a language for use in official or prestigious contexts: in particular meetings of the *comune* council, schools, and the church.

The varying fortunes of these efforts throw light on attitudes to both languages.

During my time in the valley local politicians from all the major parties professed support for the use of Friulian in council meetings - but in fact the proceedings were mainly, and the minutes entirely, in Italian. The ostensible problem was that Friulian language minutes would not have been legally valid, but this does not seem to have been a problem in the case of the *comune's* council-subsidised football club whose annual meeting was conducted entirely in Friulian despite the minutes being in Italian. The underlying principle seems to have been that when the council was sitting as an organ of the Italian state the councillors felt that it had to abide by whatever procedural regulations the state laid down - but that when people were discussing an activity that expressed the solidarity of the *comune* itself and its rivalry with neighbouring *comuni* Friulian was felt to be the appropriate language.

Another project with support from many local politicians was some teaching of the Friulian language in schools, but despite their support this did not happen at all. The principal reason was that the introduction of the Friulian language as an important element of the curriculum would have required a change in the law. But another factor is that the local demand for Friulian language education was at best luke-warm. The practical task of education is seen as being to fit the children for success in the Italian-language world of work. Education in Friulian would have no practical function. Even its function as a promoter of local identity is not universally welcome. The problem came to the fore at a meeting on the topic in Rigolato - in the part of the valley where the 'o'-dialect is spoken. A council member argued forcefully that Friulian should express the identity of the specific local community. From this point of view the formal teaching of Friulian would be worse than nothing - since teaching

would focus on the so-called standard form spoken round San Daniele, and so merely add to the pressures threatening the survival of the 'o'-dialect.

Perhaps the most successful attempt to raise the status of the local language is the decision by some priests to conduct religious services in Friulian. This use of Friulian in church is not in response to a demand originating from local people. Of six local priests whose origins I know, two were Carnian and four were from the Friulian plain. The three who conducted services in Friulian were all from the plain. They told me that it had been difficult to persuade their congregations to accept the use of Friulian in church. Some people still express reservations. These mostly centre on relationships with the wider Italian society. Most often people say that using Friulian wrongly excludes non-Friulian speakers. Some add that they do not want their children to grow up ignorant of the Italian-language liturgy, because they want them to be able to participate in church services outside Carnia. A less common objection, which I only heard from one or two people, was that Friulian should not be used in church because it was the language of profane life.

Despite these objections, the priests' use of Friulian is generally accepted by their congregations and highly valued by some people - by no means only intellectuals. One local family showed me the video of the marriage of their daughter to a man from lowland Friuli. The marriage took place in Ovasta's church, and the bride's mother told me proudly that the groom's family had been very moved to hear the wedding service in their native language. Reactions of this kind confirm that many people do not see Friulian as intrinsically less suitable than Italian for important occasions.

the symbolic enhancement of Carnian and Friulian identity

But, given the overall dominance of Italian as the language in which individual identity is conferred and sustained, the priests need to back their use of Friulian with an alternative source of symbolic power. They are very conscious of this, seeing the main threat to Friulian language and culture in people's sense of inferiority to the Italian culture that reaches them through all official sources and mass media. One source of countervailing symbolic power is simply their own priestly status, which carries a great deal of weight. But they are also active promoters of various activities that celebrate local culture and enhance its dignity by rooting it firmly in the historic or prehistoric past.

The activities concerned are choral singing by choirs dressed in traditional costume; latin chants; and rituals that can be identified as celtic. I will describe each in turn, but before doing so I need to return to the topic of the *invention of tradition*. This famous phrase, coined by Hobsbawm and Ranger, makes the point - which certainly applies here - that the reasons for celebrating the past need to be sought in the present situation. But Hobsbawm and his collaborators take the argument further. For them traditions are invented in the sense that they misrepresent the past, perhaps to the extent of resting on actual forgeries. I do not think this is the case with the traditions described here. A better expression might be the *use of tradition*, but even this would be misleading if it was taken to imply that the appeal of the symbolism was explained by a simple attachment to the notion of the traditional past. They celebrate the past in a way that involves the themes of work, self-sacrifice, and autonomous strength. Like the song *stelutis alpinis*, these uses of tradition owe their appeal to the way they draw on symbols and values that are central to Carnian culture.

The traditional costume of the choirs needs to be understood in the context of the typical choral performance. These take place in concerts involving choirs from about four different comunes. Each choir is introduced by the master of ceremonies and sings a series of different songs, with great attention to musical precision. The songs are sometimes arrangements of local folksongs, sometimes folksongs from elsewhere, and sometimes religious songs, or songs about the suffering of war. The overall impression is serious, and they are heard in respectful silence. At the end trophies are presented to the leader of each choir. At this point the formal part of the proceedings ends and the second, longer, informal part begins. This consists of a communal supper for all concerned with plentiful food and drink and very noisy conversation. After a bit the conversation is replaced with a general sing-song which could not be more different from the formal recitals: it is loud, boisterous, and generally a celebration of vigour. Much of the formal and most of the informal singing is in Friulian.

Taken as a whole this involves both the identification with the past - characterised by hard work (indicated by the women's costumes) and sacrifice (expressed by the words and style of singing) - and the expression of current vigour. As with the juxtaposition of fire-throwing with religious festivals, solidarity is being celebrated both by identification with dead and by the shared assertion of continuing vitality. The details of the costumes, and the language used, mark both past and present as Carnian. Implicitly they suggest that Carnian identity is as old, and hence as worthy, as the Italian state itself. Nonetheless this remains a comparatively modern source of identity. Other traditions can be used to evoke an identity that is rooted in a far more distant past.

A priest who has put a great deal of effort into reviving

latin chants explained that these derived from the liturgy of the patriarchate of Aquileia. Singing them provides a way of giving a particularly Friulian stamp to the ideals associated with christianity. In this sense it - like the translation of the bible into Friulian carried out in the last couple of decades - is an aspect of the Friulanisation of church services - discussed in the next section. But it is also a way of associating Friulian identity with a christian past going back to fourth century Council of Aquileia. The Friulianist priests emphasise this identification in various ways - including visits with the choir to the basilica at Aquileia down by the coast.

However an antique identification that probably has more resonance for most people is the belief that the Carnians and the Friulians are both Celts - descendants of the Carnii who occupied much of Friuli at the time of the Roman conquest and whom they seem to have classified as Galli (i.e. Celts). For autonomists it has the appeal of linking their cause to the longer established nationalisms of Ireland and the other countries of the celtic fringe. But it has another appeal which is linked to the complex of ideas surrounding the *cidulas* ceremony. The idea that the *cidulas* ceremony is of celtic origin is recent, originating with Leicht's article at the turn of the century - but it is now widely believed. It too provides a link with Aquileia - and hence Friuli - because Leicht linked the *cidulas* to the worship of the celtic sun god Beleno - who had a temple at Aquileia. The image of the Celts embodies precisely those images of wildness and masculine vigour which are conveyed by fire-throwing.

The ecclesiastical and celtic images of Friulian antiquity can be linked. The priests believe that the traditional religious processions called *rogazions* are derived from a celtic ritual. There have also been a couple of occasions in which fire-throwing has been celebrated under church auspices. One was in 1976 when *cidulas* were thrown from

the tower of the basilica at Aquileia as a way of celebrating Carnian and Friulian resilience in the face of the consequences of the earthquake. Another took place in Ovaro in 1992 when the friulianist priests sponsored a special throwing of *cidulas* at the *Plêf* - the main church in the valley - on behalf of the valley as a whole. This too was an assertion of Friulian identity as became clear when the youths called out a dedication along the lines of 'to Italy which has never brought us any good' - causing great offence to the mayor.

symbolism and practical effectiveness

The image of the Celt does not owe its appeal solely to its antiquity and to its embodiment of the ideal of assertive masculinity. Celts and Germans are both thought of as being nordic races, and so the idea of a celtic origin associates Carnians with the impressively efficient Germans - and dissociates them from what they see as the lazy and corrupt inhabitants of southern Italy. The notion of race corresponds closely to the generalised idea of strength, in the sense of a physically embodied quality of effectiveness. The idea that Carnians are racially distinct from most Italians is very widely held.

The *Lega Nord*, which is often accused by its opponents of being racist, may owe much of its appeal to its ability to draw on this idea. In its appeal to a notion of innate effectiveness it is arguable that the *Lega* is truer to the spirit of Carnian culture than was the appeal of the previous autonomists. The *Lega* asks its supporters to bet on their own strength, and does not implicitly ask for outside support as the cultural autonomists did. The very fact that it downplays the linguistic issue enables its supporters to avoid an issue where they feel vulnerable, and makes it easier for them to see themselves as hard, determined, and successful. By explicitly linking its political appeal to the economic strength of all northern

Italy, it rests its case on apparently demonstrable economic realities and not merely the symbolic evocation of a satisfactory but vanished past.

D Theories of nationalism and regionalism

activists and ordinary people

The Friulian autonomist movement belongs to the wave of western European micro-nationalisms that arose, or took on new life, in the 1960s and have continued until the present day. By now there is a substantial body of ethnography dealing with this theme and focusing particularly on the degree of match or mismatch between the meanings assigned to the ideas of regional or ethnic identity held by activists and those of the people with whom they have chosen to identify. At one extreme Chapman (1978) and McDonald (1987), working in the Gaelic west of Scotland and in Brittany, have reported an almost total lack of fit between the ideas of the local people and those of the intellectual enthusiasts who have made it their business to promote their supposed sense of ethnic identity. This is not always the case: Bowie reports that Welsh nationalism is in tune with strong popular feelings of Welsh distinctiveness in northwest Wales; and MacClancy reports that Basque nationalism has been integrated into the general youth culture in Spanish Navarra. The fact that activists can make common cause with the population in general is also indicated by the electoral success of local nationalist parties in the Basque country, Catalonia, Welsh speaking Wales, and some areas of Scotland. The position of the Friulian autonomists in Carnia seems to be an intermediate case. They had very limited political success before their absorption by the *Lega*, but nevertheless the autonomist priests - despite their non-Carnian origin - are greatly respected as community leaders, and the desire to protect and celebrate what can be salvaged of the old way of life is widely

shared.

This difference between the typical activist and the community at large is not unique to post-1960s micro-nationalism. Hroch has documented the same phenomenon in nineteenth century nationalist movements in Europe: showing how the members of nationalist movements were found disproportionately among educated groups such as teachers and the clergy. In fact he argues that evolving nationalist movements go through a three stage process starting with the non-politicised study of folklore, moving on to nationalist activism on the part of a minority, and finally reaching the stage - if the movement is successful - of mass support. This typology fits the Friulian case rather well: in the first phase, starting after the first world war, study of folklore was promoted by *la Filologica*; the second phase started after the second world war and was still continuing at the end of the 1980s; Friulian nationalism itself has not moved on to the third phase, but the generalised north-Italian autonomism of the *Lega* has recently attracted wider support. The existence of this sequence raises two questions: why is the initial support for nationalist movements found among an educated minority rather than the people at large; and what sets the process in motion and moves it on from the initial stage of folklorism to the final stage of mass political support?

It is not particularly surprising that activists come predominantly from the more educated members of the population. In modern societies, political activity of any kind involves the manipulation of formal written discourse - which is something education trains people to do. So, even if support for nationalism was spread evenly through a population, the activists themselves would probably be recruited disproportionately from those with more education. But there are also reasons why educated people might be particularly inclined to support nationalist ideas. As O'Brien reports in French

Catalonia, education gives people a position in the dominant society which partially removes them from the context of the local community - literally so in the community she studied, since French bureaucratic careers necessitate moving to other parts of the country. They therefore come to experience their local identity as problematic - and adopt nationalism as a way both of sustaining that identity in the midst of the dominant culture, and of demonstrating to their community of origin that they have not been entirely absorbed by the dominant culture.

But the mental distance between activists and the rest of the community is not just a matter of divergent status, it also derives from the nature of the nationalist project itself. Chapman (1978) argues that Scottish patriotism draws on an image of the Gael as Celt, which derives from a long tradition of metropolitan projection of wildness - whether with positive or negative connotations - onto communities which in reality are merely different. It is hardly likely, he argues, that actual Gaels would themselves equate their difference with wildness.

I am sceptical about this specific formulation of the difference between nationalist and local conceptions of identity - because the Carnians do express the difference between themselves and Italian society in terms of wildness, and because their assertion of celtic identity is an aspect of this. This factual point reflects a deeper problem with Chapman's argument. His analysis derives from ideas of Ardener's about language and the perception of difference - according to which each society or dominant group employs a specific, not wholly translatable, system of categorisation - and difference, non-communication, and perceived wildness, are all characteristics that place a person or group at the margin of society (Ardener 1982; 1989). The implicit assumption is that society itself is characterised by straight-forward communication and agreement on the application of

conceptual categories (at least among members of the dominant social stratum). Ardener's view of the relation between society and the wild differs from the argument of this thesis - which has placed conflict, over both material prosperity and meanings, at the centre of the social process. The centrality of conflict means that the possession of strength to sustain oneself and one's group is an essential aspect of individual and collective identity. Closeness to the wild symbolises this strength - and is therefore important to individual and group identity at all levels.

The real difference between nationalists and the not-yet-convinced community at large is not about the symbolism of wildness, but about the level at which the values of assertive strength (with their connotations of wildness) are reconciled with the values of social order (with their connotations of innocence and self-sacrifice). It is the ability to reconcile these opposed sets of values that constitutes the claim to legitimacy of an independent state. For most people in Carnia the Friulian language is associated with the assertion of local identity in segmentary competition - and thus with claims to strength and wildness. What makes the autonomists different is that they want to make it a vehicle for transcendence as well - in order to take on the actual and symbolic role of the legitimate state. This is why support for a nationalist or autonomist project means that, at least in its initial stages, the activists must view the local culture in a fundamentally different way from the majority of the local people.

nationalism, micro-nationalism, and economic change

Do the Carnian data throw light on the other problem posed by the micro-nationalism of the last three decades - why it is happening now? Gellner has explained an earlier wave of European national movements in terms of the impact

of industrialisation. The industrial economy led to greatly increased need for technical and commercial coordination, which was favoured by, and in turn promoted, use of a common language and certain common cultural assumptions. Distinct ethnic groups, which had previously coexisted in multinational states, were faced with a situation in which one language or other was destined to dominate - the question being which one. Nationalist movements were attempts, often successful, to lessen the sense of disorientation of the recently-rural workforce which flooded into the new industrial towns, by imposing their own language in place of the elite language of the existing dominant strata.

A similar argument works very well in late twentieth century Carnia - only this time the change is not so much the coming of industry as the collapse of agriculture. The initial result was a feeling, even among many of those who stayed put, that the local language and culture was no longer relevant. Autonomist activism has been a response to the resulting sense of disorientation and loss. In Friuli's particular situation the attempt to promote Friulian as the language of technical and commercial activity has had little success - because people were already integrated as Italian speakers into the wider economy. This fact limited support for the autonomists' political demands, and their fortunes only revived when they could link their aspirations to the cause of autonomy for northern Italy as a whole.

Although ethnographic accounts of micro-nationalism have not paid much attention to the question of why it has risen to prominence in the last three decades, the collapse of agricultural employment has been a Europe-wide phenomenon and so might well apply to other micro-nationalisms as well. Despite this, economic explanations are not wholly convincing as *total* explanations of the phenomena of nationalism and micro-nationalism. The very fact that these movements draw on symbols of pre-

industrial society shows that more is involved. The next chapter will discuss the possibility that important elements of national ideology were already implicit in the social and symbolic structure of European villages.

A Attitudes to structuralism

Structural approaches have not on the whole been popular with students of European anthropology, despite their wide application to studies of other parts of the world. This has tended to create, or perhaps to confirm, an impression that European societies are fundamentally different from those elsewhere. A few writers have challenged this viewpoint, though without so far having a great deal of impact on the mainstream of European studies. Ott (1981) in particular has appealed for anthropologists to pay more attention to formal organising principles in European societies - arguing that the result would be to demonstrate that formal structures are as important in Europe as in other societies. If Ott is right, this raises the question of why the importance of structural principles has so often been overlooked.

One reason may be that social structure is something which is easier to see 'from afar'. Bourdieu (1977) explains this by saying that what appears to outsiders as a structured pattern is in fact generated by individually pragmatic activity by each of the members of the society concerned. The pattern derives from the implicit assumptions - mental schemas - which guide this activity. Insiders would see nothing to remark on because these schemas, which they themselves may never formulate explicitly, seem to them simply part of the way things are (cf. Bloch 1992). Anthropologists from within the society will be as blind to the importance of these schemas as anyone else - unless they deliberately set out to distance themselves from their own 'common sense' expectations.

Bourdieu's explanation cannot be the whole story, because not all formal social patterns are the result of uncoordinated individual activity. Some formal patterning - including the principles of rotation and serial

replacement in the community studied by Ott - is embodied in collectively organised ritual or explicit social rules. These are not things that anthropologists, even anthropologists from closely related societies, would simply miss. If they are not reported - or reported but not stressed - it must be because they seem relatively unimportant. In other words the thing which is too familiar to be seen is not the formal pattern, but the social situation which it helps to bring about. In Carnia - as in most of Europe - this is a territorially based society, with more areas of freedom from kinship ties than would apply in many non-European societies. Is the problem that this set-up is so familiar to students of Europe, that it seems to have no need for formal underpinning?

If so, the task for structuralists is not merely to record specific formal elements within European societies, but also to show how these elements combine to generate the kinds of social system that are found in western and central Europe. This is not, of course, to argue that European society depends on formal structures alone - or to deny the importance of pragmatic economic motivations and the role of technological change in the recent transformations of European society. But it does require the working hypothesis (to be verified or rejected by the available data) that formal elements can be combined differently in different places so as to generate distinct forms of social organisation even when the technological basis of practical life is similar. This is not something that can be tested by comparing the social organisation of societies using advanced technologies with those that are still based mainly on agricultural production. But it can be tested by looking at the differing social structures of agrarian communities with access to basically similar agricultural technologies. So the argument turns on the different ways of organising 'traditional' (i.e. pre-

1960s) agricultural communities within Eurasia.³⁸

This chapter will pursue the argument by

summarising the structural analysis put forward in earlier chapters;

relating the discussion of Carnian kinship to other analyses of European kinship systems;

considering how representative Carnian villages are of village communities elsewhere in western and central Europe;

comparing the conclusions with Goody's non-structuralist account of the evolution of Europe's kinship system.

The final section of the chapter will return to the present day and consider the implications of this structuralist analysis for theories of collective identity and nationalism.

³⁸Eurasia because Goody (1976) has argued that its agricultural technology marks it out from the shifting cultivation and hunter-gatherer systems of sub-saharan Africa. Superficially, alpine societies - with their reliance on herding and use of the hoe rather than the plough - might appear to conform to the African rather than the Eurasian technological model. However this is an illusion, because alpine agriculture shares the fundamental Eurasian characteristic of intensive land use, combined with a relatively high level of investment in capital: the land was maintained, not just cleared and abandoned; houses were built to last; and even if the plough was not used those items of the technology that could be used in a mountainous environment - including sledges and wheeled vehicles, mills, and sawmills - were.

B Elements of structure in traditional Carnian society

representations of sympathy and strength

I have argued that the structural patterning of Carnian society should be seen as a response to a practical problem: how to arrange for cooperative activity, or at least avoid disruption, in face of the fact that economic activity has implications for status, and status conflicts are understood as a zero-sum game. The most fundamental principle is that any social unit must be able to reassure its members that they are safe from the danger of envious rivalry. This reassurance is conveyed by representations of sympathy and strength. These representations involve various formal elements.

Prominent among these is a theme emphasised by Ott - namely rotation. The symbolism of rotation, or simply of circularity, is present in almost every context in which social unity is expressed. This account has highlighted the ritual of the *cidulas* - wheels - in which, among other things, the conflict between those at different places in the ordered progression through life is reconciled. The *girs dal païs* of the *coscrits* and of the children asking for *sops* are part of the same process. The carrying of statues of saints and the Virgin through the village streets, and the circling of the village fields in the *rogazions*, are further occasions when circular movement expresses the unity of purpose of fellow members of the village. At village dances the couples rotate on their axes as they rotate round the dance floor - as the joke about 'undancing' in chapter 3 pointed out. When people gathered in each others' homes for an evening of work and sociability it was known as visiting *in fila* - 'to spin', another activity involving rotary motion. The ritual foods that celebrate family unity - the slab of *polenta* - and union with the church - the communion wafer - are both circular. The sun, a perfect circle, is the main symbol of unity and order; and the moon, usually a broken circle,

stands for disorder.

Shared unidirectional movement - whether through time or space - is also an important expression of sympathetic identification. One aspect of this, the periodic reunions of age-mates as they move through life, is also reported in by Ott (1981:p78)³⁹. Implicit in this identification is the ordering of successive age-groups and the displacement of each age group by its successors. This has something in common with the principle Ott describes as 'serial replacement', but it is not exactly the same since 'serial replacement' is a matter of turn-taking in which each person's or household's turn will eventually come round again. Turn-taking was found in Carnia - both in the annual transmission of the role of the *bric* in Ovasta and in practical applications such as the rotas for helping in the dairy and in informal labour sharing groups (though I have no details about how these practical arrangements worked, and so do not know whether they were cyclical). Turn-taking may have had other applications as well, but I was not told of anything as elaborate as the ordered progression through six named roles in the Basque shepherds' hut.

A third formal principle with a role in the promotion of sympathy might be named *randomness*. This operated when experiences could not literally be shared - for instance in the division of an inheritance into distinct portions, or the allocation of the task of clearing specific pieces of road. It compensated for the impossibility of sharing the outcomes of these allocations by stressing the shared lack of control over the process of allocation itself. Stretching a point, it could be argued that the wild mismatching of many *cidulas* couples conveys a similar message. Ultimately everyone must end up with one

³⁹Even the names given to the group of age-mates are equivalent - *konskritak* in the Pyrenees and *coscrits* in Carnia - though in the Pyrenees the reunions take the form of attendance at each others' weddings and a feast held in the year they reach 50.

particular marriage partner - but in the meantime the sense of shared destiny is enhanced by the thought that anyone might strike up an affair with anyone else.

The symbolism of strength is largely to do with the ability to separate oneself from others, and resist an unwelcome sharing of destiny. This is partly a matter of literally shutting them out - which explains the stress placed on the qualities of hardness and closedness. Boundaries to communication are particularly important: whether literal barriers such as the walls of a house, or symbolic markers such as dialect differences. But strength is also a matter of biological vigour: expressed in the symbolism of trees, flowers, and food. While biological vigour - connected to the notion of *fisic* - can reinforce the impermeability of the person or household to external forces of envy, it can also be used to break down barriers - as when the *coscrits* breach the physical and social boundaries of the separate households which make up the village.

Fire and light are important both as symbols of natural vigour and because mutual visibility marks out the existence of a shared social space.

fields of sociability

The social units marked out by these symbols exist in physical space - as single houses or the cluster of buildings and associated land which make up a village - but they can also be thought of as distinct elements within the different 'fields' of social space (cf Turner) constituted by linguistic and visual communication, exchange, and kinship and affinity. There are parallels between the manifestations of a given kind of unit - say a village - in the different 'fields', but they are not precisely the same. Each 'field' has its own structural principles which affect the way it can be used to express

the strength of the unit, and the mutual sympathy of its members.

In the case of communication, chapter 4 examined the parallels between the fear of gossip and beliefs about witchcraft and the evil eye - and showed how communication could express both the strength of public opinion and a sense of good fellowship. The underlying point is that people are concerned about their own image in the minds of those people who they themselves think about. Real power is exercised by the opinion of those they feel unable to ignore, and the stress of the situation is minimised by defining the relationships involved as sympathetic and free of coercion. Coercion is resisted by defining it as such, and setting up barriers to communication with the supposedly envious people involved. The barriers protect the integrity of the in-group by preventing discreditable information being known outside, and by blocking off external messages of disapproval. Within the group reciprocity of communication makes all potentially equal - except to the extent that some people are less open than others.

Symbolically significant exchange takes place mainly within, rather than between social units, and centres on food provision. This might seem to make the application of the Maussian notion of the 'gift' inappropriate - but in fact these intra-family prestations have all the characteristics he described. Although they are in fact obligatory they are also seen as expressions of the moral commitment of the providers. The provider expresses a form of power because the gift conveys something of his or her identity to the receivers - and also creates an expectation of return prestations, in the form of respect and eventually care from the provider's children. This care too, though virtually obligatory, is experienced as an expression of moral commitment. While commensality is an expression of sympathetic identification, the business of providing food is inherently hierarchical because it

asserts status, creates obligations, and incorporates the receiver into the provider's own identity.

Kinship and affinity constitute the most complex of these fields. The activities of sexuality and child-rearing within the nuclear family are themselves imbued with meanings to do with both sympathy and the assertion of strength. Ties of parenthood, sibling-hood, and affinity link elementary families into wider units, but because of the incest taboo each new link threatens the boundaries of the units that have already been created - while simultaneously making it possible for men to define new relationships through their control over the allocation of women. The way Carnians handle affinity has been described in chapter 6, and will be analysed further in section C of this chapter.

the relation of society to its component parts

Little if any of the above is specific to Europe. What is specific is the relation between higher-level social units and their component parts which arises from the particular way these social fields are structured. This can best be described as a combination of fusion - accompanied by sympathetic identification of all the individuals within the higher-level unit - and negation, accompanied by the symbolic breaching of the boundaries round the lower-level social unit. In either case the unity of society as a whole is achieved by its component units' willing or forced renunciation of their own specific identities. In particular the village community is symbolically opposed to the distinct identities of its component families.

This differs from the systems of affinal exchange described by Levi-Strauss which create a wider community by incorporating smaller lineage units, either in dyadic moieties or unidirectional loops of generalised exchange. It also differs from the segmentary principle identified

by Evans-Pritchard which links lineages together in terms of genealogical distance. Carnian society does have segmentary divisions in the sense that rivalries which are acute at one geographic level fade into the background when rivalries between more inclusive geographic units are at issue. But segmentary metaphors are not used within the group as a rationalisation for unity. The unity of Ovasta is not conceptualised as either a single family tree going back to a founding ancestor, or as a system of asymmetric marriage alliances between its component families. It is a sentimental tie uniting each individual to the village as a whole, and it is expressed in a ritual that evokes the shared identity of age-mates in order to infringe the distinct identities of the village's component lineage groups.

This *particular* method of constructing social solidarity has a lot in common with the account Durkheim gave of the relationship between the collectivity and the individual in any form of society. As in his account, society appears both as the union of individual identities and as an external reality to which any particular individual is subject. Either way society is seen as monolithic, and is inevitably opposed to the sense of self of the isolated individual - a structural opposition which is formulated by the Carnians in terms of the tension between the desire for *alegria* and the desire for autonomy of the closed, hard individual. If Dumont (1970; 1992) and Strathern (1990) are right to see the notional opposition between society and the individual as a folk theory of western social science it is one that corresponds to the facts of this particular European society.

While these patterned relationships can be understood as a particular kind of structural pattern, they also have implications for practical economic life. The image of the village, as a collective entity that was able to exercise power over the units which made it up, provided symbolic support for the collective institutions of

practical economic life - which were based on a sense of cohesion and a willingness to accept the collective decisions of the village. At the same time this image of collective power meant that there was no social basis for violent feuding, and so channelled rivalry into productive work. In this sense it was a system for maximising the economic yield from the community's environment, and was consistent with a very high valuation of hard work.

C Affinity, property, and social structure

approaches to marriage patterns in European ethnography

Chapter 6 argued that one field in which this overall structure was manifest was kinship and affinity - in particular the marriage system. This kind of assertion is rather unusual in European ethnography, except for the Balkans where Du Boulay has recorded a system of Levi-Straussian generalised exchange and Hammel has identified systems of god-kinship that follow both direct and generalised exchange patterns.⁴⁰

Otherwise European marriage transactions have been analysed in terms of the strategies of individual families, with particular attention being given to the implication of different patterns of residence and property transmission. There have been suggestions that difference in the systems found in southern Europe might be traceable to the economic consequences of ecological differences (Boissevain), and a number of studies have linked changes in property transmission and post-marital

⁴⁰Segalen and Zonabend report on work done in France, using genealogies to trace *de facto* patterns of direct and indirect exchange between different patrimonial lines. However, as they note (p114), there is little evidence that these correspond to explicit social rules or, in the case of longer term "exchanges", that the people involved are even aware of them. Sellan's application of these methods to a community in the Italian alps is open to the same objections.

residence to economic change (Davis; Galt; Loizos) - but these explanations have remained ad hoc. No overall theory has emerged to explain the connection between economic circumstances and marriage patterns in a way that could account for the observed variations as specific instances of a set of general principles. If such a theory were ever to be found it would not be purely economic. Ethnographic studies have often commented on the importance of social and symbolic considerations in relation to inheritance and dowry transactions (Brettell), even when these are the subject of hard quasi-commercial bargaining (Loizos).

The existing evidence is perfectly compatible with the idea that such a theory would be structuralist, in the sense of identifying formal principles underlying marriage and property transactions which link people and families into overall systems of social solidarity; and in this section and the next I will argue that - generalising from the Carnian example - much of western and central European village society might be understood in this way. However I am not proposing a general theory - merely carrying the analysis far enough to show that the Carnian system does use marriage to create an image of general village unity, and that the social meaning attached to property transactions in this process can be understood in terms of the same basic principles as apply in other European kinship systems. But first it is necessary to make some general points about structuralist accounts of marriage systems.

structuralist approaches (1) property and the exchange of women

Any attempt to give a structuralist account of marriage which includes property transactions must cope with the fact that the only form of property considered in Levi-Strauss's original synthesis were the women themselves.

His structuralist account of marriage rules as systems of alliance rested on two fundamental propositions: that groups of men exchange women in order to build alliances between their groups; and that these exchanges are governed by rules which ensure that they fit together into a coherent system which unites the entire society. If this approach is basically adequate, where do other forms of property transfer come into the picture?

At first sight bride-price appears to fit easily into an extended version of Levi-Strauss's scheme, but dowry does not. Bride-price can be seen as a countervailing flow of prestations going in the opposite direction to the women themselves but expressing the same pattern of relationships (Needham). Dowry is more perplexing: from a lineage point of view it goes in the same direction as the bride, which is puzzling because she herself is surely a substantial enough gift already. Secondly, dowry payments seem to have as much or more to do with establishing the new couple as they do with relationships between lineages (Goody 1976,1990). If they fit into a structural scheme at all, it cannot simply be one of gift exchanges between internally unified lineages.

The key to the puzzle is to realise that Levi-Strauss's scheme only offers a partial account of the relationship between social solidarity and the exchange of women. Transfers of women also affect the internal solidarity of the exchanging groups. At one level they undermine that solidarity by introducing outsiders who may serve as focuses for division within the receiving group. But in a way that is only apparently paradoxical they may also play a role in constituting the exchanging groups themselves. Schneider (1971) argues that in Mediterranean societies men form social ties through their shared interests in the control of particular women. So Levi-Strauss's original scheme needs to be extended to include the way the exchange of women interacts with the internal structure of the exchanging groups themselves. Once one adopts this

point of view, the significance of dowry payments becomes clearer.

structuralist approaches (2) the meaning of European marriage payments

Until recently two kinds of property transfer were found in virtually all European kinship systems. One was post-mortem inheritance by at least some of the offspring. The other was dowry, in the sense of property contributed to the new household by the bride's family, or by the bride herself, at or near the time of the wedding. Both these transfers simultaneously define a social position and impose a connection. The Carnian data show how inheritance is both associated with the transmission of a patrilineal identity, a name, and puts the recipient under an obligation to maintain the family enterprise built up by his father.

Dowries vary greatly between societies both in size and composition. What is universal is that the dowry helps to provide the new couple with some of their household property, and that it includes items of clothing and bedding. In doing so, dowry expresses the separate identity of the new nuclear family and the conditions of its formation. Just as the wife is the condition of the husband's adult social role as head of a reproductive unit, so her property helps to found the corresponding property unit; and just as non-incestuous reproduction depends on receiving a wife from outside the groom's kinship group, so must the nucleus of the new unit's property also originate outside. (Rheubottom 1980)⁴¹.

⁴¹Although I am indebted to Rheubottom for these points I am not sure that he would agree with the way I have generalised them beyond the Macedonian case, or with the precise way in which I have formulated them. In particular he argues (page 248) - in contrast to the analysis presented here - that dowry should be seen as "the means through which affinity is symbolically negated". This seems odd, particularly as he says that

The other point about the dowry, in so far as it is provided by the parents, is that it represents a claim to continuing parental involvement in their daughter's social identity. One implication of this, stressed in ethnographic accounts of dowry transactions, is that the status of the bride's parents is dependent on the status of the family into which their daughters marry. Viewed from the other side of the transaction, dowry represents a claim that may conflict with agnatic solidarity.

The implications of this can be understood by looking at the operation of a European patrilineage system. Rheubottom describes typical Macedonian patrilineages as substantial groups, based on actual or assumed agnatic links, each occupying a specific neighbourhood within a village. They are internally egalitarian, and are perceived as units from the outside - in the sense that the social prestige of lineage members depends on that of the lineage as a whole. But they are not corporate, in the sense of sharing common property. The largest fully corporate group is the patrilineal extended household. Marriages provide the main context in which the whole lineage acts as a group. Lineages are exogamous, and the acquisition of a bride is the occasion for a public demonstration of the strength and solidarity of the men of the wife-receiving lineage. Since women leave their native group, female inheritance is minimised. Dowry too is reduced to little more than a trousseau.

The problem for lineages is that they depend for their reproduction on ties with families in rival lineages, a fact which is symbolised by the dowry. The wife-receivers need to find a way of incorporating the bride which makes

other marriage prestations should be seen as "tokens of relationship" (p248) and comments (p234) that as a result of her dowry the bride "is among [her new family], but outfitted by others so that she can never be completely of them" - which hardly suggests that the dowry negates affinity. Some of the implications of affinity are negated in the marriage ceremony, but in the way described in the following paragraphs.

it clear that the resulting link does not weaken the internal solidarity of their lineage. The usual solution in Rheubottom's community was the symbolic seizure of the bride. A party would set off from the groom's home, led by armed men on horseback - one of them carrying the national flag. It would wind its way round the village before arriving at the bride's house, where there would be a brief symbolic scuffle at the gate - after which the groom's party were admitted and the remaining procedures took place in a peaceful way. At the church ceremony next day, none of the bride's kinsmen are present. The ritual does not deny affinity, but it does clearly assert that, wife-givers' claims notwithstanding, the new couple is founded under the auspices of the groom's lineage - the rights of the wife-givers are overcome by the display of physical power.

An alternative solution to the same symbolic problem seems to be expressed in those payments of 'brideprice' that are recorded in historical and contemporary European societies (for instance in Albania (Goody 1990 pp430-4), though not among the Macedonian Slavs studied by Rheubottom). Goody has argued that, since a large part of these payments tends to be passed on by her father to the bride herself, they should be seen as an indirect dowry - rather than payment for bride. Goody does not explain why the groom and his family should go through this complicated transaction, rather than themselves bestowing the goods and money directly on the bride. But all becomes clear once we realise that the wife-receivers are caught in the same dilemma as the groom's family in Macedonia. They need the dowry as a sign of the bride's externality, but want to cancel the obligation by making an equivalent or better payment to her original family. In the Albanian example prestation takes the place of the symbolic force used in the Macedonian example: both are ways of asserting the status of the wife receivers.

Carnian marriage as a European kinship structure

In contrast to the Macedonian system, in which the village is divided into competing patrilineal groups, the Carnian system avoids systematic internal division by relating both wife-givers and wife-takers to a group that represents the village as a whole. This is the role of the young unmarried people, led by the young men, who form a crucial part of the Carnian system. This group, which is referred to as '*la gioventù*' - 'the young'- fulfils the role vis-a-vis individual households of both wife-giver and wife-taker. In effect *la gioventù* take on the roles of both lineages - with the young men acting as collective controllers of marriage, while the young women appear as collective providers of the *trousseau*.

In the fire-throwing ceremony the young men use symbolic force to extract the girls from their parental homes - much as the men of the Macedonian wife-receiving lineage do. They then become symbolic wife-givers, pairing off single women with single men within the village. When there was a marriage the girls of the village jointly provided the marital mattress - arguably the single most significant item of the *trousseau* - thereby themselves becoming part of the wife-giving group.

If the girl marries a man in another village he must pay *entrastalas*, but no payment is due if the groom is from within the village. This reflects the logic of 'bride-price' discussed above. None is needed from a groom within the village, since that would cancel the link between the couple and their village contemporaries - and the whole purpose of the proceedings is to reinforce that link. On the other hand, if the girl marries out, the rights of the wife-giving *gioventù* of the original village need to be cancelled by paying *entrastalas*. The system thus expresses the unity of the village, both by cancelling the claims of wife-giving households, and by placing new households in the position of wife-receivers

in relation to the village as a whole.⁴²

Carnia differed from both lineage societies such as Macedonia, and societies where large dowries are paid such as Cyprus, in allowing fairly free choice of marriage partners to the young people themselves, at least within the village. An attraction of the present analysis is that it demonstrates that consensual marriage need not breach the fundamental principles of Levi-Strauss's theoretical scheme. The freedom of choice was not simple absence of control, but a positive part of a scheme that created an alternative form of social solidarity by actively denying parental control. In this sense the disposition of women was being used to build a system of solidarity. What is more this was being done under male control - in the form of the *coscrits* and the other young men. The reason why this control was compatible with consensual marriage was that the control could only be exercised negatively, *against* the parents. Had the *coscrits* themselves really tried to allocate particular young women to particular young men, the resulting jealousies would quickly have destroyed the basis of age-group solidarity on which the whole system rested. So instead of imposing choices they merely announced them in the *cidulas* dedications - generally either acknowledging existing couples or making up random pairings that

⁴²Some elements of the Carnian system are found in societies where the continuing link with wife-giving families is expressed by substantial dowries - but they take place in a way that tones down the role of the young men. In Alto Minho young men demand a payment along the lines of *entrastalas* but, instead of being led by *coscrits*, the young people's *feira* on the day of St Sebastian is organised by young men who have been exempted from military service and by young women (Pina-Cabral 1986 pp129,131). In Naxos, and elsewhere in Greece, there used to be a ceremony in which youths predicted each others' future marriage partners in improvised rhymes. But a key role in the ceremony was played by a little girl (Stewart p130). These transformations confirm the basic point that emphasising the collective power of the village young men is in contradiction with stress on affinal links between specific families.

expressed the notion that all the young people in the village were potential marriage partners.

The fundamental point is that though the overall formal structure into which Carnian marriages were organised was very different from that in a lineage society, and although this meant that patterns of social control were also different, the principles on which the structure was built - in terms of the meanings attached to the allocation of women in marriage, to dowry and 'bride-price' payments, and to the symbolic use of force - were essentially the same. If such apparently different systems can be seen as variations on common structural themes, it seems likely that the same approach could be extended to other European kinship systems as well.

D Family, village, church, and state

How representative is Carnia?

In fact many pre-industrial European societies seem to have resembled Carnia not just in terms of underlying principles but also in terms of the overall structural framework into which they were combined - i.e. the corporate territorial village. In a review of European anthropology published in 1973 Freeman noted the widespread importance in pre-industrial Europe of forms of social organisation which were both territorial and corporate, and of corporate groups defined by age and marital status. She wrote that 'corporate traditions are, in general, disappearing, but there is little question that they were once characteristic forms to be found in Europe from Russia to England and the Alps, from Scandinavia to Spain and Hungary'.

Carnia also seems to have resembled much of central and western Europe in specific aspects of the customs relating marriage to community life. The throwing of burning disks

takes place, or used to, over much of southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria, as well as in Slovenia (see above Chapter 7, section D). O'Neill (p302) was told of a similar ritual - involving young men announcing imaginary marriages on the final night of Carnival - in Portugal. Writing of other areas in the Italian Alps, Destro (p143) and Sellan (p14) both report that young men had a sense of collective ownership of the village girls, and fought with outside suitors. The custom of asking bridegrooms from outside the village for a token brideprice is reported by Pina-Cabral in Portugal (1986 p129) and was recorded by Van Gennep (pp131-142) as characteristic of the French Alps. The importance of young adults in village life, and their status as a force for unity, has been reported by ethnographers from Iberia (Christian pp23-6) to Romania (Kideckel pp44-5; Kligman pp57-8). In Elmdon the young men used to fight rivals from other villages over access to girls and agricultural jobs (Strathern 1981 ppxix-xxx)- suggesting that, even in an area where land had long been enclosed and most men had access to it only as wage labourers, there was some notion of the village as a unit with common interests in both land and women. The sense that community is asserted by violating the private space of individual families finds expression in adult male sprees in France (Zonabend pp128-132) and as far away as the Shetlands (Cohen 1987 pp74-8).

All in all, Carnian society seems to be sufficiently representative to be used as an example in discussions of why western and central European kinship systems differ from those in the rest of Eurasia.

Goody's theory of the origins of modern European marriage

The main - indeed the only - attempt to tackle this problem is Goody's (1983) argument that the free choice of marriage partners was promoted by the medieval church as part of a sustained assault on lineage relationships.

Goody's argument has been disputed by Verdon on empirical grounds. Verdon argues that detailed examination of marriage and inheritance rules in the late Roman period does not support Goody's thesis that the church was acting strategically to maximise its receipts from legacies. Verdon also points out that consensual marriage was usual in Rome *before* the advent of christianity - which is a crucial point since it demonstrates that the new religion cannot have been the sole cause.

Goody's argument is also theoretically implausible. He assumes that all concerned - both kinship groups and ecclesiastical authorities - think of the allocation of property in predominantly economic terms. This runs counter to ethnographic data about the importance of social and symbolic meanings in the context of property arrangements. It also leaves the supposed power of the church itself entirely unexplained, since its essentially symbolic activities would seem little more than decorative in a society where everyone was motivated by hard-headed assessments of their economic prospects. At the risk of a pun, one can say that religion for Goody operates as a *deus ex machina*, which is a very poor starting point for a scientific explanation.

Within Goody's overall account there is a subsidiary argument which stands up better than his stress on the self-interested actions of the church. This is that a kinship-based system of social organisation does not fit easily into state institutions, and that therefore the growth of state power was at the expense of the power of kinship groups, including their power to control marriage. This would fit the finding that Roman marriage was already consensual before the advent of christianity. However it is a rather abstract point. The beauty of the ecclesiastical argument, had it stood up to criticism, was that the church's role as the promulgator of marriage laws provided a direct institutional link with kinship practice. Is there some other institutional structure

which could provide a clear link between the power of the state and the form of kinship organisation in local communities?

village, state, and kinship

It seems to me that the missing term needed to substantiate Goody's second line of argument is the corporate village. The feudal system, out of which modern European states evolved, was based on the existence of villages and towns, which were internally organised on corporate lines, but subordinated to a military elite whose solidarity was based on ties of vassalage and kinship. Corporate institutions were so crucial to the system that as feudalism expanded from its core areas either side of a line from London to Milan, into Iberia and eastern Europe, feudal rulers attracted new settlers by writing their privileges into explicit village charters (Bartlett pp117-123, 171-2). This process of feudal expansion spread the authority of the catholic church, and it covered an area which in recent times has been generally characterised by consensual marriage - unlike the Balkan peninsular. So from the point of view of a historical connection with emergent state systems, and with catholic canon law notions of consensual marriage, the corporate village was in the right place at the right time.

But the crucial point is that the connection makes sense in structural terms. The previous section completed the demonstration of the fit between consensual marriage (within the village) and corporate village organisation. Earlier chapters have also shown that the internally egalitarian organisation of the village community creates a role for an external authority - both to arbitrate disputes and to close off the symbolic system: and that both church and state play important practical and symbolic roles in this respect. In fact an image of state

authority - the army - is central to the symbolic liberation of daughters from parental authority. Thus state authority and village corporate organisation are mutually supporting; the same applies to corporate village organisation and consensual marriage; and the connection between the two is implicitly recognised in the folk-ritual of courtship and marriage. The original *direction* of the causal link between state, corporate village organisation, and consensual marriage may be hidden in the distant past, but the *existence* of a causal link would be hard to deny.

E The structural preconditions of nationalism

villages as miniature nations

The state structures within which corporate villages flourished for most of their history were not nation states in the modern sense. But it is arguable that the social and symbolic structures of corporate villages may have prepared the way for the emergence of the 'imagined communities' of nation states. The following is a description by Braudel of a typical village in *ancien régime* France (p150).

'Providing for all its own needs was the usual inclination of the village. As long as it was a certain size (over 500 inhabitants) it could even find enough marriageable girls and boys on the spot to ensure its biological survival.... The village tended to live as an isolated unit; it had its own institutions, its landlord or landlords, its community, its commonly owned property, its feast days, its social life, its customs, its dialect, its fairy tales, songs, dances, proverbs, and its ritual mockery of neighbouring villages. The need to make fun of one's neighbours, the jeers and mocking songs, the real feuds which could end in long-drawn-out

lawsuits, are all evidence that here was a miniature *patrie*, with all the faults, excesses and enmities to be found between great countries.'

Braudel's list includes many of the features highlighted in this thesis, and draws the parallel between the corporate village and the nation state. Is this merely a coincidence or might the symbolic structure of the village community have provided a mental template which gave the idea of the nation state its apparently 'natural' appeal? The prominent place given to the image of the traditional rural community in nationalist propaganda suggests that village social structures may indeed provide some of the conceptual framework for nationalism.

The idea that symbolic structures are so ingrained that they virtually determine the way in which a new larger-scale collectivity must be presented, conflicts with the view that there is considerable free play in the way that symbolism is deployed to define community boundaries. This view of the essential arbitrariness of symbolic boundary-markers is expressed by Cohen when he writes (1989 p117)

'Since the boundaries [of any community] are inherently oppositional, *almost any matter of perceived difference* between the community and the outside world can be rendered symbolically as a source of its boundary. The community can make *virtually anything* grist to the symbolic mill of cultural distance, whether it be the effects upon it of some centrally formulated government policy, or a *matter of dialect, dress, drinking, or dying.*' [My italics.]

Although Cohen's account makes it sound as though the symbols of difference are chosen virtually at random, it is arguable that all the examples he cites are intrinsic to the process of constructing the community and are

therefore unlikely to have been seized on merely as convenient tokens of difference. The issue of the arbitrariness of boundary markers is particularly important in the case of language - since, if linguistic differences are merely one arbitrarily chosen way of marking the boundaries of a collectivity, it seems to follow that nations themselves are arbitrary inventions. Before going on to discuss the topic of language and nationalism, it is worth looking again at the role of linguistic (dialect) differences as markers of village identity.

This thesis has drawn a connection between the power of gossip - which is often highlighted in European ethnographies (Bailey) - and the stress on village level dialect variation which, though often reported, is given less theoretical attention. The point is not simply that dialects vary from village to village, but that local people attach significance to the fact. Ott (1981 p1) remarks that the Souletine dialect is more musical than other Basque dialects, and that the variety spoken in St Engrace is the most musical of all - but does not say whether this is just her opinion or whether it is shared by the local people. Pitt-Rivers (p12) reports that people remark on inter-village speech differences in Andalusia, in communities where the power of public opinion is intensely felt. Weinberg (p177) reports that villagers in French-speaking Switzerland use dialect differences as one of the ways of classifying distinct regions within their small valley (containing about 4,800 inhabitants). This too is a community which stresses personal and family reputation (pp95-9,p145).

So it seems likely that the relation between language, social control, and village identity in Carnia was once typical of much of rural Europe. I have argued that the underlying point is that communication conveys power, and that an autonomous community must therefore have its own distinct field of communication. Corporate villages are

structured in such a way as to minimise structural supports (such as particularistic kin-ties) that could provide a basis for resisting public opinion. The heightened role of public opinion as a principle of authority makes barriers to communication, such as language differences, even more important as a marker of community boundaries than they otherwise would be.

language and national identity

Findings about the relation between language and social structure at the micro-level have implications for the argument about the role of linguistic factors in nationalism. This is part of a more general controversy between an earlier scholarly tradition which shared the nationalist view that nations were natural entities with collective personalities embodied in their language and culture, and a more recent view that nations and nationalism are creations, even inventions, of the last two centuries (Smith). Adherents of the modernist view tend to discount the political significance of language in earlier centuries. For instance Hobsbawm states (1990 p62) that before the advent of modern nationalism

'special cases aside, there is no reason to suppose that language was more than one among several criteria by which people indicated belonging to a human collectivity. And it is absolutely certain that language had as yet no political potential.'

It is not quite clear why Hobsbawm feels so certain of this. He himself notes that the Germans and Slavs - longstanding enemies - have always referred to each other by terms which relate to the language they speak (1990 p58). Among the incidents leading up to the Thirty Years War was an attempt by Bohemian patriots to resist the authority of the German-speaking imperial authorities by preventing non-Czech speakers becoming citizens (Wedgwood

p71). Bartlett notes (p201-2) that

'A growing strand of linguistic nationalism or politicised linguistic consciousness emerges in the later Middle Ages. A symptom of the identification of language and people is the use of the word for language in contexts where it almost certainly means "people"....The sense of belonging to a language community could become the basis, not simply for a feeling of belonging or fellowship, but also for political claims.'

Braudel traces the political significance of language further back still, arguing that the division of the Carolingian empire in the ninth century became an enduring political frontier 'because linguistic frontiers were already, in the ninth and tenth centuries, becoming entrenched along the lines they still have today' (p315).

All the same, it is true that language took on much more political significance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that the languages to which this significance was attached were ones which until that time had been the preserve of an educated elite, or whose standard form had only recently been fixed by intellectuals. Why did this happen?

One reason was discussed in the previous chapter. The surge into prominence of linguistic nationalism coincided with the expansion of commerce and industrialism, and of an increasing role for state bureaucracy particularly in the field of education. Gellner emphasises the importance of a common means of communication that is shared over a wide area for the efficient operation of the greatly expanded division of labour that arose with industrial capitalism. But, persuasive as his analysis is, it is incomplete because it does not account for the intensity of the emotional attachment to the linguistically defined nation. Although Gellner recognises the importance of the

emotional side of nationalism and its accompanying imagery, he has difficulty in accounting for it and tends to treat it as an illusory attempt to disguise the dictates of economic rationality.

Anderson (page 15) argues that in this instance imagery is of the essence:

"In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined".

They need in fact to be based on a model. Anderson shares Gellner's analysis of the economic reasons that favoured large linguistically based political units, but he is also concerned to show how the model of the language group as a potential community grew as a result of the increased use of printing, and of the shared experiences of bureaucratic careers. The resulting relationships provided the bourgeoisie with a linguistically based model for their own necessarily wide-ranging and impersonal solidarity. Anderson contrasts this with the personalised ties of the feudal aristocracy, conceived of in terms of the obligations of kinship and friendship.

Anderson tends to write of community in terms of networks of relationships - rather than of structures. For him, as for Gellner, formal structures are a feature of economic and bureaucratic organisation. However his analysis can be strengthened by considering the way the effects of economic and bureaucratic changes were mediated by another kind of structure: the formal symbolic structures that help to build solidarity. From the eighteenth century onward, economic progress and the growth of state power eroded the economic and political power of the landed aristocracy - and with it the credibility of the symbolism of authority, deference, and the exchange of services between distinct estates, which legitimised power in *ancien regime* Europe. As this collapsed it was necessary

to search for a new basis of solidarity, based on mutual identification, instead of the previous system of hierarchy and exchange between ranked strata. The French revolutionary stress on fraternity, and the romantic nationalists' emphasis on a unity that grows from shared culture (James pp34-54), both derived from this need to replace stratification and exchange with a sense of shared experience.

Given the earlier argument that language forms a central part of the symbolic construction of shared experience, it is not surprising that this movement - from states based on differentiated social strata to states which based their legitimacy on shared identification - was accompanied by the disappearance or toning down of the linguistic distinctions between strata, and the emphasis on a common language and its identification with the state.

It is also appropriate that the symbols for this new national identity were so often sought for in village life. Old-style village organisation already had, in miniature, many of the features of the modern nation state - including common territory, temporal continuity and common descent, a stress on the quasi-military status of the young men, and a common linguistic identity. All this was bound up with an ideology of solidarity based on shared experience, which must have helped give modern nationalism - despite its larger scale - the apparent naturalness that has been remarked on by several writers. If nation states function as imagined communities, it is partly because their symbolic structure shares so many features with that of the face-to-face communities which already existed over much of Europe.

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