

Patron-Client relationships in a North West Argentina community

by Esther Hermitte

The outsider arriving in Huarco would conclude, after a few days in the community, that there is a single, paramount valuable for the local people: the "telas" (Woven ponchos and shawls made with vicuña or llama wool).

"Telas" are a permanent topic of conversation; women may be seen in most of the house spinning or busy weaving at the loom; stores, carrying an assortment of supplies will always have some woven pieces for sale, even when they are largely specialized in hardware or groceries.

With telas one buys food and clothing, cars and electrical appliances. "Telas move the economy of Huarco" everybody says. "All of us are teleras" state the women. 1/

Furthermore, telas are a priced item in the larger cities of the country and being able to allocate them to these markets means an astronomic gain over the prices paid to the local weavers.

The social reality of Huarco is, nevertheless, far more complex than what that first impression would suggest and although woven articles have a preponderant role in the economic activities of the town, other goods are moved through section of the population and the exchange of services is equally important in the local patterns of interaction.

In this paper I will analyze certain characteristics of the social structure of Huarco, a small town in the province of Catamarca, N.W. Argentina where different sectors of the population have unequal access to culturally defined valuables. A large part of the inhabitants of Huarco, either agriculturalists on small holdings of irrigated land or textile artisans, have almost no access to regional and national markets for their products. 2/

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Their chronic shortage of cash makes it difficult for them to acquire raw materials for weaving, expand their land-holdings, pay for medicines, health care and for the small but continuous supply of household-goods and clothing. Moreover, as it will be seen later on, the community, part of a complex society, has multiple needs for contact with that larger society but the small producers lack the social mechanisms to deal successfully with outside spheres of influence. Control of these valuables is restricted to a minority of the inhabitants who occupy privileged statuses. They act as crucial intermediaries, in the economic as well as in the social and political fields, between the community and the nation. Locally, they patronize the small producers, thus obtaining access to such resources as the labor of the agriculturalist and the skill of the weaver, (the products of the latter are highly valued in the national markets) ^{3/} and specially to their loyalty. Having a following, is an indispensable asset for that nation-oriented minority when it covets power positions both in the community or in wider spheres where the rules of the political game require, precisely, a numerous clientele.

The connection between the small producers and that minority (store owners, professional men, a few big farmers and a handful of weaver-entrepreneurs) brings into play the cultural mechanisms of "compadrazgo", in which a relationship of mutual confidence is set up on a basis of personal feelings, which is instrumental in assuring the continuous flow of goods and services, thereby compensating for the deficiencies inherent in the local economic system.

In Huarco, where there are marked differences in status between the participants in this ritual kinship, the "compadre" relationship verges on forms of patronage, in which the asymmetric position of its members results in the typical differences of reciprocal obligations. In view of this situation the term intermediary is frequently interchangeable with the cultural terms of patron and "compadre".

The failure to recognize the existence of these personalized alliances explains why all attempts to form cooperatives have been frustrated in the community. The promoters of cooperatives will continue to be frustrated until such time as they realize the necessity of taking over the functions now carried out by the intermediaries.

Before undertaking the analysis of patron-client networks, it is important to describe the community, the ways it relates to the nation, and most important to characterize the productive units in it. This is essential to an understanding of patronage in Huarco because the system of personal relations there differs from other communities described so far in the literature inasmuch as the largest proportion of small producers are women.

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Huarco is located in the valley of the river of the same name and is flanked by mountains to the east and west which are "notable for their ruggedness and poorness of vegetation as compared with the well-treed alluvial plains. Water supply is the factor which decidedly limits its receptive capacity for new strata of population". (see Aparicio and Difrieri, 1959. Vol.1 p.398 fol.) It is distant from the important cities of the northwest and access to it is not always easy. Of the three most important routes, two cross slopes that present a severe obstacle to large cargo vehicles and the third is almost impassable during the rainy seasons. The nearest railroad terminal is 90 kilometers away from the town.

The population of the "Villa" as the town is called locally to distinguish it from the department (similar to county) of the same name, amounts to 6.000 inhabitants with a predominance of natives of the locality and others from neighbouring provinces. The most important immigrant ethnic group, in view of its numbers and bearing upon local commercial activity are the Syrio-Lebanese, who began to arrive in the community after the first decade of this century and although they are of second generation Argentine, are still known generically as "turcos" or turks. Other nationalities are in a very small minority, in many cases limited to one or two persons. 4/

Huarco at the present time cannot be qualified as a homogeneous or self sufficient community. With regard to the first characteristic, the economic and social differences between its inhabitants are marked. In addition to the sector already mentioned, of small producers in which the men farm mostly tiny holdings of irrigated land and the women devote themselves to the domestic industry of weaving shawls and "ponchos" of llama and vicuña wool, commercial activity is intense and a preponderance of general stores may be observed which not only supply the population but also buy up part of the textile production. This group of traders, as we shall see further on, is one of those who act as intermediaries.

Being a county-seat Huarco is the place of residence of numerous functionaries and professional men and the confluence of the national provincial and municipal levels of authority which, through their various institutions, handle public affairs. 5/

Huarco's dependence on the province and the nation shows in a plurality of ways. It should be recorded here that the province of Catamarca lacks the economic resources to balance its budget and the national government subsidies cover around 60% of the provincial government's expense. The same thing occurs in the case of the community with respect to the province. The municipal revenues are insufficient to meet the demands placed upon it by its legal structure, with regard to the services it has to provide, and it depends upon the province almost to the same degree as the province is dependent upon the Nation.

A very direct form of dependence is the supervision of the indispensable community services that are the exclusive responsibility of the nation or of the province and which imply the control by these two extra-local spheres over the town. For example the "Dirección Nacional de Agua y Energía" (National Water and Power Board) administers the irrigation system and electrical power supply; the "Obras Sanitarias de la Nación" the drinking water supply; "Vialidad Nacional" (Highway Board) the highway system; the "Dirección Provincial de Rentas" (Provincial Tax Office) the collection of taxes; the "Dirección Provincial de Catastro" (Provincial Land Office) real estate affairs; the Provincial Regional Hospital, public health; the national and provincial educational system, public education (there are 7 elementary and 4 high schools); the Banco de Catamarca, credit facilities; the Municipality, the building code and public health; the police and the civil registry complete the list. X

The limitations of the local organization (of which the "Intendente" or Mayor is the highest authority) make it necessary for matters to be referred to higher levels of decision in certain cases, and this applies also to the Justice of the Peace, the police and all the institutions above mentioned.

Furthermore the supply of articles not produced in the town, and the marketing of agricultural and textile surpluses are equally important. Huarco, is also a supplier of migrant labor to the national labor market during the periods of agricultural inactivity, especially in the sugar harvesting zones for which between three and four hundred men leave the town annually. There is also a more permanent exodus to the large cities of the country or to places where there is a greater demand for labor, such^{as} the oil fields of Comodoro Rivadavia far to the south. The situations in which individuals or groups must have access - economic, political, or social - to extra-community spheres are many and varied, and the list could be extended almost indefinitely with cases that, in any of the aspects mentioned, require a regional or national dimension for their solution. It is fitting, therefore, to consider Huarco as "the local termini of a web of group relations which extend through intermediate levels from the level of the community that of the nation" (Wolf, 1956:1065).

Nevertheless, the channels of communication between the community and the nation are not open to all members of Huarco. Access is limited to a minority, strategically placed in this social system.

The majority of the Huarqueños are affected by this limitation in access. But those who are affected the most are the small agriculturalist and the textile artisan. A clear explanation of the complex of inter-dependent causes which result in that lack of communication is offered by Wolf (1956:1073). Although referring exclusively to agricultural villages, it may be applied to define the situation in Huarco:

"Most of the inhabitants of such communities either lack access to new opportunities or are unable to take advantage of such opportunities when offered. Lacking adequate resources in land, water, technical knowledge, and contacts in the market, the majority also lack the instruments which can transform use values into marketable commodities. At the same time their failure to understand the cues for the new patterns of nation-oriented behavior isolate them from the channels of communication between

community and nation. Under these circumstances they must cling to the traditional 'rejection pattern' of their ancestors, because their narrow economic base sets limits to the introduction of new cultural alternatives. These are all too often nonfunctional for them. The production of sufficient maize for subsistence purpose remains their major goal in life".

In Huarco the preponderance of minifundia places very real limits on the productive capacity of the small agriculturalist. In fact the whole community is hemmed into a restricted cultivable zone defined by the relatively fixed flow of irrigation water. 6/

The absence of extended cooperation groups serves to reinforce the limitations created by the preponderance of minifundia. As a production unit, the nuclear and the consanguineal family predominate. The latter amount to 22 % of the total number of families in Huarco according to a pilot census taken in 1969. Interfamil^y~~ly~~ alliances to maintain the property undivided are non-existent and probably could occur only at higher social levels, in the case of the few large land-owners of the area. The agriculturalist invariably worked with the members of his nuclear family, preferably menfolk, although he may employ hired hands for certain jobs. Forms of reciprocal cooperation appear during very short periods of the year as, for example, during weed-clearing time (deshierbe). 7/

The small land holder's adventures into commercial crops--cuminseed, sweet pepper, aniseed--are nothing but timid experiments and one bad harvest can make him desist from such undertakings. In addition, the market prices for these products fluctuate widely from one year to another which also discourages this activity. It is interesting to note that the area sown with spices shows notable oscillations from year to year which is not true to the same extent of the cereals, staples in the local diet, such as wheat and corn. In the agriculturalist has devoted a part of his holding to the cultivation of spices, a shortage of cash may force him to sell his crop ahead -at the furrow (venta en tastrojo)--. This may ease his immediate situation but may also plunge him in a greater crisis should the crop fail, as he will then have to respond to the buyer who (paid in advance?). Or, if he has grown peppers, for instance, he will have to sell them as soon as they are harvested, in order to avoid the cost of grinding.

Even if he gets satisfactory results, the small marketable surplus does not allow him to travel to the regional markets, not only because the transportation costs would practically cancel out the profits, but also because he is not equipped to face the impersonal rules of interaction involved in this class of transactions. Although buyers representing commercial firms visit the community, they are mainly interested in large volume purchases, a continued supply and homogeneity in quality and the small agriculturalist is hardly likely to be able to meet all these requirements. Frequently, the solution is to sell the agricultural surpluses to local dealers, store-keepers or the big farmers, who, in turn, sell to the regional or national markets. This last decision is not so circumstantial as it would appear for, in this manner, a many-stranded relationship is set up, a relationship which includes the performance of mutual services from which both partners benefit.

There is another element in the agriculturalist's situation that contributes to the sense of strict limitation weighing upon him, and that is the seasonal peaks occurring in the agricultural cycle. The interval between these peaks is marked by an exacerbation of the chronic shortage of cash during which it is difficult, to use a local expression, to "wait it out" (hacer la espera). In order to relieve the economic pressure in such periods there is an increase in the need to buy on credit, obtain loans, or to enter into sharecropping arrangements with the same person to whom he has sold his small surplus. Thus begins a relationship, favourable to the small agriculturalist, but he has the obligation to deliver his produce. Not to do so would imply the risk of not obtaining the wherewithal to satisfy his needs in moments of crisis. Working as a sharecropper or partner of a large producer is a guarantee that the small agriculturalist will not have to deal with the problems of marketing. Moreover, and this is fundamental, the small producer must live and maintain his family during the whole period when he receives no income from the sale of his produce. It is then that the big farmer, by associating him with his enterprise, guarantees his sustenance throughout the year.

Although the textile craftswoman operates in very different circumstances, her lack of access to certain resources is very much the same as the pattern I have described for the small agriculturalist, and the resulting situation of strict limitation is similar. I have chosen to deal separately with the problem of the weavers or "teleras" not only because we are dealing with a craft, distinct from agriculture and an activity almost exclusive of the female population,

but also and fundamentally because it is in this type of production that the need~~s~~ for contacts with the extra-local market is most intense, given that the product is commercialized in its entirety. As a consequence of this, the woven products have a decisive influence in the economy of Huarco and the network of interaction created by its production and marketing is ^{more} ~~more~~ closely knit than ~~than~~ in the case of agriculture.

Textile production in Huarco requires certain implements - the 'telar' or loom, the 'Huso' or spindle and the 'pala' or rod to adjust the weft and the wool - all of low cost and of great durability. The raw material consists of llama wool or vicuñas skins. The llama is an animal that may be sheared every two years and the wool ⁱs sold by the kilogram. In the northern part of the county and in other Andean provinces there are large herds of llamas, but the vicuña, in which the greater part of the weaving population specializes, is a swift wild animal living in the high mountain ranges and must be shot at a distance. From the end of the 19th. century there have been many attempts to prohibit vicuña hunting to prevent its extinc^tion, but up to the present time these laws have never been strictly enforced. In spite of this, there are various restrictions on obtaining the skins. Those skins which have fulfilled the legal requisites+ "stamped skins" as called locally - have almost prohibitive prices. Often the legal obstacles are circumvented through different channels and the material reaches the hands of the weavers. Since vicuñas are not available in the nearby area there are problems with the irregular supply of skins, and the disbursement which their purchase entails. To weave a poncho three vicuña skins are needed. In 1967 the price of a skin ranged-according to the origin-between 3 and 6 thousand pesos (10 to 20 dollars). Even when these inconveni^ences are overcome, the characteristics of the technology involved and the composition of the production unit, furthermore contribute to isolate the textile artisans from the channels of communication. The techniques used in Huarco--hand spun thread and weaving on the "criollo" (hand) loom--result in a limited productivity. 8/ There are as well, certain peaks in the sales of woven products, prior and during the winter months when the best prices are obtained, but they show

a marked decline in the summer. Another critical factor in the situation is that the role of telera - there are very few men engaged in this activity - overlaps that of housewife, mother, and occasionally, sales-woman of articles that bring some cash, such as pastries or home-baked bread, all of which considerably reduces the time spent at the loom.

Weaving is carried on at home. Ideally all the women of the domestic group take part in it. The girls are socialized in this activity at an early age, but the boys cannot be asked to cooperate to the same extent and the local cultural pattern which emphasizes weaving as a purely feminine task enable them to get away to farming or some other type of odd job. There is a local saying which sums up certain attitudes of rejection of the masculine weaver putting him down as a homosexual: "Tejedor, es maricón".

Therefore the number of women as a cooperating unit, in the house, inclines the balance towards a greater or smaller [€]output. Actually a number of circumstances undermine this potential cooperation, such as: the degree of cohesion among the member of the domestic group, the ^tattraction toward other activities implying social mobility, (high school education or migration to a big city) and, obviously, whether there are one or more female weavers in the household. The fact that there is no institutionalization of extended groups of cooperation reinforces the situation described so far.

A system of reciprocal assistance was traditionally practiced in Huarco, where the person receiving the collaboration was obliged to return it, there being no question of payment for the service rendered. The two best known forms of this reciprocity were the "minga" ^f2/ of the teleras and that of the reapers. In the first one a group of women would meet nightly at the house of the telera who needed to finish the poncho in hand. Once the work was finished advantage would be taken of the occasion for some recreational activity such as receiving their male-friends, partaking of a meal and dancing. The group rotated from night to night amongst the houses of its members. Something similar took place during the wheat harvest and the men went reaping from farm to farm until all the part-

icipants of the "minga" had harvested their crops. This obligation could last for more than a month. 10/

The forms of complementary reciprocity have not entirely disappeared, although most of the inhabitants regard them as things of the past. It is evident that many of the elements of the ritual accompanying these "lend a hand" tasks are lost and the cooperating units have undergone changes in their membership. The meals, dancing and musical accompaniments are no longer a feature and the appeal to a large group of neighbours, friends or "compadres" to ~~spend~~^{spare} some of their time for this cooperation, is no longer made reciprocal labor subsists but it is restricted to a small nucleus of relatives. Stavenhagen (1965: 61) explain^s the disappearance of these forms of cooperation as coinciding with the introduction of commercial crops and of private ownership of the land. It was not until 1945 that the "minga" as an ~~institution~~^{institution} was on the wane though land had been privately owned since the en^d of the 19th century. 11/ The marketing of spices coincides with the decade of the thirties. I believe that although the two characteristics suggested by Stavenhagen partially explain the disappearance of the traditional forms of cooperation, other and deeper changes have to be considered, those which affect the social structure of the community and which are a consequence of a new market situation resulting in a greater insertion in the system of regional and even national relationships.¹² The exodus of the males to the sugar harvest or to permanent labor markets - the migration to Comodoro Rivadavia began around 1940 -, the greater demand for textiles in several areas of the country, the settling of numerous traders in the locality, who absorb the production in smaller quantities but more continuously, had as a consequence, in spite of all the limitation^s mentioned so far, the opportunity for the craftwoman to sell her product individually. The extended groups have lost their function giving place to a productive unit coinciding with the domestic group. 12/

Returning to the productive potencial of the weaver and to the several circumstances that place her in different loci within the system of production

and marketing of the telas. I suggest a typology derived from the cases studied:

Type A: Correspond to the least privileged position in the two key stages - production and marketing -. This is the textile craftswoman who works for others, carrying out one or more of the tasks in the textile process, who totally lack^s access to the raw materials, and for whom the problem of marketing does not exist, given that at no time does she own the product.

Type B: Includes a wide variety of craftswomen. It could be derived into various sub-types but I have chosen to include them all in one, as the two principal characteristic selected - production and marketing - show variations which do not introduce substancial changes in the total situation of the producer. These are the weavers who have access to labor within their own domestic group and who, occasionally, may also have family contacts outside the community who sporadically facilitate the obtaining of raw materials and the distribution of the finished product. Nevertheless, the greater part of their production is sold to the local dealers from whom credit, necessary to continued production, is obtained. The variations within this type can be correlated with the number of members of the productive domestic unit and with the contacts, or lack of them, with kin living outside the town.

Type C: This is a minority that may be classified as "weaver-entrepreneurs". Its members are those who have access to labor outside their own domestic group, often beyond the town limits, as they can hire weavers according to the excellence of their work. As a consequence their output is notably increased and of superior quality allowin^g them to compete in the national market and to obtain a steady clientele. Credit possibilities are much greater, not only because certain buyers will ad-

vance them money against future deliveries of telas but also because, in view of their level of production, they have easy access to bank credit. The dependence of this type of artisans on local dealers is non-existent.

The above typology can be summarized in the following diagram:

	<u>Type A</u>	<u>Type B</u>	<u>Type C</u>
<u>Access to labor</u>	-Non-existent (labor for a third party).	-Limited to own domestic group.	-Domestic group. -Hired labor in and outside the community.
<u>Access to raw materials</u>	-Virtually non-existent	-Buys from local dealers -Sporadic remittances from kin living in other areas	-Large volume buys, generally outside the town.
<u>Access to markets</u>	-Virtually non-existent	-Sells to local dealers. Occasionally to kin living out of town.	-Regular customers in the larger cities. -Travels periodically to regional markets.
<u>Access to credit</u>	-Employer (Type C)	-Local dealers. -Relatives.	-Cash in advance from regular customers. -Bank.

The boundaries of these types are not absolutely rigid and upward mobility, although very difficult, can occur in the course of a number of years or when certain conditions allow for greater production and better marketing. The inverse process, of downward mobility, can also take place.

The description of a case is now opportune in order to clarify some of the dynamic aspects in this system of patronage, such as the importance of the membership of the productive unit, the plurality of needs, the shifts in patrons and the ups and downs in the fate of the weavers.

The situation described is that of a consanguineal family where weaving was the most important activity. The head of the house was a frail old woman in her nineties, an excellent and incredibly fast spinner who, because of her age devoted all of her waking hours to spinning while sitting in the sun. Many of her sleepless nights were occupied with the same task. Her niece, Virginia, the weaver, was responsible for this part of the process, as well as for the finishing touches of every woven article. She was a 32 year old widow with three sons in elementary school. The remaining member of the household was a niece of Virginia, a teenager taking sewing lessons, who contributed little to the textile activities done by the other two women. Virginia was in charge of the house chores and she complained often and bitterly about the refusal of her boys to help in any part of the weaving process.

Support and help from the outside came to the group in several ways: first, as remittances of vicuña skins and small amounts of cash from relatives living in the province of Salta to whom a vicuña poncho was sent once in a great while for sale. Problems arose when the remittances from Salta were delayed and also because instead of sending the price obtained in cash, part of it would be sent in skins, which did not solve the immediate need for cash in the house. Another complicating factor was that often the vicuña ponchos would not sell quickly, thus making the situation worse. Second, Virginia sold some of her textile articles to a local Lebanese-owned store where she bought all the supplies for the whole family. Third, she had a good relationship with a local M.D., a man with good connections in the capital of the country since he had been senator years before. He had been instrumental in obtaining that a debtor of Virginia's deceased husband would settle the debt with the widow. Besides he gave free medical care, and medicines, to the old woman who needed them

constantly, as well as to the rest of the family. Virginia would clean the clinic, going very early in the morning for an hour or two. Sometimes the doctor also bought one of the telas made by the women. Fourth, a cousin of Virginia, visited them almost every morning, before going to work and helped spinning some llama wool. And fifth, Virginia's husband brother, a small agriculturalist in Huarco reciprocated the help given him by the three boys, who loved to do small agricultural tasks in order to escape weaving, by sending wheat or corn for home consumption.

The relationship between Virginia and the store owner became brittle because he refused to give her cash for her woven products and, furthermore insisted in having all of the woven pieces she made. When the situation between them was very tense an older man appeared in the town. Although born in Huarco he had left many years before, going to Buenos Aires and becoming there a successful weaver-entrepreneur. Upon his return to the community he employed many weavers to accelerate his production for the capital city where he took short trips. Virginia started to work for him in her spare time, doing mostly the delicate finishing touches of the ponchos and shawls and receiving cash for her work as well as help in the form of small loans. Simultaneously she acted with great skill to sever her dependence from the store-owner and, cash in hand, could buy in other stores. In the meantime the weaver-entrepreneur increased his demands on Virginia and the old woman's working time, something they accepted gladly because of the independence it meant.

This was the situation when the old woman died. Her contribution to the vital ongoing production stoppe^d. Virginia gave up vicuña weaving and devoted herself to llama wool products. She obtained from the doctor a full-time job in the clinic and kept her job with the weaver doing what her time allowed her. The link^s with the Salta relatives became very weak.

Obviously a type B weaver, Virginia, with a rate of production notably diminished, and without the contacts she had, would have moved down the ladder, ending as a total dependent of a type C weaver

With very few exceptions the agricultural and craft activities do not yield sufficient income to meet the producers' needs. For the majority of the small producers the fragile economic equilibrium in which they live can be upset by unexpected expenses. Sickness or a death in the family, a wedding or a baptism is enough to send them looking for loans or to force them to sell their products without attempting to maintain a price commensurate with their effort. They go to the local dealers, especially those who are also store-owners and the usual practice is to receive part of the sale price in cash and part in kind. The economic balance frequently goes against them due to the disparity between their productive capacity and their necessities of essential goods.

At this point the importance of the credit system in Huarco as the "lubricant which keeps the machinery of production going" (B. Ward, 1960:139) should be discussed. This significant privilege is granted only when there is trust between the parties, and it serves as a basis for strengthening the links with other cultural mechanisms, especially ritual kinship, which helps to ensure a lasting relationship.

Although there are possibilities of obtaining credit in the local branch of the Bank of Catamarca, often the small producer does not have the minimum income required to be granted an advance. Furthermore, he is ignorant of the formalities and is fearful of the commitment which the application entails, so he has recourse to those who will lend him money in smaller amounts, perhaps, but with less formality and greater continuity than the bank. Stavenhagen, referring to agricultural societies states that "where cheap credit on a large scale and freely available is not to be found...local money lenders and traders play an increasingly important part in the community...there is an enormous sector of small and large trades people, middlemen and money-lenders who generally absorb the greater part of the regional income" (Stavenhagen, 1965:64).

Whoever grants credit in Huarco does not do^{so} haphazardly or without limit. First of all, because in a society such as the one described here face-to-face relations are predominant and, second because the lender himself has credit obligations with suppliers from outside the community. B. Ward sums up this situation in the following manner:

"...a large proportion of the everyday commercial transactions-produce buying^o retailing, paying for services of all kinds, including those of a predominantly 'social' nature such as funerals, weddings, etc.- is carried on by means of some form of credit arrangement. In the vast majority of cases the creditor parties to such arrangements themselves have very little capital, and the number of debitors they can serve is, therefore, closely restricted. Furthermore, these are nearly always arrangements of personal trust made between individuals who are well acquainted with each other, and there is a limit to the number of individuals any one creditor can know well enough to trust in this way, even if he has (as he usually has not) a relatively large stock of capital." (Ward,1960:138).

The outstanding characteristic of the credit system in Huarco is the non-settlement of debts. A monthly payment, partially reducing the amount owed, is considered as a guaranty of the honesty of the debtor. Evidently both parties to the relationship benefit from this system. The debtor because he gets over his cash crisis and the creditor because he assures himself of an inflow of products and eventually of services. It should be noted that the majority of the stores offer a complete assortment of goods, from foodstuffs to clothing. The explanation is not far to seek. The customer must find the goods to cover almost all of his needs, otherwise he will provide himself at various stores weakening the connections which link him up with his creditor. In the case of the big agriculturalists or local professional men who enter into the same credit arrangements, although usually they are not providers of goods, they can offer land to be worked, indispensable attendance of health problems, loans and other forms of support.

It is important to note that the non-settlement of the debt is one of the main characteristics of nearly all local arrangements for hiring labor. For instance farmers who engage workers make a partial payment of the amount due leaving the balance to ensure their future collaboration.

Partial=settlem⁵ent of the debt is then one of the mechanism⁵ which ensure the continuity of interaction. A total settlement would expose the debtor to the risk of having the relationship interrupted thus ending the series of loans which have

contributed to alleviate his situation. G. Foster says in his work on the dyadic contract:

"A functional requirement of the system is that an exactly even balance between the two partners never be struck. This would jeopardize the whole relationship, since if all credits and debits somehow could balance off at a point in time, the contract would cease to exist. At the very least a new contract would have to be gotten under way, and this would involve uncertainty and possibly distress if one partner seemed reluctant to continue. The dyadic contract is effective precisely because partners are never quite sure of their relative positions at a given moment. As long as they know that goods and services are flowing both ways in roughly equal amounts over time, they know their relationship is solidly based". (1961:1165)

This paragraph is relevant to the analysis undertaken inasmuch as it adds another dimension to the relationship.

In my opinion the credit system or the partial settlement of the debt do not constitute, by themselves, a perfect guarantee either that the relationship will last or that it will prevent a "competitor" substituting one of the two participants. Teleras and agriculturalists are numerous in Huarco, but there are also many tradespeople and professional men to make such a risk possible.

The intensification of the relationships described above through bonds of ritual kinship is very common in the town and usually starts when the small producer requests the person with whom he already has some economic relationship to be the godfather of his children. It is also frequent that the creditor asks to be named godfather to the small producer's children. This is explained by certain local criteria regarding prestige, specifically related to the field of political activities. "Compadrazgo" between persons of different status - Mintz and Wolf, (1950) call it 'Vertical' to distinguish it from that established

between social equals - is characteristic of the community. Individuals who have acted outstandingly in politics over a number of years have up to 400 godchildren (including those of baptism, confirmation, first communion and marriage).

The respect and deference which are norms between "compadres", "formalize certain interpersonal relationships and channel reciprocal behavior modes into customary patterns" (Foster, 1953:10). The "compadrazgo" not only seals a relationship already established but, by incorporating the moral ingredient makes the priority of obligations of both participants much clearer.

In view of the absence of groups more extended than the nuclear - or consanguineal-family and the need it has to establish relations with those who can give it support and serve as intermediaries, the rules of action prescribed by ritual kinship will order and sistematize the allocation of rights and duties serving, in the last instance, as a moderator of the interaction between groups whose contact is inevitable. An example of the latter is the fact that the Syrian-Lebanese are among the most conspicuous "godchildren-seekers" in the community. Perceived by everybody as foreigners, store owners and actively engaged in buying and selling textile products, all of these creating a negative image the "turcos" must adjust to the local culture by adopting customary practices. "Compadrazgo" is an ideal way to achieve some acceptance. As it was mentioned above, there are benefits for them accruing from these fictive kinship bonds.

We are dealing then with a system of interaction characterized by pervading patron-client networks. In it a large proportion of the small producers are female artisans contributing with goods to the other sector who distributes them, and receiving in exchange necessary materials and services for their subsistence. In Huarco only a very small proportion of these artisans - Type C - have reached a status which allows them to assume the role of patrons. The other patrons are the merchants, professional men and the few land-owners of the community.

Now, unless some supplementary information is offered in these pages the reader might wonder if the social reality in Huarco is not different, better,

Than the writer has portrayed so far. I'll try to cope, precisely with some of these aspects in the last section of this paper.

In page it was mentioned that cooperation obtained within the nuclear family but also that the consanguineal type of family was numerous in Huarco. It is important to insist here in the presence of the domestic group consisting of the unwed mother and her children. If the stable nuclear family were the dominating productive unit in the community, it could be assumed that from the joint effort of the spouses - the agriculturalist providing the staple foods and the weaver contributing with cash derived from the sale of telas - an economic stability, certainly higher than what is described here, would be assured. On the contrary ephemeral unions are common but given the fact that weaving is mainly a feminine activity the unwed mother and her children form the nucleus of the household, becoming a "regular viable, family unit in a regular, functioning society" (Adams 1960:36). In this unit the presence, more or less sporadic, of the male does not fundamentally alter the maternal dyad. 13/

Even in the homes where the conjugal union is more permanent the man may not contribute with a substantial share of the needed income for the members of the family. Several circumstances explain this: Huarco does not offer a good labor market for men, and some may be unemployed for months and only have odd jobs only during short intervals throughout the year. Of these - it also happens with the small agriculturalist - a good proportion leaves the town for 7 or 8 months of the year toward the sugar areas of the country, hoping to return home with large sums of cash, an expectation that seldom cristalyzes due to the expenses incurred while living outside plus the acquisition of some attractive but expensive and not always useful articles such as radios, record players, watches, etc. Finally, as the figures quoted in footnote 6 indicate, there is an enormous proportion of plots of less than one hectare in size, the produce of which is not enough to feed a family for a whole year.

When visiting people in Huarco it is not strange to see a group of women basely engaged in the different steps of the weaving process while the men are sitting around drinking "mate". The description, by the women, of the "lazy Huarco man" depicts him as lying on his back beneath the loom while the woman weaves, his only task being to pick up the thread everytime it falls to the floor.

It is not difficult to realize that the role of the woman weaver as the main producer in the home and as the socializing agent of the future weavers grant her greater decision power within the domestic group. That these privileges, derived from the monopoly of textile crafts are closely guarded to keep them in feminine hands is proven by the definition of male weavers quoted earlier. These men who enter the activity, and who are homosexuals do not appear to be a feared competition for the "active sex".

Although clientage in Huarco does not consist exclusively of women, they are a good percentage of those who need the support and mediation of patrons occupying the privileged statuses of the town.

This is a peculiar situation in a system of patronage since traditionally authors have discussed *the system* as that of asymmetrical exchange of goods and services between males. I believe that if we keep in mind that the goods produced by the weavers are extremely valuable - they are warm and fashionable garments worn in the larger cities and tourists resorts of the country - this explains the interest a patron might have in helping the artisan in order to have access to those goods. Furthermore, the women may do useful chores in the house of the patron. Finally women were given voting rights in the late 1940's and having a female following has been nothing to be disregarded.

It should be mentioned here that during the times of intense political activity - especially during the Perón era, 1943-55 - three of the Type C telamas became active and successful leaders in the political campaigns.

Given the organization of the productive units and their connection with the patrons, the patron-client blocks are vertical monoliths in which trust and loyalty is shown in a downward-upward direction. Horizontally are the potential competitors and distrust is felt that way. This explains why all the attempts to create cooperatives - both for agriculturalists and for textile workers - could never succeed in the town. The direct participation of all sectors in them was prevented precisely by the preponderance of the forms of solidarity prevailing

in the system. Likewise, the attempts to create a local chamber of commerce have failed, the explanation lying in the extreme competition among the upper business spheres of the community.

There are mechanisms, though, to introduce flexibility in this apparently rigid system. First, a person may change patrons during his lifetime, second, he or she may have more than one patron simultaneously as the case quoted above proves. What obtains in Huarco is not only a dyadic relationship of person to person, but one which, for the potential client, involves all the possible occupants of the role of patron. The producer who necessarily has to depend on someone else for subsistence, has to be careful not only to maintain and strengthen the relationship with the present patron, but also to manoeuvre tactically and keep open the possibility of being able to establish new links, if the need arises, with those who occupy a position similar to the present patron.

As to the need for more than one patron at one time, it is easy to understand that ^{to} a greater complexity of the town, there has been a parallel increase in the needs of the producer. The new requirements, more complex and diversified, for the circulation of goods and services have resulted in a plurality of the role of patron, each of whom has more specialized functions. Thus a system now exists in which a single client may require more than one patron in order to gain the services that were formerly provided by a single individual. As a corollary of this changes the strategic positions necessary to assume the role of patron have been modified and individuals, variously placed in this social system can take over that role.

NOTES

- 1 - Tela (literally cloth) is the name given in Huarco to the articles woven in the loom. The weavers are called teleras.
- 2 - In 1969 a pilot population census - prior to the 1970 national census - was taken in Huarco. According to the preliminary results of the economically active population (15 years of age and over) 46 % of the women are weavers and 25 % of the men are agriculturalists.
- 3 - Vicuña ponchos sell in the stores of the larger cities of the country for around 450 U\$S. This is approximately three times the price the small producer receives in Huarco.
- 4 - The largest immigrant groups in Argentina, Spaniards and Italians, have not reached this area in any significant numbers.
- 5 - Huarco, the capital of the department of the same name, has jurisdiction over all the departmental area where there are around 35 smaller villages, some of which have scarcely 200 inhabitants. From the town of Huarco commercial products reach the farthest points. Likewise the "area doctors" have, as their responsibility to service all of those places that have no resident physicians. The inhabitants of these villages and hamlets travel periodically to the town to buy needed articles or to sell their products. It is important to note that though the capital town loses people who migrate to the larger cities it attracts population from these smaller nuclei who find better living conditions in it.
- 6 - According to the figures for 1965 given by the local branch of the Irrigation Office there is a total of 1751 lots listed, the sizes of which are as follows: 1312 (less than one hectare); 377 (from 1 to 5 hectares); 45 (from 5 to 10 hectares) 10 (from 10 to 20 hectares); 6 (from 20 to 30 hectares) and 1 (from 30 to 40 hectares)

- 7 - Deshierbe (weeding) is a necessary task since the undergrowth in the agricultural lands is profuse due to the intense and continued use. It is a manual, slow work that does not require great skill. Usually it is children who take care of it.
- 8 - A llama wool shawl can be finished in a few days, but the vicuña poncho takes much longer, the spinning of the extremely fine thread can take up to a month, perhaps more according to the time devoted to it, and the weaving, around ten days. There are only a few electrical spinning machines used in the area closer to "downtown", since electricity does not reach the whole community.
- 9 - Reciprocal help for agricultural work practiced traditionally in the Andean area. C. Erasmus (1956:445) distinguishes between the festive forms (called Minga in the southwest of Colombia and in the Ecuadorean highlands; minga bailada in the northern coast of Ecuador and mingaco in Chile) and those that refer exclusively to reciprocity in labor (ayni in Peru; cambio de mano in Colombia and vuelta de mano in Chile) even though he admits that both coincide in many instances, something that evidently happened in Huarco.
- 10 - C. Erasmus (cf. ut supra) makes no reference to this circular pattern in the forms of reciprocity described by him.
- 11 - The founder of the town, who received the lands as a Royal grant, donated them to the Virgin in 1681 and during two centuries they were under a system of emphyteusis by which the inhabitants paid the rent to the church.
- 12 - After the town was founded in 1678 and until the middle of the 18th. century the principal sources of income were the corn and wheat crops, the vineyards and the tolls levied on the droves of mules en route to the mines of Potosí. Towards the middle of the 18th. century there was a notable decline in the mule traffic coinciding with the displacement of mining activity from Potosí to Mexico. Crops continued to be the

principal resource and they not only supplied the local population but were taken to nearby towns. The transportation of grain, dried grapes and liquor, the major items of local production, was undertaken by the rich men, who could finance the cost of the pack trains to Tucumán, a 13 day trip over the mountain roads or the 5-day journey to the city of Catamarca. These were the patrons in the community and they brought back with them articles needed in Huarco. Towards the end of the 18th century weaving became important. The textile products must have flowed along the marketing channels already in use for agricultural products. This means that a system whereby a small minority, who had the wherewithal to undertake the necessary journeys to regional markets and upon which depended the large majority of small producers, persisted for over two centuries. Although the number of weavers was high, according to national censuses figures for 1869 and 1895, all of them worked as "peonas" dependent upon those who could supply them with the raw materials and take the finished articles to the regional markets. The 2-th century brought changes. After the first decade the Syrio-Lebanese began to settle in the community and to buy the few stores owned formerly by the "local aristocracy". Since that time there has been a notable proliferation of such stores thereby creating a local market for the woven products and the small agricultural surplus. The professional men - in the town since the 40's - are the last group of potential patrons to arrive. All of these bring as a result a diversification and plurality of the role of patron.

- 13 - To this household more members may be incorporated through adoption. Girls, usually daughters of unwed mothers who want to leave the town and try better luck in the larger cities, are an economic asset in any household of weavers.

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