

## CHAPTER VIII

### ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

#### Trapping

Like any farmers the Q?eqčiči? lose some portion of their crops and domestic fowl to wild and "domestic" animal pests. While the magnitude of these losses is a crucial datum in the energy budget it is also highly variable in both space and time and therefore was not sampled. Instead, trapping techniques were documented: the technical means available to apply effort, knowledge and plant materials in order to minimise such losses.

There is nothing so drastically effective as a chemical or explosive pesticide in the folk arsenal. However, given sufficient provocation appropriate sorts of traps can be rigged from sticks, vines and rocks; if properly made and tripped, they do their job well at little cost and hazard. All traps built or described by my informant depended on one basic trigger mechanism, but there are three variations in structure depending on the intended victims: one for gophers; one for dogs, raccoons, opossums and armadillos; and one for birds. The inventory of edible wild animals is nearly identical to that reported for the Chorti.<sup>1</sup>

---

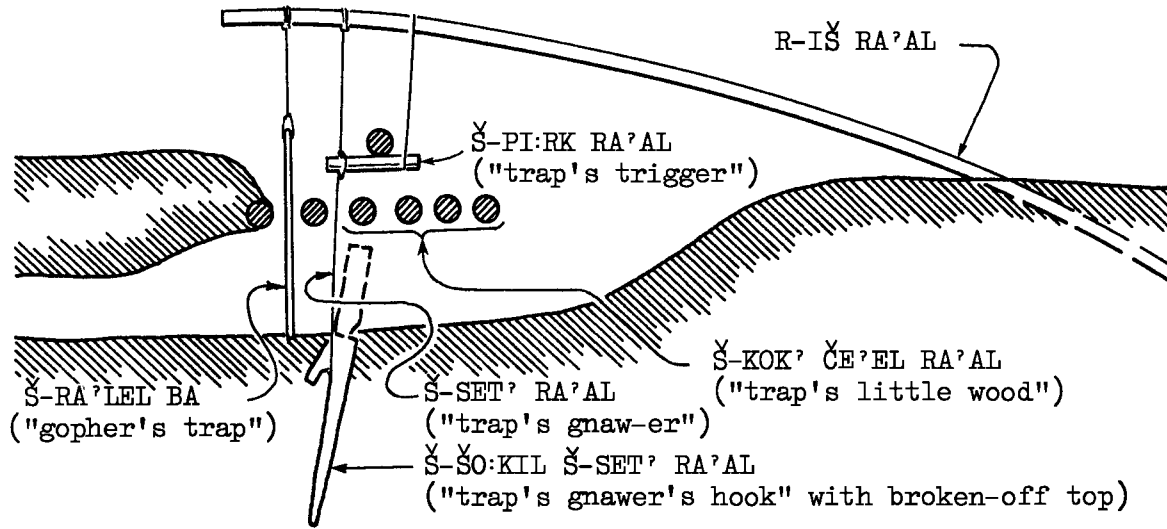
<sup>1</sup> Wisdom, 1940: 73 (fn. 17).

Gopher Trap

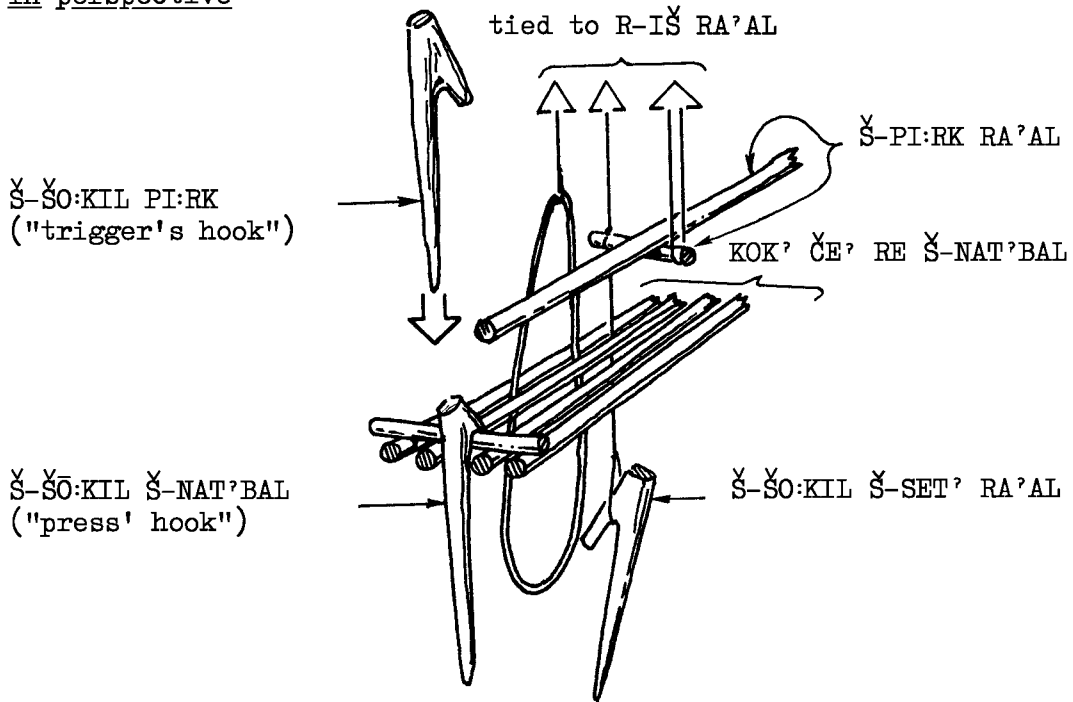
Gophers (*ba*, Sp. *taltuza*) are probably the most persistent pests and the most catholic in tastes: any root will do. While they are not outstandingly numerous in the highlands, one gopher goes a long way in several senses. The pest's habit of checking exit tunnels and clearing those which are blocked is known and exploited.

One tunnel entrance is chosen because it shows signs of recent use, enlarged by hand, and the top opened for 15 or 20 cm. A hooked stake with trigger vine or cord attached (*š-šo:kil set?* and *š-set? ra?al*) is shoved deep into the tunnel floor; the stake is notched just above its hook so that when set the upper part can be broken off to leave no trace above ground. Two pointed sticks are driven in the tunnel wall at its top and up-tunnel from the trigger a distance of *xun k?oxok* (knuckles plus first joint of thumb); they are horizontal and between them a loop of vine, twine or wire is slipped. At the above spacing, the loop should lift amidships on the average gopher after he gnaws through the trigger. Next a springy sapling (*r-išil ra?al*, trap's skin) is driven into the ground along the axis of the tunnel (never to the side), the remaining section of the tunnel roofed over with further twigs and a covering of dirt, and the trap cocked by pulling down the spring, placing the trigger release (*pi:rk*) as illustrated in Figure 5, attaching the loop to the spring, and blocking the tunnel mouth with a loose wad of leaves - at best, those left by the gopher in the first place. Then the trapper runs for home and never looks back, for if he does the

FIGURE 5  
GOPHER TRAP



Detail view  
in perspective



gopher will wall off that sector of the tunnel and never approach the trap. Talking is also forbidden while making the trap, for the same reason. Materials which are suitable for the critical trap components are listed in Table 20.

TABLE 20

## MATERIALS FOR TRAPS

| <u>Part</u> | <u>Plant(s)</u>   |
|-------------|---|
| SET? ....   | IS, SAYUB, K?AKAK, KO:KOM, QUL, BAČ? ( <u>not</u> IK?E)       |
| RIŠ .....   | AQA?AL, PATA, MES ČE?, CUNIX ČE? ( <u>not</u> OQOB, YUŠ, ČAX) |
| RA?LEL ..   | K?AKAK, KO:KOM, K?OT AK?AČ? ( <u>not</u> QUL, K?A:M ČOKL)     |
|             | (all other materials non-critical)                            |

My informant set such a trap at 8 AM and removed a gopher the following morning; he guessed it had been dead since the evening of the day the trap was set. The animal was male, 33 cm. long including 7 cm. tail, 11 cm. across the pelvis, and weighed 638 g. (1 lb. 6½ oz.). This animal was eaten in his household, but similarly prepared<sup>2</sup> *ba* carcasses are in greater demand than supply in the market and fetch from 50 to 75 centavos or almost double the per-pound price of beef. The flavor is delicious, as it should be considering

---

<sup>2</sup> Preparation of the gopher begins by singeing off the hair and scraping the skin. The exterior is washed with pig-fat soap before opening the abdomen at the ribcage and inserting a finger to depress the intestine and keep it clear of the knife. All internal organs are removed and packaged in a leaf along with spices to taste - salt, chili, etc. - to be baked separately under coals. The body cavity is washed out with water only, propped open with an 'X' of twigs, and the carcass set beside the fire to roast and be smoked.

Note that the contents of the intestine are not stripped out, but are baked with the rest of the organs.

the investment in roots of maize and other crops which it represents.

#### Deadfall Trap

Domestic dogs are among the most obnoxious pests of ripening maize; to trap and kill them - or any other four-footed walking nuisances such as opossums, raccoons and armadillos - a deadfall (*č?imp*) is used. Two fences of twigs are shoved in the ground, with dimensions suited to the size of the intended prey, and slightly taller forked sticks at each corner (see Figure 6). Twigs are cut for the *pi:rk* as shown in the detail drawing, which is then rigged to the load-bearing sticks. The trap is armed with a "bridge" made from sticks or a plank and loaded with as many rocks as the structure will bear. Friendly neighbors are advised to keep their dogs tied up once the trap is baited with an ear of maize or other appetizing morsel.

#### Bird Traps

Birds, like insects, are almost too numerous to reward the bother of catching them. Scarecrows of human form and pieces of cloth or plastic tied to a string (*san k?a:m*) are the usual defenses against bird flocks, but occasionally the trap shown in Figure 7 is put to use. It combines features of the other two types, with a fence of sticks suited to the size of the bird to be caught and a noose on a sapling spring with the standard *pi:rk* trigger. The noose and trigger cord are of fine maguey twine, and the bait is usually dry-ground or whole maize kernels.

FIGURE 6

DEADFALL TRAP

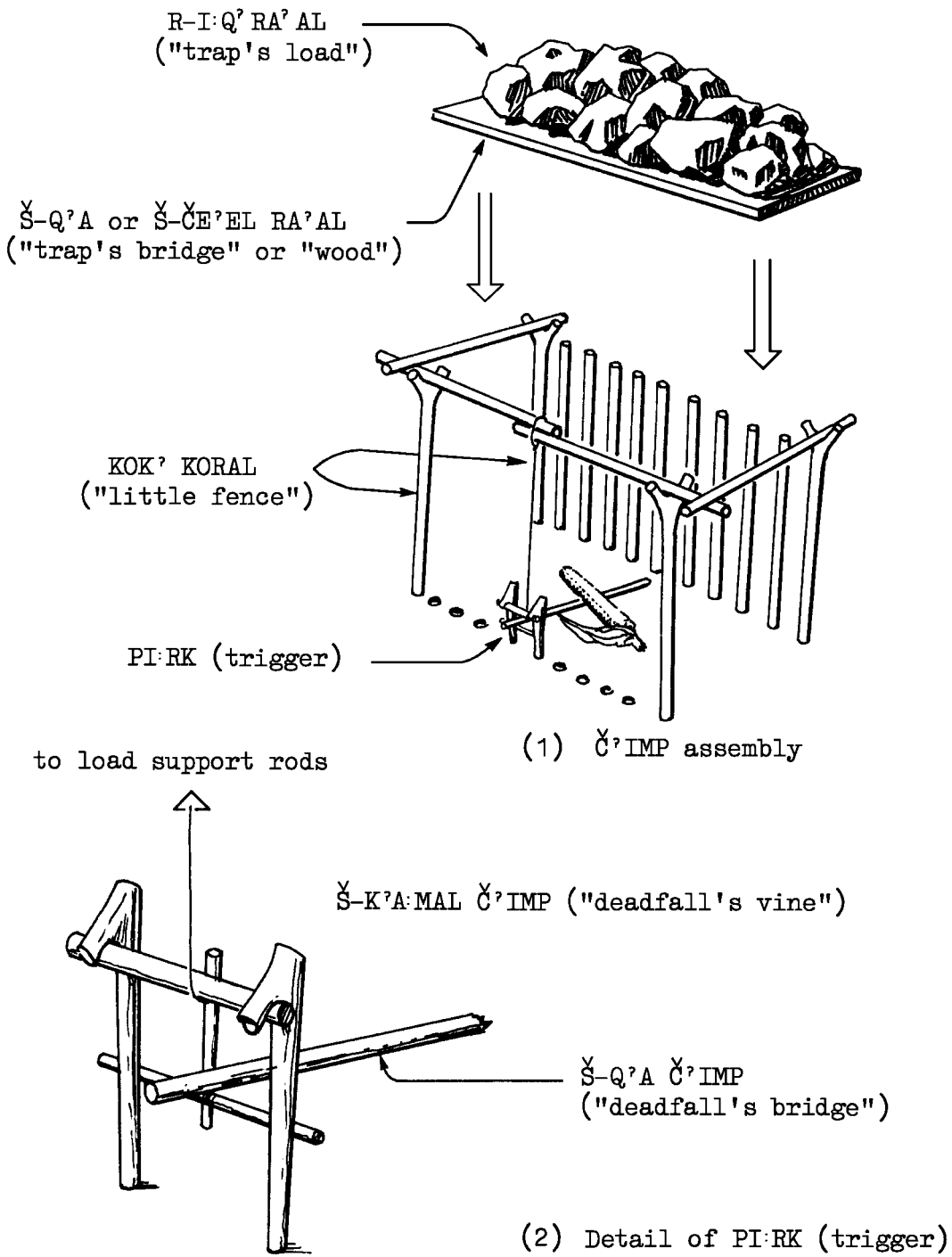
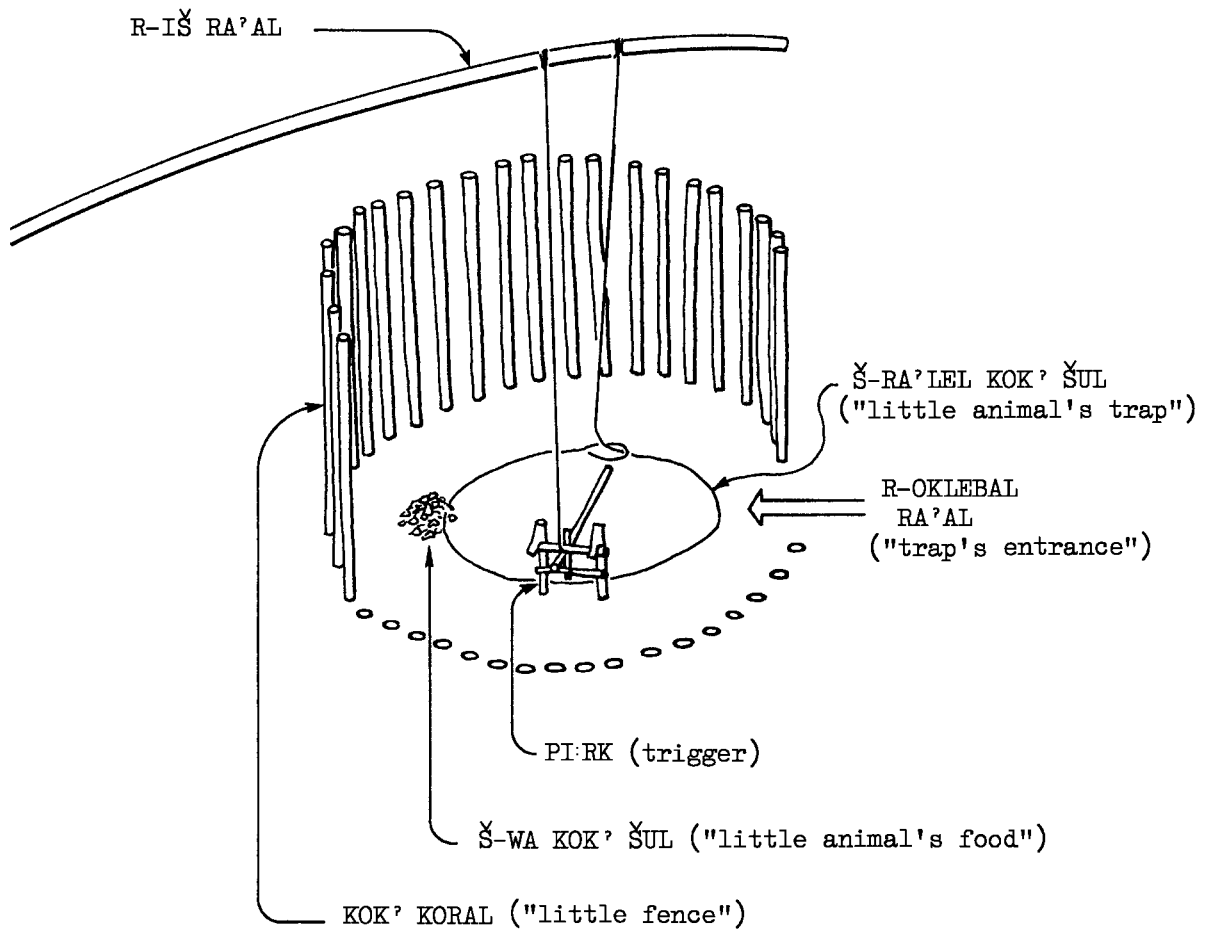


FIGURE 7  
BIRD TRAP



Several kinds of birds, especially the *xekeco?*, are hunted with blowgun (*pubčhe?*) and clay pellets or with .22 caliber rifles by those few Indians who have them.<sup>3</sup> But there is one bird which is not a pest but a potential pet, and it is hunted with a special trap rather than with weapons. The *ša:lau* (Sp. *pitoreál*) is a dull little bird with a brilliant song; traps for taking it are made of the mid-ribs of *tis* fern fronds bent and bound into a flat-floored, arch-topped cage (*kololte?*) with two sections. In one end a captive, singing bird is placed while the door to the other end is open but rigged to drop whenever a wild bird comes to keep the captive company. Thus for no more effort than it takes to make the cage, hike into the highest forests, and wait, those who are adept in this craft make from Q0.60 to .75 for newly captured birds and up to Q 3.00 for those specimens that become accustomed to people and begin to sing again.

#### Domestic Animals

Domestic animals, particularly the smaller ones, are integral parts of agricultural households whatever their social organization. For tribesmen, peasants and farmers alike they represent a "detour" in the production and consumption flow of food energy, inefficient and therefore expensive converters, yet necessary for their protein and useful in storing surplus or non-palatable foodstuffs.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> A much larger part of the avifauna is mentioned as edible by the Chorti; see Wisdom, 1940: 74 (fn. 20).

<sup>4</sup> Carter, 1969: 138-139; Rapoport, 1971: 127-128.



Q?eqčiči? keep any or all of the following animals: chickens, turkeys, dogs, cats, pigs, cattle and horses. Wild animals such as armadillos (*iboy*), raccoons (*ax ou*), rabbits (*imul*) and tayra (*sakol*) are occasionally kept captive or even made into pets, but domestication is not attempted.<sup>5</sup> Q?eqčiči? knowledge of, or beliefs about, the animals they keep may differ only in a few quaint points from standard veterinary information, but it is still a topic worth reporting as the basis on which animal management is predicated.

Out of the list above only horses and cattle fail to appear in detailed discussion below: horses because the era of horse transport, for all its 400-year duration, is past and nearly forgotten; cattle, because their case is a monograph topic in itself. Briefly, Q?eqčiči? men either purchase cattle at the Cubulco fair (January 30) or in Salamá, Rabinál, or Morazán, and trek the 50 km. to Alta Verapaz, or take calves from Ladino owners and raise them for a fixed fee. Although profit from cattle-keeping is the quickest way to wealth in folk-tales as well as fact,<sup>6</sup> and although beef is the meat consumed in greatest volume by Q?eqčiči?s, still the audacity and force of will needed to manage cattle are alien to Maya norms of character.<sup>7</sup>

The following information is essentially a transcription of a

---

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, 1970: 24-61.

<sup>6</sup> A calf costs Q33 to 40 and "matures" in one year if staked to new pasture three times a day, or two years if moved twice daily; at sale it will bring from Q80 to 90.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Morley, 1946: 33-34.

taped interview with an elderly woman. However, it has been supplemented with information from field notes and from other informants.

### Chickens

For chickens (*kašlan*), hatching is said to occur three weeks after eggs are laid; the setting of a hen is referred to by *xumpu:k*. Given ten to fifteen eggs in a nest, two or three are liable to fail to hatch, or produce chicks that live only a few days. Dead eggs may be found half full of liquid with a partly formed chick on top when opened, or the chick may be fully formed but did not peck its way out of the shell (*bu:lq* refers to the latter; cf. *bu:l*, dice, game). "Watery" eggs are detected by shaking upon failure at three weeks (*čuq?čut*, shaken). Chicks will fail to hatch if the griddle is left on the fire without tortillas on it (*k?atal k?il*, burned comal), and the same result may follow use of *o:nk če?* in the cooking fire. Egg-shell is referred to as *pek* (stone) or *riš* (skin); *k?ocon* refers to hatched chicks (cf. *k?ocok*, to chip away at a hard surface). Some unhatched chicks will be found to have the head jammed under the wing (*q?al kuš*, hug neck), credited to their owner's having slept in that pose; in addition the feet will be tucked up and crippled. One can hear the "*c?iu, c?iu*" of such chicks, but even opening the shell will not save them.

If there are watery eggs in a clutch it is the result of leaving the water from cooking *poč* or *buč* to accumulate rather than discarding it regularly. The smell, unmistakable from description alone, is that of hydrogen sulfide. Hatching failures are partic-

ularly prevalent with purchased eggs - often these will be infertile (*ma:k?a? š-co? šulil*, its lack of rooster). After hatching, the shells will be placed in a hole in the dirt "to teach the chicks to hide from the *k?uč* (hawk)", and for the same reason the nest itself is hidden under trash and upside-down (*či huphu*). Some chicks are born with leg defects: *k?onk?os* (curved) or bowlegged and pigeon-toed, and *pec* (dwarf) with very short legs and turned-in feet. These birds nevertheless grow well and are eaten, but their affliction is credited to the same misuse of fire fuels that causes death before or after hatching.

Eggs from a hen may be put under a setting turkey, so long as the hen's eggs are laid about a week later than the turkey's to match hatching periods. Five or even ten such eggs may be introduced, and frequently these will succeed even though the turkey eggs fail completely. *Wan š-mo:s* ("it has servants, or *mozos*") describes the resulting mix of turkey hen and assorted chicks.

The proper food for new chicks is *kebil q?em* (Sp. *posól*), which is dry-ground maize rather than the wet-ground *buč* used in tortillas. After a week one shifts to *q?es q?em* (barely fractured grain), with *buč* as an alternative. Chicks must be fed early in the morning before hunger sets them foraging on their own, since they may eat the millipede-like *milmič re kašlan*, which infests the junction of the two throats (*ukleb & šolol*, drinking device & windpipe). The resulting infirmity is called *coq* and is evidenced by stretching of the neck as though to vomit (*c?obok*, suck, swallow) and by

loss of balance. Note that this *cogeb re kašlan* has no connection with the wild bird named *c?oq* (Sp. *sanate*, boat-tailed grackle).

This infestation is only the first of many possible problems; fortunately, some chicks may be saved by twisting the tip of a sugarcane leaf and using it to fish the "worms" out. Other diseases include *tiq* (fever), *šoš* (warts or pustules), *ilbil* (Sp.: *ojeado*) due to the gaze of a passing drunk or a pregnant woman whose "hot" condition is magically infectious (*tiq ru*, hot-faced), and *caqioq* (dry foot) in which the chick's feet curl under (*sikok*) and become very thin (*čaqik*, to dry out) while the animal also fails to eat and waddles (*peclok*) rather than walks. For *ilbil ban tiq ru* a general cure applicable to children as well as animals is a red string tied around the neck. The use of *o:nk če?* for firewood can kill chicks after hatching as well as before, and burning any vine or rope (*k?a:m*) in the hearth has the same consequences: *k?a:m kuš* or *šoki oq* in which the bird runs around in circles or falls over backwards as though drunk (*na-xa?xot*, falling backwards), and cannot eat even though it tries to. A trial cure for the latter problem is to knot a length of whatever fiber is suspected of being the cause around the neck and light it so the bird gets another whiff of the smoke that smote him - quickly removing the cure before it ignites the patient.

The following plausible diagnoses were offered by a veterinary pathologist: *š-c?ogeb kašlan* may be a parasitic worm, *Syngamus tracheae*; crippled feet may be the result of severe B-vitamin or mineral deficiencies, while the weakness of *bulq* and *q?al kuš* chicks

may result from vitamin A deficiency; loss of balance and co-ordination in *kʔa:m kuš* could be from virus infection or, after seven to ten days from hatching, a form of encephalitis.

The colors and other characteristics of *Qʔeqčičiʔ* chickens, but not the combinations of color and anatomy, are given in Table 21.<sup>8</sup> Breeding to type is not practiced but there is constant genetic pressure against poor layers and ineffectual roosters by way of the cooking pot. Roosters with big spurs are favored as the most prolific or at least reliable sires; the spurs are called "little fingers" (*š-čičiʔip rok kašlan; r-al ru r-oq kašlan*). Five-toed hens (*čit*) are favored as layers. Occasionally a black-feathered, black-skinned, and even black-boned bird appears in a brood. These are termed *be:nk*, as are all-black turkeys. Two *be:nk* variants are recognized, of which only the blackest is never sold but kept on hand as a remedy for fever. Only an *ilonel* ("see-er"; Sp. *curandero*) knows the exact procedure, but in general it involves killing the bird, passing it over the patient, then discarding an offering of bird, cigars, garlic, chili, ash, and pom below a tree or close to a trail. The lighter variant of *be:nk* lacks a black membrane over the bones and the meat is not black, excepting the blood vessels. The short-leggedness of *pec* (cf. *pecpo*, seated) is true-breeding from a pair and shows in half the chicks when one parent is *pec*.

---

<sup>8</sup> Constellations of color and form characteristics as well as their regional origins are mentioned in Carter, 1971, and continue to be investigated.

TABLE 21

## CHICKEN CHARACTERISTICS\*

Colors

|                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| SAQ .....       | white                  |
| APLOMA:D .....  | yellow/brown mottle    |
| ŠEP RIŠ .....   | speckled black/white   |
| KOKO RIŠ .....  | ditto                  |
| XASMIN .....    | speckled, mainly white |
| Š-PO?OT .....   | yellow-throated        |
| Q?EQ .....      | black**                |
| BENK .....      | black skin and bones** |
| Q?AN ČI KAQ ... | yellowish red          |
| KAQ RIŠ .....   | red**                  |

Body and feather forms

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| ČIT .....       | 5 toes per foot                                 |
| PEC .....       | short-legged                                    |
| XOLIN .....     | tailless  |
| TURU? KUŠ ..... | naked-necked (Sp.: PELONA)                      |
| BO:T WEŠ .....  | feathered legs and feet often combined with ČIT |
| KOK? WEŠ .....  | ditto   |
| ŠI:L .....      | flight feathers reverse curved                  |
| MO:R .....      | all feathers recurved (lacks KIS)               |
| TUNTU RIŠ ..... | ditto (lacks KIS)                               |
| ŠU:TU .....     | puffy feathers on top and sides of head         |

\*Documented in Sedat, 1955

\*\*Produce mainly brown eggshells

Feeding is at a rate of one pound of maize for four pullets and half a pound per bird per day when full-grown. A typical rate of expenditure would be three to four pounds (1.36 to 1.81 kg.) per day among twenty birds of assorted ages, or up to 660 kg. per year.

A large hen will lay eggs at six months' age; however, if she is allowed to become extremely fat she may fail to reach full size and will not be a good layer. The relevant term is *bobo* (from Sp.?), and according to the veterinary pathologist mentioned above the condition is frequently found in cases where feed is low in protein and high in carbohydrates: heavy deposits of fat are laid down, especially over the pope's nose and the egg-laying organs (*š-k?irisiom li kašlan*; cf. *k?irisi:k*, to breed). Fat-stricken birds soon die if not killed and eaten first; they may even begin to crow like roosters if their ailment is allowed to progress, and this is an evil omen. Large red, yellow, white and speckled hens exist but these are not the favorites since they lay on alternate days or even every three days and are prone to the above-mentioned problem. *Kok? c?ikil kašlan* (little wild-bird chicken) is the light, scrawny variety which, along with *pec*, is preferred because it reaches full weight quickly and usually lays every day.

Large roosters sing loudly, while the smaller varieties are less vocal and lack the after-note (*š-sum*) as the throat deflates. A rooster will call chicks to eat if he finds food, for example crickets, and hens make the feeding call even before their chicks hatch.

Market prices run from 25¢ to 30¢ at four weeks and go up around

10¢ per week until they taper off to 70¢ at ten weeks and 75¢ at six months, just before laying. After first laying a hen's value jumps to 90¢ and a good broody hen fetches Q1.50; full-grown hens which fail to lay are worth 25¢ less, while a top-class bird is worth an additional 25¢. Roosters are cheaper at every age "because they lack fat"; immatures go for 50¢, and mature roosters for Q1.00 ± 25¢. Eggs brought 5¢ each in 1969.

Some families give a chicken to each child on its saint's day in place of purchased gifts and with the intention that it will be used as "capital" to be cared for by that child until sale or until it is consumed, often on the next saint's day. Though these birds are in a particular child's care they are never given his or her name, or any other: Ladinos might do something so ugly, but Indians emphatically do not.

To kill a hen or rooster one suspends it by the feet and stretches the neck (*yu?uk* or *q?učuk*); when the head swells with blood as it hangs down (*t?uyubanbil*, hung, suspended) the bird is dead. Plucking (*mič?ok* follows, then a bath of boiling water and a final singeing to get the last of the pin-feathers. The exterior is washed with lard soap before the abdomen is opened, the body cavity cleaned out, and the head cut off. Once the carcass is completely dismembered the pieces are washed; the intestine is discarded but the liver (*sa:seb*) and gizzard (*xaš*) are saved. If the blood has not drained properly into the head the broth and meat come out a brick-red color and the meat must be washed clean yet again. The fat over the tail (*š-kis*,



its fart) is sometimes used medicinally (see Chapter V, p. 74). Chickens are killed and consumed in a household only on a few festive occasions in a year; generally, they and their eggs are more often sold to Ladinos to get the cash for urgent necessities - a few more pounds of maize when the loft is empty, treatment or a coffin when illness strikes, bail, or new clothes.

### Turkeys

The risks in raising turkeys (*ak?áč*) are greater than in raising chickens, but so are the cash values of mature birds. However, from the comparative accounting summary in Table 22 one can see that from a narrowly economic viewpoint both sorts of fowl are losing propositions, except for chickens under ten weeks old.

Out of a clutch of ten turkey eggs, seven or eight are likely to hatch but only two to five usually make it to maturity. Rearing success is much more variable than with chickens, though: all but one may fail to hatch, or all eight hatchlings may survive if no disease strikes. Turkeys are extremely susceptible to fevers (*tiq*) and chills (*ke*) brought on by wet-season weather, so hatching is attempted only during the dry season. As adults they are susceptible to *šoš* or excessive growth of 'warty' skin on head and neck and in general they are quite without resistance to disease: no cures or helpful rites were mentioned. Their advantage is that they can get by on weeds and bugs once they are grown, whereas chickens require a steady supplement of maize. However, if fed generously on maize turkeys grow accustomed to it and will not forage for themselves.

Weeds (*pim*) favored by turkeys include *aš*, *ik pim*, and *šubay* (all composites); flowers of *pač?aya* and *xut?ut?* (grasses); and tree fruits like *tul*, *raštul*, *pata* and *koyou*. *Šuštan* is a favorite weed but *š-sok iboy* is avoided; bean plants and human excrement will be worked over thoroughly when available, and bugs or grubs like *torob* are snapped up. Young chicks are fed softened, coarsely ground maize (*purbil buč*) which is held in the hand for the chicks to peck at "to help stretch their necks"; they will not eat off the ground in any case. Chicks are fed three times a day, one handfull for ten.

A growing bird of one or two months' age consumes a pound of *buč* a day, and at three months can manage plain, dry maize. The old-time method of calling turkeys to eat is to pound on the side of the house and give a loud trilling call; this was heard several times out in the *aldeas*, but never in town.

Laying begins, at best, at six months but may be delayed to nearly a year. A clutch of ten, twelve, or even twenty eggs will be laid day by day or every other day, followed by a gap of several months before the next round begins. Turkeys hardly make any noise when laying, in contrast to chickens; they are famed for sleeping wherever night catches them rather than returning to the household to roost; they stay out in all weathers; and they make no emergency cry even if attacked by predators.

Color varieties include black (*q?eq* or *raš*), white (*saq*) and red (*kaq*). In each of the first two types, the most common, one can find both black-legged and "white"-legged specimens, but the latter sort

TABLE 22  
ACCOUNTING SUMMARY FOR DOMESTIC FOWL

Chickens

| <u>age</u> | <u>market value</u> | <u>feed invested</u> |                   |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|            |                     | cash eq.*            | maize (lb.) (kg.) |
| 10 wks.    | Q0.70               | Q0.70                | 17½ (8.0)         |
| 6 mos.     | 0.75-0.90           | 2.66                 | 66½ (30.16)       |
| 9 mos.     | 1.50                | 4.34                 | 108½ (49.2)       |

\*Cash equivalent: consumption mentioned in text times Q0.04 per lb.

Turkeys

| <u>age</u> | <u>market value</u> | <u>feed invested</u>       |                   |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
|            |                     | cash eq.*                  | maize (lb.) (kg.) |
| 2 mos.     | Q0.50               | Q1.52                      | 38 (17.2)         |
| 8 mos.     | 1.50                | 5.12                       | 128 (58.1)        |
| 12 mos.    | 4.50                | (no additional feed costs) |                   |

\*As above

TABLE 23  
SPECIAL TERMS RELATING TO TURKEYS

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Š-PIS, Š-Q?OL | head warts "its knots, necklace")   |
| Š-MAC         | tom's breast ornament ("its beard")   |
| Š-SU          | tom's chest cavity, used in drumming ("its gourd")                              |
| Š-SAM         | fleshy pendant above beak; length varies with ambient temperature ("its mucus") |
| YO ČI TULUQ   | tom's puffing and strutting   |
| LOQOL, LOQOL  | counterpart of "gobble, gobble" in English                                      |

has legs "red like a pigeon's". The blacks are generally large birds while the others tend to be smaller or at least more rangy. Color is said to be more closely controlled by the tom than the hen: a white tom and a black hen will produce white chicks, with few exceptions. One additional feature of the red bird is its very bare head - rather like a buzzard. Table 23 shows special terms for turkeys.

The market prices of turkeys are as follows: 50¢ at two months; Q1.00 when fledged; Q1.50 at seven to ten months; Q2.00 when full-grown but lacking "beard" (*š-mač*) on tom. The top price depends on a bird's weight but usually goes no higher than Q4.50 or 5.00; the price of toms and hens is identical up to a year, but then toms become heavier.

Only tom turkeys are killed differently from the method described above for chickens. In every case birds are hung by the feet from a rafter projecting outside the house, but, according to one informant, a tom's neck is too long and too tough to break by pulling so his throat is slit or his tongue cut off instead. Either way the blood drains and is collected in a bowl, salted, spiced with mint (*r-isk?i?ixul tib*), and poured in the boiling stock once the meat has been cooked and removed. As with chicken meat, if the blood has not been properly drained it will be washed with lard soap before cooking. Only after the meat is removed will seasonings like garlic, tomato, onion, mint and salt be put into broth. The term for a person who specializes in killing turkeys for festive meals is *bakero* (from Sp. *vaquero*?) or *ax kamsin ak?ač?* (lit.: turkey-killer). This is a paying job which has a seasonal peak around planting time: the

"owner" of the seed ritual is prohibited from the job since household birds are regarded as fictive children.

### Dogs

A dog is not so much a pet as a functional element in a Q?eqči? household. Most obviously, it is a burglar alarm and automatic doorbell, but more significantly it is a scavenger and all-around garbage can which largely replaces diapers for the baby and an out-house for adults. In remote localities dogs continue to be functional in hunting, too. Thus dogs have a cash value, and they merit treatment when ill.

Gestation time for dogs is said to be three months. They are born blind and remain so even though they are soon mobile; the eyes open at twenty-one days, but another eleven are needed to complete the process. Nursing continues to three months' age, unless five or six pups are born in which case nursing is cut short and the pups abandoned by the bitch (from this one gets an idea of the malnutrition that is the common lot of dogs). Puppies are ordinarily sold as soon as they are weaned: about 50¢ for males, half that for females.

Dog diseases include the following: šoš or eruptions on the belly (š-k?at r-uk?al in-c?i? is the description: "my dog's 'jug' has been burned") for which no cure is known; mange (*sal*) which is contracted by bedding in maize husks or from sheer abuse and turns to bloody sores by continual scratching; fever (*tiq*), the most prevalent ailment and one which may lead into rabies (*wax ru*) with copious salivation; and finally cough (*woc?ok š-kuš* or *oxb*). A trial cure for rabies is to cut off the tips of ears and tail so as to bleed the

dog slightly; my informant considered this a "sin", however, and it may be a Ladino trait. For a person bitten by a dog suspected of rabies, remedies include consumption of mashed root of runner bean (*lol*), or a concoction of rust (*š-q?ol li č?i:č?*) mixed with lard and sugar, or a swig of *kriolina* (creosote!). For colds, coughs, or should the bones of a snake get stuck in the digestive tract, the remedy is a necklace of red maize cobs.<sup>9</sup> Fever in dogs is dangerous because it will cause swelling (*si:pok*) of any children in the house-hold; the birth of pups indoors will cause children to fall mortally ill (*wosok*: to be startled, chilled, paralyzed) with *čaqi iš c?i?*, for which there is no sure remedy.

Dogs, especially puppies, have problems besides disease. Fleas (*k?aq*) and lice (*uk?*) abound, and blowflies (*rašya:t*) leave their larvae in any wounds and turn them into swarming sores. Teeth are said to be changed three times: twice in puppyhood, and once when adult. In the first two changes there is danger of choking on swallowed teeth, so at this time pups are fed a mix of pig lung, lard and *raš uqun* (*Sp. atól*) to pass the teeth safely through the gut.

Dog varieties include *šoxb c?i?* (coyote dog; Alsatian, presumably introduced by German landowners); *sawe:s*, a long-eared (*luš š-šik*) and large dog worth Q10.00 as a pup and Q40.00 as a trained retriever; *išim c?i?* (maize dog), the usual underfed mongrel; and naturally tailless *tup*, said to grow big and to be good in all respects. "Yuču, yuču" describes the motion of a *tup* trying to wag its non-existent tail. Litters rarely include only one color or ear

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Madsen, 1965: 126.

length; two *tup* and one *luš* might show up in a litter of seven. Dog merchants will take as many as three animals to far points like Chisec, Seból, Chamá, or Saquehelá and barter them for maize or pigs. Though billed as hunters these usually turn out to be lazy (*q?em kun*, dough penis) and may even be trained to sneak back to the seller. Names are given to dogs only by Ladinos; my informant says it is very ugly (*yib ru*) to do so.

Male dogs which persist in roaming and fighting may be castrated. Chicken-stealing dogs are emphatically *yib ru* and are promptly killed. Nearly all *išim c?i?* will attack passers-by in frenzied defense of their territory; one is ill-advised to walk any trail without a machete or a stave for self-defense.

### Cats

Cats (*mis*) equal dogs in functionality and value because they are enemies to the enemies of stored maize: rats and mice. In the lowlands they also help control roach populations. They are born blind after a nominal three months' gestation (rather than 60-68 days), like dogs, but while dogs will bed on the ground a mother cat requires a box nest in the loft (*kaq?*) and the kittens spend three weeks there before their eyes open. The mother hunts rodents and birds to wean her young; cats will not eat tortillas as dogs do, and can be fed only wheat bread if they are fed at all. Cats grow more slowly than dogs and take longer to mature (this is contrary to the expected relationship, but plausible given the local conditions). A tom is said to eat all kittens not of his own coloration.

Cats are not considered to have any 'real' diseases in that their infirmities do not transfer to children and are not curable. Vomiting and spasms are the most frequent symptoms preceeding death; getting wet is the principal cause, unless the cat has been accustomed to frequent bathings since kittenhood.

Kittens are salable when weaned at three months, though they are still very likely to die. The going price is 40¢ to 50¢ at that stage, or Q1.00 when half-grown, and Q1.50 when full-grown and able to hunt effectively. There is no price distinction by sex.

Very old and well-fed cats are said to turn into *yakl* (an implausible transformation: see Chapter V, p. 72). One kitten fed on bread and eggs grew and grew until it finally took to hunting chickens and had to be shot after stealing some fifty fowl. The term describing the heavily furred face of such a feral housecat is *wočwo* or *wuqwu*.

### Pigs

Information on gestation, breeds and the lore of farrowing pigs (a:q) was not pursued because very few Indians have the temperament, experience, equipment or capital to manage full-grown hogs and sows. Hence it is probable that dependence on Ladino sources of piglets has been habitual. Nevertheless, piglet-rearing has been a favorite method of capital accumulation by Q?eqči? families, particularly as a secondary occupation for women and children, and there were about as many Indians as Ladino investors in the ill-fated hog co-operative initiated by a Peace Corps volunteer in San Juan Chamelco. With the exception of this co-op, pigs seem not to have been bred in



Chamelco or even in Cobán.

Piglets are acquired from specializing vendors. They and their crate-loads of assorted sizes and variable breed occupy the street corner across from the southwest corner of the market building in Cobán and even appear in Chamelco at Fiesta time. The type of pig supplied in Alta Verapaz is generally light-skinned, short-snouted but not pug, with a coat of hair in solid or combined brown, white and black. This is strikingly different from lowland pigs which are black-skinned, long-snouted, and practically hairless. The difference is obviously related to temperature adaptation, but whether one or both varieties are products of recent introduction or local differentiation was not established. Presumably, whatever pigs arrived with the Conquistadores have since been considerably modified, or perhaps replaced, by animals of recent European, Asian and North American derivation. The animals sold to Indians would most likely be rejects from fairly up-to-date enterprises run by Ladino *finqueros*, such as those at San Miguél Chicaaj and Rabinál.

The price of a piglet depends on size and an estimate of the growth potential of the animal, and does not fluctuate very much for a given class of piglet. A runt or a very young specimen whose survival is doubtful and whose time to maturity will be long will go for Q3.00; Q4.50 to 5.00 is the rate for well-weaned, average sorts; older, larger or otherwise prime animals might fetch as much as Q6.00 or 7.00. Resale of pigs midway in the rearing process is infrequent and no prices can be quoted. Finished animals of 6½ months' age sell for Q20.00 to 25.00.

One of the commonest sounds around Alta Verapaz is the infuriated squealing of a piglet being huled along the trail or street, its feet squarely braced against the rope halter's pull. Often the renegade will be tucked under its owner's arm or toted in a gunny-sack, still protesting. Slightly less frequent but just as unmistakable are the wails of mature pigs being driven to buyers' pens and the almost human shrieks of their death agonies (or anticipation of same). At least one woman in Chamelco, a Q'eqč'i? separated from her Ladinoized common-law husband, specialized in the purchase, slaughter and marketing of pigs for pork and lard. However, many pigs go directly to the village slaughterhouse for processing by the municipal *destazadór*, an Indian whose midnight-to-dawn labors included both pigs and cattle.

The price per pound of pork meat and 'bone' are government-regulated at 30¢ and 20¢ respectively, and the same for beef. Liver and other 'meat' organs sell at the price of meat, while trotters, snout, ears, tripe, etc., sell at the price of bone. Only the latter are purchased by Indians for occasional festive use in tamales (*poč*).

A pig raised by my informant's family was fed three times a day, generally on strongly salted gruel (*uq?un*) or stale tortillas broken in salty water. The pig soon acquired a taste for tortillas and would not touch crude maize. When avocados or *koyou* fruit were cheap they would be fed to the pig, and greens consisting mainly of *sayub* were collected and fed daily. Rooting in the yard was the pig's principal activity, but most of its area was in maize or other crops

which had to be kept out of bounds to the pig. An old door was propped up to serve as a shelter against sun and rain. When the beast was small and tractable the children played with it and everyone made it feel at home by keeping it indoors and rubbing its belly to the chant of "tu?, na?, tu?" (breast, mother, breast), since it was of the sow sort. This treatment produced glazed eyes, crooning grunts, and a general air of infinite pleasure. However, once the pig grew larger and more fierce in its demand for food, NOW!, the change in character was acknowledged and it was routinely fed as fast as possible and as much.

Previous pigs raised by this family had suffered from various problems. Among these was failure to grow despite good health and food, and the same failure but due to tapeworms. Other potential causes of poor performance are failure to delouse, in which case a pig can become crusted with these parasites, and *ilbil ban tiq ru* (cf. p.182) symptomized by feet which curl under and split skin on the legs. For the latter there is no cure.

An activity often mentioned by, or in connection with, men who travel as pedlars (*ax bia:x: Sp. viajero*) in the lowlands north and east of Cobán is the purchase and droving of herds of pigs from these outposts back to the highland centers. The prices paid and received were not established, unfortunately, and no estimate of the antiquity or profitability of the trade can be offered.

#### Production of Lye Soap from Lard

Household production of soap is a folk technology which would have disappeared long ago were it not for the habit of washing fowl

and game meat before cooking. The technology is probably of Colonial Spanish derivation since there are a number of mild vegetable soaps known to the Q'eqčiči? but now out of general use: č?upaq, saqyo:l and others.<sup>10</sup> Prior to the conquest the availability of animal fats would have been quite limited. The procedures and an accounting summary are presented in Table 24: it should be no surprise to find that moulded blocks of detergent are the soaps in present use, replacing the old 5¢ ball of lard soap. The most salable size today is a oneounce ball for 2¢, and a shift to the half-ounce size is under-way. There are no more than ten soap-makers in Chamelco and perhaps twenty more in the aldeas, all of them elderly women. In Aldea Cojila there are three active soap-makers and one who has 'retired'.

---

<sup>10</sup> Compare to the Chorti practices in Wisdom, 1940: 181-182.

TABLE 24

## MANUFACTURE OF LARD SOAP

Procedure

1. Place 2 layers of *tul* or *moš* leaves in the bottom of a large *uqʔal* with the bottom broken out, making a crude filter;
2. mix 1½ small plates full of *čun* (lime) in a middle-sized *uqʔal* of *ča* (wood ash), roughly a 5-to-1 ratio;
3. dump the mixture into the filter pot, as many lots as it takes to fill it; pat the load of lime-ash mix smooth;
4. prepare two complete filter jug lots and leach by passing water through one, into an intermediate bowl, and from that to the second; the result is *lexi:* (< Sp. *lejía*, lye);
5. pour two xom volume of filtrate into a large *uqʔal* set on the usual three hearth stones, add 3 lb. *še:b* (< Sp. *sebo*, lard) and stir well;
6. boil for about seven hours, adding lye *xo:m* by *xo:m* until a total of six small *uqʔal* of 1 qt. or 1 l. capacity is reached--2 per lb. of lard;
7. pour liquid soap into a *bate:y* (< Sp. *batea*, wooden tray) and stir well with a wooden paddle;
8. scoop out warm soap with a *lekb* (halved fruit of *Crescentia cujete* L.) and weigh in balance scales;
9. using hot, wet cloths over hands, shape soap into a ball and place in cloth-lined basket to cool.

Accounting summary

|                        |            |                       |              |
|------------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 3 lb. lard @ 35¢ ea. : | 1.05       | 44 balls @ 2¢/1 oz. : | 0.88         |
| wood ash :             | .02        | 30 balls 3¢/1½ " :    | .90          |
| lime :                 | .02        | 10 balls 1¢/ ½ " :    | .10          |
| firewood :             | <u>.20</u> |                       |              |
| (9 hrs. labor) Q1.29   |            |                       | <u>Q1.88</u> |
|                        |            |                       | <u>-1.29</u> |
|                        |            | net return            | .59          |