

SOCIETY, RITUAL AND SYMBOLISM IN UMEDA VILLAGE  
(WEST SEPIK DISTRICT, NEW GUINEA)

by

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## A B S T R A C T

This thesis concerns the people of Umeda village, one of the four villages which make up the Waina-Sowanda Census district of the West Sepik district of New Guinea.

The thesis falls into three major parts. In the first part (Chapters 1 and 2) the major features of the social structure are outlined. The economy (based on Sago, hunting, and gardening) is described. The discussion of Social Structure looks at various 'levels' of organisation starting with the most inclusive and working downwards. These levels are 1) the connubium, 2) the village, 3) Village moieties 4) Bush associations 5) the hamlet 6) hamlet moieties 7) clans and sub-clans, and 8) the household.

The main theme of the discussion is the role of marriage alliance, set up through sister-exchanges between exogamous (patrilineal) clan-hamlets, as the 'lateral' bonding element in the social structure. It is shown, for instance, that members of the society conceptualise its overall structure in terms of 'compatibilities' set up by alliance relationships. These alliance relations, though actually shifting slightly with each generation are seen as permanent structural features. This is given symbolic expression in the Village- and Hamlet-moiety organisation. The opposition of kinship relations (within the clan-hamlet) and alliance relations (outside it) is postulated as the basis of a pervasive opposition between 'central' and



'lateral' -- an opposition which underlies the society organisation, and which is also of crucial importance in understanding the Symbolic System as found e.g. in Ritual.

Later sections of Chapter 2 (viii - xi) discuss interpersonal relations in more detail. The problems posed by sorcery beliefs are discussed in relation to marriage and sexual relations generally. The concept of 'tadv' - relations (killing, eating, shooting, and copulating with the other) are discussed as the basic modality of ego-alter relations across sociological boundaries. Sorcery is the reciprocal of marriage.

Chapter 3 takes up the second major theme of the Thesis. This chapter is devoted to linguistic symbolism, particularly in relation to the basic social and kinship roles. Three forms of linguistic symbolism (or 'lexical motivation') are distinguished; 1) semantic motivation 2) morphological motivation 3) phonological motivation. Chapter 3 concerns itself only with the first two kinds, Phonological motivation in Umeda being explored in Appendix I as it poses problems which go beyond the purely Anthropological. It is shown that the Umeda vocabulary contains many implicit clues as to the symbolic system of the people. A system of analogies is demonstrated, using lexical evidence, between the structure of the body, the structure of botanical entities such as trees and the overall structure of the society. Once again the 'central/lateral' opposition is shown to be crucial, but this is further elaborated into a notion of 'organic structure' --

a structural model applicable both to biological and sociological organisms. Considerable attention is devoted to an analysis of Umeda tree symbolism: for instance, the fact that the Mother's Brother is (lexically) identified with the Sago Palm, the Ancestors with the Coconut palm and so on.

Chapter 3 thus performs a 'bridging' function between the first part of the thesis which is basically concerned with Sociological questions, and the second part which is concerned with Ritual Symbolism. Through a consideration of language, an understanding is gained both of the 'organic' metaphor at the heart of Umeda symbolism, and of the way in which this kind of metaphor meshes in with the details of the functioning of the social system, dominated by certain basic kinship roles.

Chapter 4 is mainly descriptive. The ida fertility rites, performed annually to increase the productivity of the sago palms are described in detail. A discussion of the actual ceremonies is preceded by an account of the many months of preparations for the ritual. It is argued that the ritual, and the need to accumulate supplies of food for its performance, imposes pattern and discipline on mundane economic activity. The ceremonies themselves consist of the appearance, over the course of a night and the subsequent two days, of a sequence of masked dancers (all male) representing various ritual roles. The most important roles are those of 1) cassowaries, 2) fish -- of which there are two kinds, the one red, the other black, 3) sago, 4) termites and 5) ipele bowmen, representing

neophytes accompanied by preceptors.

Chapter 5 takes the various ritual roles in order of their appearance and analyses their symbolic significance. A preliminary discussion is devoted to methodological issues. Subsequent sections discuss ritual roles under a number of rubrics e.g. the significance in practical or mythological terms of the animal or species represented, the significance of the constraints on actors taking certain roles, the significance of body-paint styles and mask styles, the significance of various methods of dancing etc. All these 'role attributes' are set out in Tabular diagram-form (Table 5). The problem then becomes the analysis of the ritual process, seen as a sequence of transformations taking place in the attributes of successive ritual actors over the course of the total rite. It is demonstrated that the ida ritual can be best understood as a concrete and dramatic representation of the overall process of bio-social regeneration. The cassowaries, who open the ritual, are shown transformed, and regenerated, as the (neophyte) bowmen, whose loosing off of magical arrows (ipele) is the culminating, and concluding, act of the ritual cycle. This finding is supported by detailed analyses of the transformations of mask-styles and body paint styles throughout the ritual. An extended account is given of Umeda colour symbolism. This leads, finally, to a discussion of the ritual representation of Time. It is argued that the ritual is a means of (symbolically) renewing Time. Certain contradictions inherent in the notion of temporality are specified, and the ritual is seen

as a means of overcoming these contradictions within the cultural and symbolic milieu of Umeda.

This chapter concludes the main part of the thesis. Two Appendices deal I) with phonological motivation in Umeda -- it is argued that articulatory features are employed expressively in the structure of Umeda lexical items. II) An appendix gives the complete Pul-tod Myth -- a myth referred to at various points in the thesis, concerning the adventures of the 'Oedipal' hero, Pul-tod (Areca-man).

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The Anthropologist's debt to his informants is always incalculable. Here, I can only inscribe the names of certain individuals, who, in all probability will never read what I have to say, and would be quite indifferent as to whether their names were inscribed or not. I tried, while I was in the field, to repay my debts to the people as I incurred them, by attempting to be a channel of communication with the outside world (which was steadily impinging more and more on the people) and by direct reciprocation in the form of gifts, money, meat, etc. I do not flatter myself that any other direct benefit to the people can ensue from my researches in a culture which I myself see as doomed in the long run. It is a great pity, but I cannot hinder it. The longer-term benefit, if any, is all ours, in that the Umeda imagination has been pillaged of some of its too-perishable riches. Well, there it is. All I can do is write



the names of some men whom I would like to thank, but who would probably construe my wishing to thank them as typical of the absurdity of white men in general and me in particular. If they have had any reward it is, really, that they saw me at close quarters for an extended period, and were able to relish the spectacle of my many peculiarities, infirmities, my laughable sensitivity. But that does not alter the fact that I am representative of those forces which have robbed them of their autonomy, and will finally succeed in destroying them and their world utterly.

DONATUS, POCWA, JULUS, WAPI, POM, AUYAI, MADA, AMASU, AIWE, WIYE, FAI, PI, YIP, KIWE, WEB, HODAI, SOWAI, MAGWI, LUCIDIUS, ZENO.

Tdum tda maiver!

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## Chapter 1

### THE UMEDA SETTING

#### 1. Introduction

This thesis is divided into three main parts:

i) an account of the social structure of Umeda village (Chapter 2, ii) a discussion of kinship terminology, language and symbolism (Chapter 3) and finally, a descriptive analysis of the ida ceremony, the ritual of sago fertility (Chapters 4 and 5). The present chapter is by way of an introduction: I shall not broach any of my major themes here, leaving them to the later chapters, since my present purpose is to place the Umedas on the map, giving some idea of their physical surroundings; and also to say a little about their material culture and economic life. But first, a word about the contact situation.

#### ii. Contact and administration

The fieldwork on which this thesis is based was carried out between February 1969 and July 1970 in Umeda village, which is one of four villages which, together, make up the Waina-Sowanda Census Area in the West Sepik District of New Guinea. My investigations did not extend beyond the limits of the Waina-Sowanda census area, though some of the features of Social Structure and ritual which characterise the four villages in the Waina-Sowanda area have been found elsewhere in the Sepik district, and also occur in accounts of groups to the west, across the Irian border.

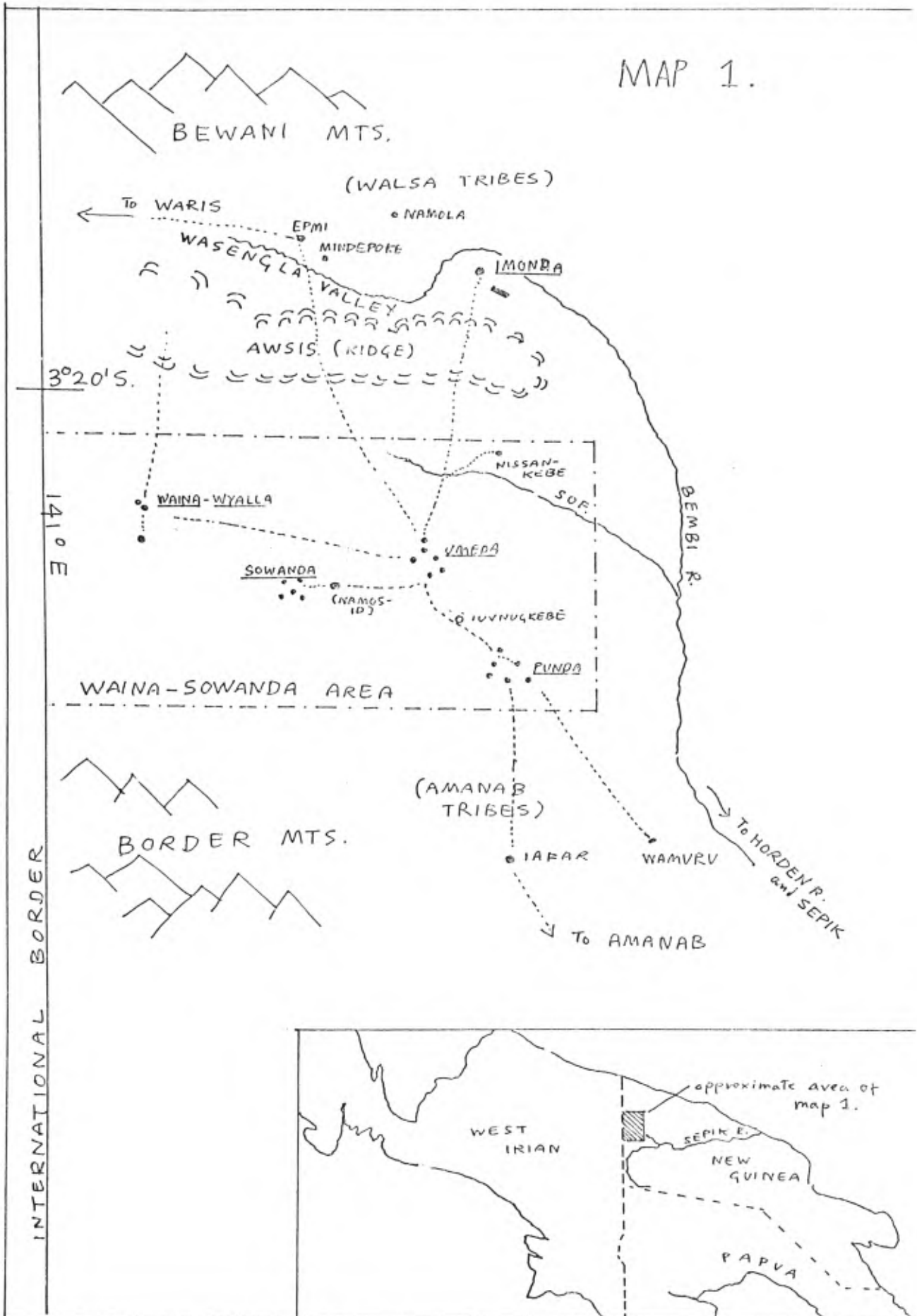
My conclusions, therefore, apply primarily to the Waina-Sowanda area (i.e. to a population of no more than c. 960 individuals). It is perhaps regrettable that it is only possible to speak in terms of such a tiny aggregate of people, but that, indeed, is very much a feature of work in the less ecologically-favoured regions of New Guinea. Population, in the Waina-Sowanda area and the surrounding region as well, is extremely sparse; though figures for population per square mile would be misleading, since in certain pockets of country quite dense populations are found, and a relatively intensive exploitation of the environment. This is particularly true of the Wasengla valley, to the north of the Waina-Sowanda area.

The Waina-Sowanda area is shown on Map 1. The four villages, Ureka Punda, Sowanda and Waina-Wyalla are administered from Imonda patrol post, six hours walk away (there were no motorable roads of any kind in Imonda sub-district in 1969-70). Five councillors were elected by villagers in the area. They represent their villages (Waina-Wyalla being counted as two villages by the administration) on the Walsa Local Government Council. Other Councillors were elected by the Imonda and Walsa villages, and the council met every six weeks at the Imonda patrol post.

The administrative history of the Waina-Sowanda area is rather complex. The first outsiders to penetrate the area were Malay bird-of-paradise hunters, who, armed with primitive flintlock muskets, sporadically visited



MAP 1.



the area during the first half of the century. Later, with the establishment of the Dutch rule in West New Guinea before the war, occasional patrols visited the western part of the area, after about 1930, without setting up permanent administrative presence. After 1950, Dutch activity increased considerably, the Waris patrol post (now just on the other side of the Irian border) was established, and missionaries of Dutch origin entered the area, introducing large quantities of metal implements and cloth. During the fifties the stone technology of the area was largely superseded, though some stone implements are still in use, particularly sago-pounders, which have no steel equivalent. By the late fifties, the Dutch were firmly established, particularly in the Western villages; rest houses were built, native authorities instituted (certain men are still called 'korano', a hangover from this period) and the missions sent catechists, trained in Hollandia, to teach the people to read.

With the expulsion of the Dutch in 1962 a sudden about face occurred. Previously considerable vagueness existed as to the precise location of the boundary between Dutch and Australian territory: but when the Dutch were replaced, suddenly and brutally, by the Indonesians who were neither white, nor, apparently, well disposed towards the Australian regime in New Guinea, this comfortable vagueness was rapidly replaced by a meticulous definition of mutual boundaries. After all, they might have had to be defended. It was discovered that the territory to the

west of the Waris patrol post ('the Waris enclave') lay to the west of the 141°E dividing line, and steps were at once taken to put the whole area firmly under Australian control. Imonda patrol post was built, together with the air-strip, and Australian Patrols entered the Waina-Sowanda area for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

The Australian patrols found considerable disparity in the degree to which the impact of Dutch presence had made itself felt in the 'Waris enclave' of which the Waina-Sowanda area was a part. Along the course of the Wasengla river, and close to Waris itself, contact had been intensive, both as to administrative and Mission activity. Many were literate in Malay, having been trained as catechists. In the Waina-Sowanda, however, the Dutch had done little; the area was not really under control, there were no literate men, and Malay was not spoken. Evidently, the Dutch had chosen not to involve themselves, both because the area is inaccessible from Waris, and because, lying so far to the east, they regarded it as outside their sphere of influence, though they did not refrain from sending patrols there, more out of curiosity than anything else, no doubt.

To begin with, the Australians had little trouble in establishing administrative control. The people, lacking a sufficiency of metal tools, were eager to work on the construction of the air-strip and the patrol post, so as to

1. For a journalist's account of the 'Wild men of Waina' see Willey 1966.

obtain them. The white men were popular enough, though individual native policemen exploited the innocence of the people for acts of rape and sadism, as usually happens when administrative control is first established. These acts are well remembered, and for this, if for no other reason, the people were unanimous in wishing Australian rule to be prolonged indefinitely, since they believe, on the basis of their experience, that they have everything to fear from their fellow New Guineans, and nothing to fear from white men, who have never shown themselves physically cruel towards them. It is to be hoped that, when New Guinea becomes independent, they will be reassured.

Patrols were threatened at various times during the sixties, but there was no serious trouble between the villagers and the administration, until 1967, when a patrol sent to re-capture a man of Umeda who had escaped from prison, was threatened by a large body of men, and had to retire. Subsequently, twenty-three men of Umeda were imprisoned: a total which seems larger when it is set against the village total of adult active men of some sixty or seventy. These men were not the only ones who were taken away. I was told that an equal number of men drawn, this time, from Umeda, Punda and Sowanda, were rather peremptorily advised that they would benefit from a period as labourers in the plantations outside the area. These men were flown to Wewak (the first time, needless to say, that they had been inside an aeroplane) to the compound where would-be plantation labourers are concentrated before being despatched to their employers. While waiting



to be deployed, in the camp, the Waina-Sowanda men - who were the 'newest' group in the camp at the time - were victimised by more sophisticated Sepiks. They determined to run away, so as to regain their homes. Their only means of ascertaining where they were, was the memory of what they had been able to see out of the window of the aeroplane which flew them to Wewak. They had seen the line of the mountains, and the river, and the higher mountains on the other side. They were not deterred, and soon found a means to break out, en masse. They subsequently split up into separate groups, living on what they could steal, always trying to follow the line of the Torricelli mountains. Most were recaptured before reaching home, though a few made it the whole way. One was shot as a suspected sorcerer, and they had many close escapes. The experience was decidedly educative for those who participated, though not, perhaps, all that the administrative powers would have wished. At present, only four Umedas and a handful of men from the other villages have had any plantation experience and the idea is, on the whole, very unpopular: mainly, I think, because the experiences of the ex-prisoners and the 'runaways' has tended to reinforce the feeling of distrust and fear of other New Guineans inculcated into the people by their early brushes with native policemen.

The impression I received from administrative personnel was that the 'Waina-Sowandas' were, by today's standards a 'difficult' lot; trouble -- of a minor kind -- was never far from the surface; inexperienced officers

were not permitted to patrol the area alone. Violence, never directed towards myself, threatened on a number of occasions while I was in the field, and one shooting did take place, but on the whole I found that full scale warfare had been definitively suppressed even before the Australians arrived in 1962. At no time was warfare anything like as endemic as it was, say, in the Highlands: and the Umedas were indeed grateful for the suppression of major warfare, since it removed the insistent pressure of the more numerous Walsa groups to the north, who threatened, at one time, to dislodge certain Waina-Sowanda groups entirely. Sporadic killings, generally in revenge for supposed acts of sorcery, are another matter -- it is likely that such attempts will continue.

The sensitivity, on the part of the administration, to even quite trivial happenings in the Waina-Sowanda arose both out of the troubles of 1967-68, and the fact that the area abuts directly onto the international border. 1969 was the year of the notorious 'act of free choice' in West Irian which occasioned the arrival of a number of refugees from Indonesian rule into the West Sepik district. None of these, as it happened, passed through the Waina-Sowanda, but the area was considered sufficiently sensitive from a military point of view, to be twice patrolled by the army, as well as being placed under the surveillance of specially briefed military personnel called 'Civil Affairs Officers' whose military role was an open secret, despite their discreet official title. (They were supplied, every month, by huge Caribou aircraft of the RAAF which rather

belied their 'Civil' status.)

The Administration was generally popular, and the Local Government Council, though not very well understood by the people, provided an efficient means of communication between the Administration and the villagers and vice-versa. Real efforts were being made to educate the population politically, in preparation for independence. In the fields of health and education little had been done. A medical post had been established in Umeda in 1965, but the 'doctor-boy' had deserted shortly after, no replacement having been provided. There was no medical aid nearer than Imonda, and no resort was made to help so far afield. Consequently, the health of the community left much to be desired; there were many deaths during my time in the field. In education, things seemed to be going backwards: administrative support was withdrawn from the boarding pupils of the Imonda primary 'T' school which resulted in a drop in attendance, since the school is sited away from the centres of habitation, making day-attendance impracticable for most of the pupils, none of whom, in fact, came from the Waina-Sowanda area. Unless support is restored, it will be impossible for any Waina-Sowanda children to attend the school in the future. No literate individuals were to be found in Waina-Sowanda, either in Malay or Pigin English, let alone English proper. A catechist had been established in Umeda for some years, but had failed to teach any of the children to read, though they had acquired a number of mournful mission ditties. The catechist was a Walsa, who was aided and abetted by



his clan-brother, the ex-catechist, whose career had ended with a term of imprisonment for the abduction of a married woman. They were both very popular, since the crimes of the ex-catechist were committed not against the people of the village, but against other Walsas -- besides which abduction was not considered to be in any way a criminal act, very properly, I think. It was sad to see these two frustrated, literate, layabouts, whose 'abductions' were infinitely less serious than the abduction that they, themselves, had suffered at the hands of the missionaries when, as children, they were taken off to Hollandia to be educated. Having been alienated from village life for ever, they were expected to communicate the word of God for the rest of their days at the princely salary of 5 dollars a month. In fact, they lived on the charity of the villagers, which was humiliating for them: but what could they do? They often contrasted their present indigence with the rich life they led as school-boys in Hollandia, feasted on rice and fish, while now they had to survive on sago and bamboo shoots. They also contrasted their condition with that of the European missionaries, who lived in state and comfort on the mission station at Imonda, well-fed and with little in the way of work to do since few people lived near the station.

Meanwhile, besides giving religious instruction, the catechist was supposed to teach the three R's. Unfortunately, it was the form, rather than the substance of these skills which was transmitted to their pupils, who could write the letters of the alphabet, but had no



clue as to the sounds they represented. Writing was a ritual activity, and many had had strange formulae such as AFR or KNT tattooed onto their arms. Maths was still more of a performance: my young informants were always keen to borrow paper and biros to practice writing out addition sums. The 'sum' always ran:

$$\begin{array}{lll}
 1+1 = 1 & 4+4 = 4 & 1+2 = 3 \\
 2+2 = 2 & 5+5 = 5 & \text{or } 2+3 = 4 \text{ and so on}^1 \\
 3+3 = 3 & 6+6 = 6 & 3+4 = 5
 \end{array}$$

At best, the catechist was an effective teacher of pidgin English. Most pidgin had been learned by the ex-prisoners, by those who had been labourers, or from casual contacts with policemen and other agents of the administration. All the children and young men under twenty or so knew pidgin, though some were very unwilling to speak any. A few men aged up to thirty knew pidgin, about five speaking it very well, including the Umeda councillor, Pom. The general knowledge of pidgin is increasing all the time, especially since the catechist also teaches it to girls, who do not have access to the kinds of relationships through which the men have learned pidgin. But literacy, even in pidgin, is another matter; at present there seems little prospect of educational advance in the Waina-Sowanda.

To conclude on administration: though sporadic contact with Europeans has occurred over the last 20-30 years, for most of this time the influence exerted has been slight, except, perhaps, in the matter of the suppression

1. But see the footnote to p.275, where Umeda numerals are discussed.

of warfare. Since 1962, administration has been more intensive, in response to the underlying factor of the 'confrontation' with Indonesia which focussed attention onto the border areas of New Guinea. But the effects have been slight, and mission penetration has also been superficial only. Considerable material changes have resulted -- notably the universal introduction of metal tools, and to a lesser extent, cloth. A little money circulates, but in no sense has money penetrated native economic activity: it is spent on trade-store goods, particularly clothes and tinned fish -- otherwise it goes in Council Tax (50 cents per capita in 1970). Horizons have been widened -- as far as the perimeter of Vanimo prison, one might say -- but little fundamental change has occurred in the attitudes of the people. There has been no Cargo Cult activity. The activities of the administration are regarded neither with hostility, nor much enthusiasm. It is difficult to assess what the future has in store; in the absence of any possibility for economic development in the immediate vicinity -- cash-cropping on a large scale is ruled out because of the proximity of the border -- it is likely that more and more men will be induced to work in other areas, where they will take their families, leading eventually to the liquidation of the Waina-Sowanda villages, which are poorly placed to benefit from general economic development.

### iii. The land

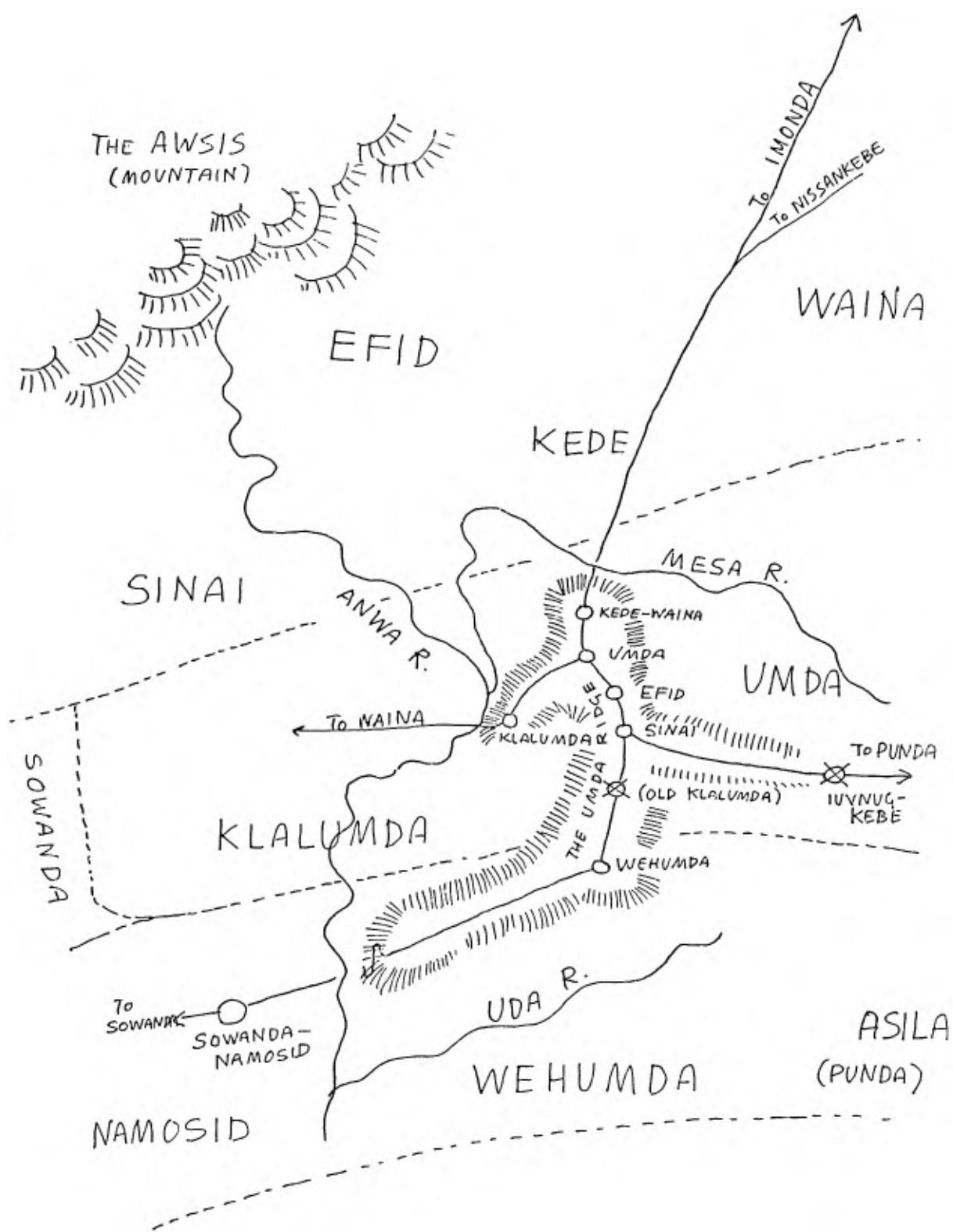
The Waina-Sowanda census area lies in a depression between the Bewani Mountains, to the north, and the Border mountains to the south. A ridge (the ausis) demarcates the northern boundary of the Waina-Sowanda village territories: the Wasengla valley, over the watershed, is controlled by the Walsa villages. To the south, the country shelves away towards Amanah. The many small rivers and creeks are all tributaries of the Hordern river, which enters the Sepik itself East of Green river Patrol Post, some 40 miles to the south. On all sides, the country is hilly and broken, though not mountainous. To the East, the land becomes more and more marshy and the rivers drain north into the Nebi. The main rivers -- which are not properly marked on any map available at present, are shown on the sketch map of the Umeda area. From the air, the Waina-Sowanda area looks quite flat; the dense tree cover concealing the many minor corrugations, the rocky limestone outcrops breaking through the prevailing friable mudstone, the steep gullies, marshy depressions and so on which make walking in the area more tiresome, especially in the wet season, than an aerial impression would seem to suggest.

The geology of the area -- recent yellowish sedimentary deposits -- may be responsible for its low fertility, as compared, for instance to limestone areas, and still more so areas on the Sepik with volcanic soils which support heavy populations. The poor drainage and low altitude (c. 900 feet) also means very malarial conditions, further

contributing to the low population density.

The prevailing vegetation of the area is dense primary forest. There are no grassland areas, though in some intensively cultivated areas, especially in the vicinity of permanent hamlet sites, groves of permanent bamboo are found. These anthropogenic bamboo groves are an important source of food, however. There are also large areas of secondary bush, which are used for making gardens, since the trees, being smaller, may be more easily felled. The primary forest areas are used for hunting and collecting, as well as for new gardens, if necessary. Swampy areas and creeks, of which there are a great many, are marked by many small stands of sago, the staple food of the people. There are no large swamps and hence no really extensive sago-stands, such as are found on the banks of the Sepik river itself, but the great number of these smaller sago stands makes up for this. Sago appeared to grow almost anywhere, except on truly rocky terrain, which was hardly to be found except on the Ausis, though it was concentrated in the lower, swamplier, parts of the territory. It is probable that all the sago has been planted since the majority of the palms found are infertile, producing no seeds. The planting may have taken place over a great many generations, ever since sago people first inhabited the area, down to the present day, the older stands regenerating themselves as the newer ones were planted, gradually filling out the available sites.





MAP 2.

UMEDA AND ITS ENVIRONS

#### iv. Settlement

(see map 2).

The four villages consist of a variable number of nucleated hamlets: Sowanda contains ten separate hamlets, Waina-Wyalla only three. Umeda, the village with which I shall be mainly concerned, has six hamlets. The hamlets are all sited on relatively high ground, i.e. on low ridges. Villages cover quite large areas: it takes twenty minutes to walk from one end of Umeda village to the other, the hamlets being separated by stretches of secondary bush and bamboo groves. The villages are quite close to one another. Sowanda, Punda and Waina are all within three-quarters of an hour's walk from Umeda.

The villages are not pallisaded or surrounded by areas cleared of vegetation to discourage surprise attacks, though the ridge top sites do confer some military advantage. Attacks on villages do not seem to have been a common occurrence in pre-contact times, though they did take place (most fighting seems to have taken place in the bush).

The nucleated hamlets vary greatly in size (see Fig. 3). A typical hamlet contains some ten or so houses of wood and sago-stems thatched with sago leaves. Houses may be built either on the ground, or, more usually, on stilts. The houses are simple, plain, and without decoration. They are used, less for living in, than for storage purposes: the inhabitants usually sleeping on the verandah or underneath the house in good

weather, only retiring inside when forced to do so by rain or high winds. In front of the houses there is a plaza, kept more-or-less free of weeds, where hamlet activities are carried on, and, on occasion, ritual. However -- and this perhaps is rather an important point -- there is no 'Men's House' such as is so commonly found in New Guinea village societies. Each house is inhabited by a nuclear family, with or without additional members, or by groups of siblings of either sex. When the men congregate together for discussions of matters of common interest, to smoke or chew areca, they do so in the open, in the plaza.

Surrounding the hamlet are numbers of coconut palm, which, dominating the tangled secondary vegetation on the slopes of the hamlet-ridge, mark out the hamlet-site from afar. Also planted on the slopes of the ridge are breadfruit and areca nut. Some colour is lent to the hamlet by decorative shrubs, cordilynes and the shrub codium variegatum as well as introduced hibiscus and convolvulus.

Paths radiate out from the hamlet site, leading to the other hamlets and into the bush: these paths are narrow, overgrown and slippery, no attempt being made, except, occasionally, under administrative stimulus, to keep them in good order.

As will be explained in a later section, the people do not live in the permanent hamlets on the village ridge for a great part of the time. Besides the main hamlets, there are to be found, throughout the Waina-Sowanda area,

a great many semi-permanent bush encampments and garden houses, which are used by the inhabitants when working sago, gardening, and hunting in the bush. The habitations found at these bush sites range between the simplest of shelters made of sago fronds propped on a framework of sticks, to relatively elaborate houses with walls and limbum floors. Some bush sites contain a number of separate houses, but it is more common to find long, open-sided shelters with raised beds ranged down either side, which can accommodate twenty or thirty people at a time. These are rather like Asian or South-American 'Long-houses' except that they are not used permanently, and that they generally lack walls. The more important of these bush sites are virtually separate, miniature hamlets, away from the main village: however all the inhabitants maintain houses in the main village as well, even if for most of the time, they live at bush sites. The uniqueness of the village, as opposed to the 'bush' hamlet-sites is marked by the fact that it is only at the village site that coconut plantations are found, even though it would be perfectly possible to plant coconuts at the semi-permanent bush sites. The bush sites are marked by plantations of breadfruit and areca nuts, as well as decorative shrubs etc.

Numbers of semi-permanent bush sites are generally found grouped together in neighbourhoods occupied by particular clans or groups of allied clans who co-operate together in bush work. They may be surrounded by areas of gardens and secondary bush, with bamboo groves. These



neighbourhoods reproduce, on a smaller scale, the pattern seen in the village (i.e. separate nucleated hamlets separated by secondary bush). Surrounding the bush neighbourhoods are large tracts of undisturbed forest, in which there are isolated gardens and here and there a hunting lodge or a sago-working site. Away from the village and the more intensively used tracts close to it, where the bush encampments are found, there is no shortage of land: but closer to the village, and especially where the four villages have borders with each other, there are areas of relatively intensive occupation, and here conflicts over the control of resources may arise.

#### v. The people

I did not collect data on physical anthropology. In general it may be said that the people show typical Papuan traits, being fairly short in stature, often muscular, particularly the men, and with considerable variability in skin colour, albinism occurring sporadically.

It was apparent that the environment was far from being a healthy one, and the ill-effects of malaria were exacerbated by a poor diet, particularly where the women and children were concerned. The enlarged spleen characteristic of malarial conditions was seen throughout, and was particularly marked in the children. I saw at least one case of ricketts, and others no doubt had resulted in the deaths of the affected children. Infant mortality was high, and was increased, in all probability, by female infanticide (see below). Still more serious

was a marked incidence, while I was in the field, of maternal mortality, which inevitably also resulted in the deaths of the new-born children as well. The people were also affected by dysentery and parasites, not to mention tuberculosis, filarial infections, tropical ulcers, and skin ailments, tinea and grille. Life expectancy was low,, especially for women, but also for men. Perhaps I can exemplify this best by the fact that in Ureda village not one man could point to his own son's son, though this is in part a consequence of the late age of marriage for men.

About the temperament of the people it is perhaps not necessary to say anything, since it will appear at large below. But perhaps I should say here that they always showed themselves very friendly towards me, and were excellent informants except in that they drew the line at telling me, a young man and a bachelor, about certain things, particularly magical techniques, which were the prerogative of older, married men. Their main occupation, apart from productive work, was conversation, particularly, long, elaborate bouts of mildly competitive raillery, with much recourse to a stock of standardised obscenities. They never stood on their dignity, they never behaved deferentially: they were highly egalitarian. They only occasionally indulged in angry rhetoric, generally against absent wrongdoers (e.g. sorcerers, adulterers) and still more rarely in actual violence. There were no 'big men' of the classic New Guinea variety, though some senior men were, certainly, influential and accorded some tacit

respect. There were no significant inequalities in material possessions, consequently, no men wielded any social power on the basis of wealth. In this, they are somewhat aberrant by New Guinea standards, as will be pointed out below. Previously, some men had reputations as pre-eminent fighters, but these men exercised no leadership over the society as a whole: the ultra-aggressive personality was not admired. The admired man was a good hunter, a good husband, but above all a man who was always 'open', willing to talk, to joke, to reveal himself in witty imitations and lay himself open to the sallies of his companions. The secretive man was regarded with suspicion: he was consumed, it was believed, with sexual jealousies, personal animosities which might tempt him to call in a sorcerer to destroy the unfortunate victims of his hatred.

#### vi. Material culture

Before European contact, only stone tools were available to the people, who were not in contact with centres of trade. The implements made were small stone axes of polished basalt (?) usually about 3-4 inches long, hafted to a V-shaped handle. There are still large quantities of these axes in the region, but they are only used for ceremonial or magical purposes. For normal use they have been replaced by imported axes, bushknives, and a few Malay cutlasses, made from discarded motor-car springs by natives of West Irian. Considerable expertise is shown in the tempering of crude, blunt, ill-made trade-store knives till they acquire a very fine edge indeed

(this is done by heating them repeatedly and burying them in special earths).

Metal tools are far from being, as yet, in adequate supply: much borrowing of these implements takes place, and many of the available tools are more-or-less broken, chipped, with improvised handles: still, they suffice.

One important implement is still made of stone: this is the sago pounder (hon), a conical stone with a depression hollowed out in the base. This is lashed to a V-shaped handle, with the hollow base pointing downwards. With this implement pith is scraped out of the felled sago log, and is crushed in the trunk. Hon are made by selecting a suitable oval pebble which is then laboriously hammered into shape against an anvil stone. There is no steel tool to replace this pounder, though, outside the Waina-Sowanda area I saw a small fish tin, fastened to a base of wood, being used for the same purpose.

An axe, a bushknife, a sago-pounder, and perhaps a small pocket knife are the most important of the tools used by Waina-Sowandas. In use besides are bone awls, scrapers made of the claws of parrots and the teeth of bandicoots, pig-bone spoons, chips of glass and flint, as well as more disposable items such as bamboo knives (previously used for barbering, but now only for butchery, having been replaced by razor-blades -- mostly horribly blunt).

The weapon used by the people is the bow-and-arrow; spears are unknown. Bows, about six feet long, are made of black palm, arrows are tipped with bamboo blades



in the main, though some metal heads, worked from discarded petrol drums outside the region, are in use as well, and are regarded as greatly superior to bamboo in killing-power. For warfare, barbed heads of black palm are used.

Cane armour was worn in battle, protecting the abdomen and chest of the warrior. This is an idiosyncrasy of the region: evidently, it afforded considerable protection against arrows.

While the items mentioned hitherto are owned, made, and used, in the main, by men, the women have their special skills as well. Their particular province was making bark-cloth blankets (now replaced mainly by imported cotton blankets and calico cloth). The women also make the essential net-bags worn by both sexes at all times, as well as decorative chest bands, ribbons, purses, garters, etc.

Male clothing consists of the aforementioned net-bag, and a selection of the other items. Besides the net-bag, most adult men wear penis-sheaths made of globular yellow gourds with incised black designs, which they make. Older men and the young go naked, however. Women donned skirts on marriage, and did not relinquish them at any time thenceforth, adding new aprons, front and back, as the earlier strata wore out. (Most were 'married' well before puberty). Both sexes wore additional decoration in the form of flowers, perfumed leaves inserted in armbands or hair, feathers, and some paint or powder, from time to time, especially at rituals: as I shall discuss in

due course, it was the young men who were the most assiduous in self-decoration. Most men possessed one or more pairs of shorts, which were originally handed out by the missions, and the women had cotton skirts and some tatty dresses and blouses: these were not worn except when administrative patrols were in the area. Relatively new imported items of clothing were worn by their owners at rituals, on occasion, but this practice was not widespread since imported clothes are still very scarce and hard to come by. It must be said that they were eagerly sought.

Pottery was never used in the area in pre-contact times, since Waina-Sowanda lies a long way from the pottery-producing areas on the middle Sepik and on the coast, and there seems to have been no long-distance trading in the area. Instead of pots (or imported substitutes) buckets made of folded spathes of the limbum palm are used for transporting water and other substances, and for cooking sago-jelly. The method will be described at another place.

One other important technological device, the sago leaching apparatus, will be described in the next section, on economic activity.

#### vii. Economic activity

The basic foodstuff of the region is sago. Palms are felled by men with axes, and the outer bark is stripped from the upper surface of the felled sago-log with axe and bushknife. The pith is pounded by the men, who load the pounded material into limbum buckets. The women then take the Pith to the nearest source of running

water and leach it using the apparatus. This apparatus is made of sago spathes mounted on a framework of sticks. The filter, bound to the lower end of the spathe in which the washing is done is made of coconut-fibre. The water, containing the granules of starch which have been leached out of the pith, drains into a sump at the bottom, made of the second sago spathe. There, the starch settles in the bottom while the water drips out over the lip of the sump. From time to time the water is drained off and the sedimented starch is scooped out, to be packed in leaves.

I cannot state in figures the average product of a sago palm processed in this way -- besides which it is evident that palms may vary very widely as to their starch content -- but it can be said that a productive unit of a man and a woman can produce enough starch in a day to feed four or five times their numbers; intensive work on processing sago by members of the community can result in the quite rapid accumulation of surpluses. However, sago is at its best within a month or two of having been processed, unless it has been stored in specially constructed pits, which is not generally done.

Gardening activity comes a poor second to sago. All adult men have gardens, which unlike sago production, can be undertaken without the participation of women. Married men with wives are the most important gardeners however, the women doing most of the weeding and harvesting, though by no means all of it. Men are always responsible for the clearing off and burning of the garden, and the

magical operations needed to make it grow. Men also do the fencing, which is done when the garden is half grown. Gardens are often made by groups of men co-operating together, each taking a separate sector within a common perimeter fence. The most important crop, but not the most esteemed, is taro. Yams are preferred as food, but do not grow very well in the poor, clayey, soil. The longest yam was no more than a foot-and-a-half in length, a far cry from the ten-foot monsters reported for certain Sepik groups. Other crops are pit-pit, sugar-cane, tobacco, apica, piper vine and a variety of greens, not unlike spinach -- as well as magical herbs and perfumes.

Cultivated trees are coconuts, breadfruit, areca, and 'tulip' (PE) -- gnetum gnemon. These make a very important contribution to diet, particularly the leaves of gnetum gnemon which come second to bamboo shoots as a relish to be eaten with sago. Coconuts are not very plentiful, and are tabooed for long periods at a time for ritual reasons, as will be described below.

Collecting is important, particularly of bamboo-shoots, which are the almost invariable accompaniment of any meal for more than half the year -- many a meal consists of sago, bamboo shoots, and nothing else. Bamboo shoots are more important in the diet than any garden crop. Other items which are gathered in season are mangos, concurbits, and a variety of fruits, mushrooms, leaves etc. Most collecting is done by women.

Animal protein is provided by hunting. A few pigs are kept (never more than four in Umeda during my stay, and



similar numbers in the other villages) but are not bred in captivity: these domestic pigs had been captured in the forest when small and bred up. A boar will be gelded. The contribution to diet of these pigs -- which are really pets, though frequently very dangerous, ill-natured pets -- is insignificant. Most meat comes from hunting wild pig in the forest, an activity which takes up a great deal of the time of the male members of the community. It cannot be said that meat from this source is plentiful, either; the best hunters did not kill more than one or two pigs a year. Pig-meat was eked out with smaller game, possum, bandicoot, wild-fowl etc., while the children caught still smaller game, lizards, frogs, mice, grasshoppers. Fish were caught in the streams, either by poison, or manually. Grubs, particularly sago grubs, made an important and welcome contribution to diet; less important, but also very welcome, were megapode eggs.

Many dogs were kept, to assist in hunting: they were half-wild, and lived mainly by what they could kill for themselves, or steal. My impression was that the dogs remained attached to their human patrons less for the food they received, than for the caresses of the women and children, and the privilege of sleeping by the fires.

There was remarkably little development of trade or exchange, and no system of ceremonial exchange, such as frequently encountered elsewhere in New Guinea. There was no standard medium of exchange, such as Goldlip or Cowrie shells or similar kinds of primitive 'money'. This negative factor is of considerable importance in

interpreting Waina-Sowanda social organisation. The idea of 'exchange' is, nonetheless, present, but the items that are exchanged are not material valuables, or livestock, but women. There is also a certain amount of formal gift giving between kinsmen. Brideprice and death payments are not a feature of Waina-Sowanda economic activity.

In short, the economy of the area is very small-scale subsistence activity, with little emphasis either on gardening or livestock, and a very considerable emphasis on collecting and hunting -- although the sago is planted, the kind of economic pattern of activity it engenders can hardly be called agriculture, and bears a much greater resemblance to the life of 'hunters and gatherers'. There are no specialist economic roles, or entrepreneurial roles: each family unit is self-supporting, though garden work is done communally, particularly the forest clearance and fencing operations. There is no long-distant trade to speak of -- I noticed a single example of a heavy cowrie woman's necklace, only to discover that the cowries had been collected by the woman's son when visiting the prisoners in Vanimo jail, on the coast. Evidently, one or two items did filter in from the coast (forty miles to the north across a mountain range) in pre-contact times, but in insufficient quantities to engender a system of ceremonial exchange of valuables. I saw no items in use which could have originated on the Sepik. The people seem to have known about the existence of the sea previous to contact -- though the first to see it were the prisoners and labourers

who left the villages in the sixties -- but as far as I know they had no knowledge of the Sepik river, or that the Benbi (= Mordern R.) flowed into it.

I will have more to say about economic activity in Chapter 2 below, and later on, in relation to the organisation of the productive calendar by the ritual cycle, in Chapter 4. These notes should suffice to give the general background.

## Chapter 2

## THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF UMEDA VILLAGE

i. Introduction

In this chapter I will distinguish a number of 'levels' of social structure, and I shall proceed to discuss them in turn, beginning with the most inclusive. The levels I distinguish are as follows:

1. The connubium
2. The village
3. Village moieties
4. Bush associations
5. The hamlet
6. Hamlet moieties
7. Clans and sub-clans
8. The household

The basic theme of my analysis of Umeda social structure will be the role of alliances, originally set up via marriage exchange, as the means for establishing relationships between units larger than the sub-clan. I will also show how the idea of alliance is at the basis of the dual organisation into village- and hamlet-moieties. In later sections I will also say something about inter-personal kinship relations, marriage and sorcery.

ii. The Umeda-Punda connubium

## (a) Language

The four villages shown as part of the Waina-Sowanda group of villages on map 1 fall into two dialect groups:



Umeda-Punda, to the east, speak one dialect, Waina-Wyalla and Sowanda, to the west, speak another, mutually intelligible dialect. The dialects spoken to the South, in the Amanab sub-district are not intelligible to Umeda speakers -- (I shall call the Umeda-Punda dialect 'Umeda' henceforth). The dialects spoken by the Walsa people and the Imondas, to the north and east, are more cognate to Umeda speech than the Amanab dialects; communication with these groups is carried on in a sort of jargon, combining elements of both languages and pidgin expressions as well. A tentative classification of the languages of the whole area has been essayed by Loving and Bass of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (1964) but no progress has been made in systematic research on any of these languages. Certain features of the Umeda language are discussed in Chapter 3 and Appendix I.

(b) The three connubia

The two eastern Waina-Sowanda villages, Umeda and Punda intermarry and form a connubium together. Waina-Wyalla forms a second connubium and Sowanda a third: these latter villages are endogamous. A few marriages link Punda with two villages to the south, Wamuru and Yafar, in the Amanab sub-district (Map 1), but for most purposes it is satisfactory to treat Umeda-Punda as a closed connubium. Similarly, occasional marriages have taken place between Waina-Wyalla and Walsa groups to the north, and between Waina-Wyalla and Sowanda, but these I did not study in detail. One Umeda is the offspring of a widow of Sowanda origin,

who took up residence in Umeda. Apart from these isolated cases Waina-Wyalla and Sowanda are endogamous villages: they are certainly generally spoken of as such by the inhabitants.

Umeda and Punda have a common tradition of origin. A site, now overgrown with secondary forest and marked by a hunting-lodge, called Iuvnugkebe ('the place of rotten houses') is the traditional spot upon which the ancestral coconut palm grew from which Toag-tod, the first man and generic ancestor of the Umedas and Pundas, emerged, together with his dogs, his pigs, cassowaries etc. The Iuvnugkebe site is equidistant from both Umeda and Punda, which are about half-an-hour's walk apart. It is said that Umedas and Pundas inhabited a common village on this site before dispersing: the Umedas moving downstream along the course of the Mesa river, the Pundas moving upstream to the headwaters (see the course of the Mesa sketched in on the map.) However, a closer examination of the traditions surrounding the various component part of the Umeda-Punda connubium reveal that, if this story is true, i.e., that Umeda and Punda once inhabited a single village, it is not the whole truth. In fact, a considerable number of groups in the area are immigrants from elsewhere. Properly speaking, the story referred to just now relates only to a group of edtodna clans in Umeda and Punda respectively -- the significance of the moiety-designation edtodna will be examined below. Certain other clans in the area have quite other origins. For instance, though the present Iuvnugkebe site is on the boundary between Umeda

and Punda territory, in no-man's land, the site is in fact occupied and utilised by a group of Pundas known as the edapud-terai 'children of the edapud-fern'.

Now the Iuvnugkebe site is highly tabooed to all the other Umeda-Punda clans -- in fact, while passing it in the path between Umeda and Punda, travellers avert their eyes and hurry by -- to these edapud-terai it is neutral, since they trace their origin, not to the coconut palm which grew on the Iuvnugkebe site, but to the forest fern: their tradition of origin is different, and moreover, they have, at some time in the past, migrated from the village of Wamuru (otherwise known as Evada) in the Amanab sub-district. Such factors as these -- and I shall have occasion to mention other, similar, instances, tend to be glossed over in speaking of the Umeda-Punda connubium as a whole: at one level of discourse, umdapuda (Umeda-Punda) is seen as a homogeneous whole -- while in other contexts distinctions are drawn.

(c) Relations outside the connubium

The traditional enemies of Umeda and Punda are the Sowandas and the Walsa tribes. Members of Umeda and Punda might participate in war-parties directed against either of these enemies: they would not, conversely, combine with Walsas or Sowandas against each other. Some distinction must be drawn between Walsa and Sowanda as categories of enemies. Warfare with Sowanda was distinctly 'sporting' in character, whereas the battles with Walsa groups were more deadly in nature. Sowanda has a separate origin myth,

but the largest of the present Sowanda hamlets is of Umeda origin (the Sowanda agwatodna hamlet, Namosid). Relations between Umeda and Sowanda are close, despite the absence of marriage, and traditional kinship relations, based on putative marriage exchanges in the past, are maintained between members of individual Umeda and Sowanda clans. The villages are within shouting distance, and warfare, if it broke out between Umeda and Sowanda, would be heralded by some nights of mutual shouting and name-calling between the two villages, and would take place in an agreed spot, pre-arranged between the two sides. Armour would be worn, and, judging by genealogies I received, deaths were infrequent in battles of this 'formal' kind with Sowanda. Very different, it seems, were the raids which took place between parties of Walsa and Umeda warriors. While women and children were spared in fights with Sowanda -- in fact, women participated as spectators and arrow-retrievers -- in fights with the Walsas women and children were fair game. Formal battles do not seem to have been the rule between these antagonists; instead, sneak raids on isolated sago-parties or hamlets left unguarded claimed many lives till the arrival of the Dutch and the establishment of Waris Patrol Post resulted in the pacification of the Walsa, a change much to the advantage of the people of the eastern hamlets of Umeda, whose continued existence, was, it seems, seriously threatened by the raids of the numerically superior Walsa.

Outside the connubium, the cause of warfare and killings was conflict over resources. The Walsa groups today claim



to be short of territory for exploitation as sago-planting land and hunting grounds. They certainly seem more crowded than the Waina-Sowanda groups, though it is difficult to say whether they are genuinely short of land. At any rate, the Walsas now claim that but for the arrival of the Dutch in the fifties, they would have wiped out the village of Umeda altogether, and would have occupied its territory. This is an exaggeration: the western Umeda hamlets (Wehumda and Sinai) did not seem to have suffered at all from Walsa raids. The eastern hamlets, particularly Kedewaina and Klalumda, seem to have suffered severely. The largest Umeda hamlet, Wehumda, is the one whose territory is the least accessible from the Walsa villages to the north.

The Umedas had no reciprocal territorial ambitions vis-a-vis the Walsa: such raids as they made into Walsa territory were retaliatory, and seem to have been on a small scale. In military terms the Walsa seem to have had the edge on Umeda.

Fighting with Sowanda also arose out of conflicts over resources, but of a different order of seriousness. Being in close proximity, Umeda and Sowanda were very familiar with each other's territory and resources. There was no dispute over where the boundary should lie, certain landmarks -- large trees, stones or rivers being accepted markers of territory, nor had either side ambitions to take over territory wholesale, as the Walsa wished to take over some, or all, of Umeda territory. Instead conflict arose over stealing from gardens, poaching fish, grubs, or game,

and escalated as each side took retaliatory steps against the real or imagined encroachments of the other. A typical sequence might be: an Umeda sees that a bandicoot's lair has been disturbed (a dog might do this, on its own) -- he suspects a Sowanda poacher. He enters Sowanda territory and burns down a hunting lodge. The Sowandas, outraged, reply in kind. Umedas burn a Sowanda garden-house, and pillage the garden. At this point a battle becomes likely. The clan of the wronged parties on either side collect their allies from within the connubium and commence the mutual shouting mentioned previously. The mobilisation is far from general: Sowanda, with half the population (c.180) of Umeda-Punda (c.400) is not at a disadvantage, since only individual clans and their allies are involved; moreover, as I mentioned, certain relationships (which are respected in battle) subsist between Umeda and Sowanda clans, increasing the 'security circle'. (The phrase is Peter Lawrence's cf. Lawrence 1971). In the melee, fighting is mainly between individuals, and absolute numbers on either side -- likely to be no more than twenty or so -- do not greatly matter. The warriors, painted black, wearing their body armour, advance on each other, the basic tactic being to induce the opposing warrior to release his arrow too soon, so that he can be taken at the rush before having time to draw his bow again, or flee. Fighting took place in the forest, providing plenty of natural cover. In this form of fighting, or duelling, as it might be called, deaths, if they occurred, resulted not from immediately mortal wounds but from infected sores which could result from the relatively

minor damage usually inflicted. The vital organs were effectively protected by the armour, but there were many instances of wounds to the buttocks and thighs, evidently the consequence of firing too soon and an unsuccessful effort to escape from the presence of the cooler Bowman. The arrows used were hideously barbed, but I was told that some men were expert at extracting such arrows by cutting in from the other side and pulling them through the flesh. All the older men had been wounded, some frequently, and pointed to their scars -- like President Johnson -- with proud grins.

(d) Non-antagonistic relations outside the connubium

Because the connubium is not absolutely stable over time, but the product of slow processes of accretion and fragmentation certain relationships persist with groups no longer members of the connubium, but who were, at earlier periods, allied to it by marriage. This persistence of alliance relationships is a cardinal feature of social structure in the region, as I will detail at length below. I have mentioned the existence of such relationships between certain Umeda clans and opposite numbers in Sowanda: the men of Namosid speak of themselves as 'daughters' (mol) of Umeda -- the 'mother' (ava). That is, as descendants of Umeda women married to Sowanda men. This is a façon de parler only. Another tradition, maintained in Umeda, is that the Sowandas (of Namosid, at least) split off from Umeda in the distant past, as a result of a quarrel about stealing magical white earth (ogurubwe). I did not have an

opportunity to discuss this tale with the Sowandas themselves: as far as I know they regarded themselves as no less autochthonous than the Umedas i.e. as progeny of an ancestral coconut palm. (However, it must be stressed, that the myths of origin do not form a coherent system. At one level, Umedas, Pundas, Sowandas and all the rest are satuda that is, 'children of the coconut' referring to the primary origin myth, while each separate social unit or clan, generally has an origin story of its own, not necessarily compatible with the primary myth).

Besides this general idea that Sowanda, or Namosið, is the 'daughter' of Umeda, more specific relationships unite particular clans, who claim to have intermarried in the past. Members of such clans will refer to each other as hmini/awanagai i.e. as extra-clan 'fathers' and 'brothers' (see below section iv). Such men would avoid wounding one another in a fight: they would also be in a position to visit one another's houses, either in the bush, or, more rarely, in the village, and exchange hospitality.

Sowanda is not the only neighbouring group with whom old alliance relationships persist in this form. In the case of Punda's relations with Wamuru and Yafar, such relations are not confined to merely putative marriages, since exchanges of women still occur. Meanwhile, the edapudterai maintain links with those with whom they exchanged when they were part of Wamuru. Turning to Umeda, the same is true of the relation of Waina clan with Ironda - this Waina must not be confused with the village 'Waina'



(in Waina-Wyalla) which is quite separate. This clan originally inhabited a site equidistant between the main Umeda ridge and Imonda, to the east, known as Nissankebe. At that time, they intermarried with the Imondas. They left that site after having been reduced by an epidemic, and joined with Kede clan to form Kedewaina hamlet. The original relationship with Imonda is still kept alive, although it is Imonda that is blamed for the epidemic which caused them to abandon their Nissankebe hamlet. The other villages have similar links: for instance, Waina-Wyalla has links with Walsa groups, and with Sowanda.

There is, however, a special category of extra-connubial relationship which has nothing to do with traditions of alliance relationships in the past. This is the sehe relationship, which is a relation voluntarily entered into between individuals who acknowledge no previous connection, but who contract a formal friendship. One would call these 'trading partnerships' if trade were a more important feature of life in the region: as it is small quantities of gifts do pass along these channels, latterly in increasing quantities, but the benefits are more social than economic.

Sehe relationships are specific to particular hamlets: thus Kedewaina hamlet has relations of this kind with Epri, a Walsa village, while Klalunda hamlet has relations to Mindepoke, another Walsa village, and so on. Punda hamlets do not contract relations with Walsa villages, but with villages to the South, in the Amanab area. The existence of sehe bonds between individuals does not preclude the hamlets concerned from making war on one another.

The relationship is entered into between coevals of equal social status. A namesake (awnan) is a suitable choice, if practicable. Meetings will take place casually in the bush, and if visits are exchanged between members of different connubia, the visitor will place himself under the patronage of his sehe partner for the duration of his visit. In warfare, sehe partners would avoid one another, like allies. Small gifts, but not large payments of valuables, passed between partners. In pre-contact times such partnerships were the source of the small quantities of trade beads, shells, and similar objects, which found their way into the Waina-Sowanda area. More significant, probably, were exchanges of magical and other cultural knowledge. It is still the practice to stock up with magical perfume plants or other magical materials, when visiting a foreign village. And no doubt, though I have little direct evidence on this point, innovations in ritual practice were communicated through these channels. Mada, an old man of Kedewaina, one of my main informants, had a detailed knowledge of Epmi (Walsa) garden magic, which he represented, for my benefit, as Umeda magic, till other informants of mine contradicted him. New varieties of garden crops also entered the area in this way.

Two sehe relationships of influential men in Umeda deserve to be mentioned specifically. The first of these is the relation between the Umeda councillor, Pom of Klalumda, and his opposite number, the Mindepoke councillor. The cultivation of close relationships between politically important men, is, of course, part of the 'big man' syndrome

throughout New Guinea. In the case of these two councillors the relationship was significant less in the field of council affairs as such -- to put it bluntly, the council was run by the patrol officer, abetted by the senior and experienced Epml councillor and Amos, ex-councillor of Imonda -- than in the help that each gave the other in internal matters. This was particularly so in regard to runaway lovers. For the Walsa villages, the relatively un-populated Umeda bush represents an inviting place of refuge. Twice during my stay there, eloping couples from Walsa villages took up temporary abode in the Umeda bush, and on both occasions the Mindepoke councillor was sent to enlist the aid of Pom, the Umeda councillor, in rounding up the runaways.

Another, similar relation exists between Wiye of Kedewaina, the Ex-luluai, and Amos, Ex-councillor of Imonda. Neither of these men has an official role, but Amos, in particular, is an important man in the district. Amos, who has much more contact with the administration than the official Imonda councillor, is frequently employed by them as a channel of communication with the Waina-Sowandas.

It cannot be said that Amos or Wiye exploited their position as mediators of the relationship between the administration for personal benefit. The relation is advantageous to both in another way. Amos is the possessor of a shot-gun, at that time, the only one in the area in native hands. Wiye is a member of Waina clan, which, as has

mentioned, has abandoned its original hamlet and has come to live with Kede clan. Large tracts of the Waina bush areas have remained unexploited, whereas the Imonda bush, by contrast, has been exploited too much (largely by Amos himself). Amos and Wiye spend long periods together in the Waina bush with their respective families and hangers-on, hunting together and sharing the kill. It was apparent that Wiye's access to pig-meat from this source, materially increased his prestige within the community.

I may add, in parenthesis, that though it is true that at present none of the official or semi-official agents of the administration, use their position as a lever for political domination over their respective villages, this has not always been so. Feit, the late councillor of Punda, fitted much more closely to the stereotype of the New Guinea 'despot' -- the administrative appointee who terrorises his local group. (Brown 1963). Feit was the younger brother of the man who had previously been Luluai, he knew pidgin, and was considered by the Administration to have been an active and intelligent man. Having been elected Councillor -- the post went to him as the most obvious choice -- he used the threat of administrative sanctions to put everybody in his power. He made many angry speeches and harangues, and his fiery eyes are still recalled with awe. What was most vividly remembered, however, was his taste for open and copious adultery. He used to batten himself into the 'haus kiap' (Government



rest house) with the woman of his choice, and stay there for days, I was told. He had no power base within the society, and his autonomy was guaranteed entirely by his supposed administrative backing. But the circumstances of Waina-Sowanda do not favour the exercise of such personal power, even in the rather turbulent conditions which resulted from the imposition of administrative control. The Pundas responded to the angry outbursts and amatory depredations of the Councillor by retiring to their bush encampments: the 'despot' could not get at them there. Retiring to the bush is the stock means of escaping from a situation of conflict or unpleasantness, and families can support themselves indefinitely in the bush. The simple fact that it is always possible to escape from a situation by taking to the bush is an important check on the exercise of political power, and may account, partly, for the relative absence of 'big-men' from the Waina-Sowanda scene.

Feit's career was destined to be only a short one. He died in 1967, two years before I was in the field, having been councillor for only a year or so. There was no hesitation in ascribing his death to the sorcery of the angry Pundas. He was succeeded in office by his younger brother, a returned labourer. Mwi (the brother) is a man of surpassing mildness even by local standards. Informants agreed that his manner was to be attributed to his desire not to meet a similar fate to that which overtook his bikmaus brother.

iii. The village: Umeda and Punda

Having said something about the relation between the connubium and its neighbours, I now turn to the relations between its two component villages.

(a) Village Names

The spellings Umeda, Punda, Waina, Wyalla, and Sowanda are those used by the Government. Umedas pronounce the name of their village 'umda (with the stress falling on the first syllable) and the names of the other villages 'puda, sawada, waina, wayala. The government spellings conform, not to the local pronunciation of the names of the villages, but to the Imonda-Walsa pronunciation.

I use the Government spelling for village names, partly because they have appeared, and are likely to continue to appear, in the literature on New Guinea, and partly because it is convenient to have some means of distinguishing, orthographically, between 'Village' names, and the same names when used as names of clans and hamlets. Thus when referring to Umeda, the village, I write 'Umeda', when referring to the hamlet also called by that name, I write 'Umda'. The same applies to Punda (the village) versus 'Puda' (the clan/hamlet).

The villages take their names from the name of the clan associated, in each case, with the founding ancestor. In the context, it is usually clear whether it is to the whole village, or only that particular segment of it, to which reference is made.

(b) The formation of the village

The villages, as I have described, consist of groups of hamlets sited on a common ridge. Umeda and Punda both have six hamlets each. The villages have come into being by a process of accretion, which will be described in more detail in the sections on village-moieties and clans.

Together, the villages of Umeda and Punda form a single entity, recognised by the inhabitants themselves, based on territorial propinquity, marriage, economic and ritual association, and mingled with antagonism stemming from sorcery, and its expression, fighting. Solidarity and conflict both enter into the relationship.

When speaking in general terms, informants would recognise a generalised mother's brother/sister's son relationship between the two villages. But the villages were not exogamous: not everybody was the offspring of marriages involving both villages. By no means all Umedas had a mother's brother in Punda, or vice-versa: the extension of such a generalised matrilateral alliance across village lines was a polite fiction, like calling the Sowandas the 'daughters' of Umeda. The usage stemmed, not from its true applicability to the individual case, but from the fact that marriage exchange was, nonetheless, the basis of the relation between the two villages.

Marriage is patri-virilocal. There were no cases in Umeda of men permanently residing with their wives' people: though this did not preclude husbands from spending periods living with affines in the bush. The majority of womens'

first marriages involve sister-exchange, either of true sisters, or classificatory sisters. (A detailed breakdown of the pattern of marriages is made in Table 1 below). Marriage will be discussed in detail later: here, it is necessary only to say that the basic unit of exogamy is the hamlet (not the village) and that hamlets may marry women of other hamlets with whom they are not already allied i.e. groups with whom they have not exchanged women for at least two generations. Marriage takes place without brideprice -- a fact which it is necessary to emphasise, because it is in striking contrast to the situation usually encountered in New Guinea - but is reciprocated by gifts of meat which must be rendered while the marriage lasts, and by informal gifts and services from time to time. The basic means of reciprocating the gift of a woman, is a counter-gift, also of a woman. The proportion of actual sister-exchanges is very high.

The basic units which engage in marriage exchange are the hamlets, and the component clans within particular hamlets, rather than villages as whole units. Nonetheless, people are prepared to speak of Umeda and Punda 'exchanging' (magvitav) as whole units. There is an element of wishful thinking in this. I will later discuss the severe demographic imbalance between the sexes which is a feature of both Umeda and Punda. Women were a very scarce resource: in fact, women were the major scarce good distributed by the social structure. It was clearly comforting to think of Punda as a pool of available women -- especially from



the standpoint of my main informants, who were the younger, unmarried men.

The facts were somewhat different: far from being rich in women, Punda was even less provided with them than Umeda, though the situation was helped by the fact that Punda obtained a number of women, without exchanges being made, from Wamuru and Yafar. In both Umeda and Punda, the majority of marriages took place within the village.

The village is only notionally a unit for alliance and marriage purposes: in the domain of ritual, the unity is much more firmly established, as we shall see. Umeda and Punda co-operated wholesale in major curing ritual, and individual Pundas and Umedas collaborated in curing rituals of a more minor kind. Co-operation in curing ritual was the more significant, for both parties, in that suspicions of sorcery ran high between the two villages. Sorcery, and the antagonism generated by it, was the second major strand, with marriage, in the relations between the two villages. Marriage and sorcery are directly correlated in the eyes of the people -- according to my Umeda informants, all deaths, or almost all, were the result of sorcery, and all sorcery came from Punda. The Pundas denied -- as the Umedas did too -- that they practised sorcery: they attributed deaths to Umeda sorcerers and sorcerers from Wamuru and Yafar. The Umedas -- who did not marry with Wamuru and Yafar, never blamed sorcery on them. And similarly, neither village accused Sowanda of sorcery, although Sowanda was the 'traditional enemy' of

both villages -- because they did not marry the Sowandas. Waina (clan) married with Imonda until, as mentioned above, they were decimated by an epidemic. This epidemic (of dysentery) was blamed on two Imonda sisters, Yas and Mut, who solicited their Imonda kin to kill the Wainas, which they did so effectively that (to quote the story my informant gave me), 'the rivers were dammed up with dead bodies'. After this, the Wainas ceased to marry the Imondas and now they state that they do not fear Imonda sorcery any more.

I will discuss sorcery in detail in a separate section, since it is an aspect of interpersonal relations, as well as being a factor in the political antagonism between the two villages. The point I want to emphasise here is the contrast in the character of relations outside the connubium and relations inside the connubium, between intermarrying villages. Outside the connubium, relations involve competition for resources (excluding women) leading to military confrontation but without mystical danger. It was interesting to contrast the demeanour of Umeda visitors in Sowanda and Punda respectively. In Sowanda, ex-enemies engaged in hearty horse-play, with a good deal of aggression in it, but of a kind which suggested a certain back-handed respect for old acquaintances at scenes of violence. In Punda, Umedas tended to be much more restrained -- on their best behaviour, in fact, but also definitely ill-at-ease except in the company of close matrilinear relatives. The combined presence of affines and suspected sorcerers

took the edge off the gaiety to which, in the company of the Sowandas, they gave free rein.

The tendency of Pundas and Umedas to behave in a restrained, embarrassed manner in each other's presence, only increased their mutual suspicions of one another.

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Umeda ideas about illness and death acknowledge two possible causes of illness -- spirit attacks and sorcery -- but death was almost always the result of sorcery. Spirit attacks, originating with a variety of spirits, not believed to be under the control of human agents, were diagnosed by dreams, and could be cured by appropriate ritual. Sorcery, on the other hand, was caused by the active ill-doing of the sorcerer from a foreign village, who, always at the behest of an enemy within the victim's own group, came by night and consumed his victim. Sorcerers were ordinary men except that they had magic arrows which left no mark: alternatively, they extracted their victim's flesh with a magic cassowary-bone dagger, sewing up the wound afterwards, so that the victim wasted away by degrees with each successive attack. Their motive was thought to be a desire for meat: the motive of the inside agent who solicited them, a desire for revenge against an enemy in the village. Sorcery could not be cured by the same ritual as was used to remove the arrows of the spirits in cases of spirit-attack. Only one means existed of removing the effects of sorcery. Ritual for the removal of sorcery arrows was known to two men of Punda, who attended supposed sorcery victims in both

Umeda and Punda. The ritual consisted of brushing the patient with bespelled leaves in which the practitioner had previously concealed an arrow head of the type likely to be used by a sorcerer. At the critical moment the practitioner produced the arrow before the assembled company, apparently having drawn it from the body of the patient. This technique -- in which the people seemed to have considerable faith, was a recent importation, I was told, from villages to the south i.e. the Amanab area. Unfortunately I never discussed it with a practitioner -- but I am sure that I could never have hoped to improve on the psychological analysis of such medical legerdemain contained in Evans-Pritchard's famous chapter in 'Oracles Witchcraft and Magic among the Azande' (1937 p.188 ff. 245 ff.). The Punda practitioners took no payment for their services, which were performed on the basis of prior kinship links with the patients, that is, on the same basis as members of foreign villages would participate in ordinary healing rituals. Umedas did not hesitate to point to the fact that the practitioners who so generously gave their services were Pundas -- just one more fact to bolster the theory that the Pundas were inveterate sorcerers, since the power to remove sorcery naturally implied the ability to perform it, too.

If the arrow removal technique is discounted, then it may be said that sorcery is incurable. Generally speaking, an illness was not diagnosed as sorcery at all until it had proved fatal. If the patient survived after the performance of curing ritual for spirit-attacks that



confirmed both the diagnosis, and the efficacy of the means used to remove it. If the patient died, that changed the diagnosis, but did not prejudice the effectiveness of the ritual in the eyes of the survivors -- the ritual to counteract spirit-attack could be of no avail against sorcery. Though sadly ineffective, Umeda medicine lacked nothing by way of logical coherence.

Sorcery fears affected the whole gamut of relations between Umeda and Punda, even in cases of relationships -- as between mother's brother and sister's son -- which ruled out direct mutual suspicion. An informant whose matrikin were Pundas contrasted his situation with that of those whose matrikin were within the village. He said that his matrikin often sent messages inviting him to stay with them in the bush, to hunt with them and share their food, but for fear of Punda sorcery, he did not dare go. Those whose matrikin were also co-villagers were under no such disability. In this, he exaggerated to some extent. In fact, because of his Punda matrikin he was, at least, more at home in Punda society than those who had no close matrikin in Punda. He, and two other youths who also had mothers who were Pundas were alone willing to accompany me when I visited Punda to work on genealogies and observe rituals. In terms of simple security, the advantages of having Punda matrikin undoubtedly outweighed the disadvantages in the days before the cessation of warfare.

While maintaining the blanket accusation of sorcery against all Pundas, Umedas exonerated their own relatives there from any active sorcery against themselves. Since

revenge for wrongs committed against the group by sorcerers was the basis of hostilities between Umeda and Punda, matrikin were spared in fighting, since the assumption was, that they could not be the ones responsible. So far as the individual Umeda was concerned, the dangerous Pundas were those with whom he stood in a relationship of mutual marriageability (i.e. those to whom he was not related through previous alliances). This category of relationship is called awk, or awk-awk: these are the people with whom ego fights, whose sorcery he fears, and whom he may marry.

Because of the suppression of warfare, it is difficult to be sure of the frequency of revenge killings for supposed acts of sorcery in pre-contact times. The last occasion upon which a shooting resulted from an accusation of sorcery was in 1966 and resulted directly in the troubles with the administration which finally brought about the wholesale imprisonment of the turbulent men of Umeda in Vanimo prison. Deaths as a result of fighting with Punda seem never to have been as numerous as those which resulted from fighting with the Walsa tribes. But fights seem to have been quite frequent. Nowadays, when a death occurs, the men of the village, particularly those related by clanship or marriage, with the deceased, gather in the hamlet where the death has taken place, while the body, tightly wrapped in limbum spathes, is displayed. The women huddle about the body, weeping, joined by the brothers or sons of the dead man or woman. This occasion of mourning is called hure; the word also refers to the barred kestrel,

a local bird of prey. The men in attendance make angry speeches. During the occasions at which I was present myself, I did not note any accusations being made against specific Pundas, nor were specific accusations made against the supposed instigators of the sorcerer's spite. Inquiries were met with the reply that it was not yet known who was responsible. Divinations were carried out. The body was rubbed with the cut end of the stem of a banana plant, which was supposed to reveal discolourations on the skin which were 'wounds' made by sorcery-arrows. Another oracle involved a ball of damp sago flour, affixed to a short bamboo stick, which was twirled in the embers of a fire. While the abafehe oracle, as it was called, was in the fire, the names of suspected persons were repeated by the operator. At the mention of the name of the party responsible, the ball of sago was supposed to explode -- which it always did eventually -- with a sharp report. (Another, more fanciful oracle, is described below). Although no specific accusations were made at the time of death -- and the administration's ban on fighting may have reinforced this tendency, precautions of a general kind were instituted, since it was believed that the sorcerer would return in the night to feast some more on his freshly killed victim. Bodies of armed men were set to guard the paths leading from the bush, to ambush the sorcerer should he return.

It will be seen that the anthropological cliché 'we marry whom we fight' is only partially true in the Umeda situation. The most serious fighting was with the Walsa

who did not form part of the connubium, and with the Sowandas. But fighting did also take place between Umeda and Punda, and this fighting was intimately bound up with the fact that these villages intermarried, since in this case, fighting arose out of sorcery accusations, and sorcery was and is still directly correlated with marriage. This will be discussed in more detail below. Here, I would wish to say only that the cliché is true only in a qualified sense -- the end result of marriage between the two villages was both to furnish a cause of periodic conflicts, and also to moderate the conflicts as they arose, since the web of affinity and matrilinear alliance enmeshing the Umeda and Punda clans precluded violence between allied clans. Sorcery suspicions were entertained only against awk, i.e. against groups with whom ego did not have active relations of matrilinear alliance -- that is to say, against, potential, but not against actual affines. Contracting marriages with clans in the awk category exempted them from retaliatory action. It will be seen that marriage and matrilinear alliance were politically significant, since through marriage relationships ego's group acquires a 'security circle' (Lawrence 1971, p.20), i.e. a set of friendly relations among foreign groups. However, it is not the case that a concerted 'marriage policy' was responsible for the actual pattern of marriages. Men married very much when, and where, they could: the absolute value of the women acquired in marriage was much more important than any degree of political immunity they might confer: the political

concomitants of marriage alliance were a consequence of, rather than a motive for, marriage.

#### iv. Village moieties

##### (a) Edtodna and agwatodna

Each of the villages in the Waina-Sowanda area is divided into two ritual moieties called edtodna literally 'of the men' (the men's moiety) and agwatodna 'of the women' (the women's moiety). Needless to say, both moieties contain men; the moiety affiliations of women are not socially significant since they do not play an active part in the rituals during which moiety affiliation becomes important.

Moiety affiliation is determined by clan/hamlet membership. That is to say, the moieties are to all intents and purposes patrilineal, though with exceptions to be noted below. In Umeda there are three edtodna hamlets, Umda, Wehumda, and Klalumda, and three agwatodna hamlets, Efid, Sinai, and Kedewaina. In Punda there are four edtodna hamlets: Puda, Asila, Sinai, and Evil, and two agwatodna, Kebenai and Pobonai.

During ritual involving the participation of the whole village -- particularly during the ida sago-fertility ritual to be discussed at length in later chapters -- each ritual role, each masked dancer, must be duplicated, one ritual actor being drawn from one moiety, one from the other. All Umeda ritual is based on this symmetrical dualism between members of opposite moieties: it is through the moiety opposition that the unity of the village, which is only realised fully in performances of ritual, is given expression.



It is of the essence of dual organisations, such as the edtodna/agwatodna moiety organisation, that one half is logically and sociologically incomplete: the hypostatisation of the internal divisions of the society is simultaneously a means of guaranteeing its overall unity.

Dual organisation is a common feature of societies in lowland New Guinea: descriptions of such dual systems are to be found in Bateson's accounts of the Iatmul (Bateson : 1936) and Kaberry's accounts of the Abelam (Kaberry 1941) and elsewhere. I have also discussed Abelam moieties with Anthony Forge, to whom I owe the distinction between 'symmetrical' and 'asymmetrical' dualism (this idea is also to be found in Bateson's book: p.235).

While, as I said, the role of the moieties in ritual is complementary, or symmetrical, each one duplicating the functions of the other, the mythological detail surrounding them relates to a different aspect of Dualism, namely asymmetric dualism, or as Bateson calls it, 'diagonal' dualism in which the relationship of the two halves are defined by binary oppositions, relationships of inequality, rather than symmetry.

Earlier, I mentioned the fact that the primary origin myth -- in which humanity in general, the satuda or 'coconut-children' are believed to have come from an ancestral coconut palm growing at Iuvnugkebe -- is complemented by a variety of subsidiary origin myths of particular clans. This is relevant to the opposition between the moieties, since the basis of the moiety opposition in Umeda is expressed, in mythological terms, as an opposition between

the edtodna (male moiety) who come from the coconut, and claim Toagtod as their ancestor (smoked-meat-man) and the agwatodna (female moiety) who come from the naimo (Caryota) palm, a wild palm species growing in the bush, to be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Their ancestor is Naimotod, the 'bush' man, whose daughters married the edtodna ancestors, and are the ancestresses of the edtodna clans of Wehumda and Klalumda.

Seen in the light of the mythology associated with them the moieties are consistently asymmetrical: on the one hand stand the edtodna, male, associated with the culture-hero Toagtod, with the coconut palm, which, as I shall describe in detail below, is a symbol of 'culture' versus the agwatodna moiety, female, associated with the 'bush' man, Naimotod, with the Caryota palm (called 'wild sago' wailsaksak in Pidgin English) and with 'nature'. The society is seen as having been initiated by the transfer of Naimotod's daughters -- the first wives -- to the edtodna men. That is to say, the mythological history of Umeda starts with the 'alliance' between the male and female 'halves' of the society. The present day arrangement of the hamlets is seen as a reflection of this original alliance between complementary male and female groups (fig. 1):

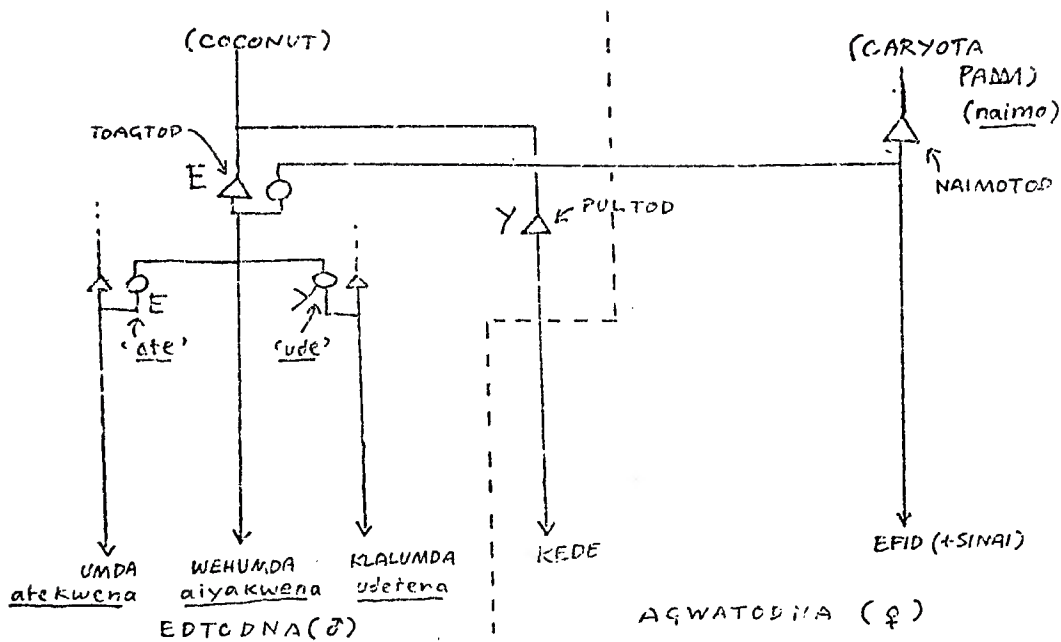


FIG 1. MYTHOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS OF UMEDA HAMLETS

Of the six Umeda hamlets, each moiety contains three. Wehumba hamlet is inhabited by the descendants of Toagtod and Naimotod's daughters. The other two edtodna hamlets descend from daughters' children of Naimotod. Wehumba are called the aiyakwena, in recognition that they descend from the 'father' (Aiya) i.e. Toagtod. Umeda are called the atekwena, which refers to the idea that they descend from the elder of the two daughters of Toagtod (ate = 'elder sibling') while Klalumda are called the udetena after the younger daughter (ude = 'younger sister'). Turning to the three agwatodna hamlets, Efid are the descendants of Naimotod himself, and Sinai are an offshoot of Efid (see below on hamlet-moieties section ix). Kedewaina is a composite hamlet. Waina are, as I have mentioned, immigrants from a different connubium (Imonda). Kede clan must be treated separately:

originally Kede were an edtodna clan: mythologically, they are the descendants of another culture hero, Pultod (Arecanut-man) the 'younger brother' of Toagtod, the edtodna ancestor. Their present status as an agwatodna clan hamlet must be explained in terms of historical circumstances.

(b) Changes in the Composition of moieties

The 'plasticity' of New Guinea kinship groups has attracted a good deal of attention in the past decade. (Kaberry 1967). This is usually discussed in terms of clan membership i.e. it is common to find 'agnatic' clan units whose members prove, on examination of the genealogical record, to be diluted by a greater or lesser proportion of non-agnates whose membership of the clan in question is a matter of expediency, not pedigree. In the Umeda situation the agnatic units are not 'plastic' at all in this sense: there is no tendency to give 'fictive' agnatic status to attached or immigrant groups. On the other hand, the hamlet and village organisation is flexible: it is possible to make adjustments to these levels of organisation in response to changing circumstances, while the agnatic clans cannot be replenished by immigration. The moiety organisation is also open to manipulation: although moiety affiliation is ideally determined by clanship, whole clans can change their status in this regard and in cases where clans have segmented, the moiety affiliations of the separate segments will be determined by the moiety affiliation of the hamlets where the segments go

to live subsequently.

The most dramatic instance of this has been the re-classification of Kede clan as agwatodna after having been previously an edtodna clan. This wholesale re-classification took place in response to the serious decline in numbers of the main agwatodna group, Efid: now still the smallest of the hamlets. The imbalance in numbers between edtodna and agwatodna threatened the proper performance of rituals. Since each role (and there are many roles) has to be duplicated by both moieties: in the absence of a sufficient number of agwatodna actors, this becomes impossible. The reclassification of Kede took place some generations back: how many, I cannot tell. Either at the same time, or later, Sinai clan, which had become an edtodna clan after splitting off from Efid (possibly as a result of becoming associated with the edtodanwa hamlet, Wehumda), was also re-classified as agwatodna.

These are instances of the reclassification of whole hamlets, as a result of the exigencies of the ritual system, which demands a certain degree of equilibrium between numbers in the moieties. It is also possible to find instances in which not whole hamlets, but clans or sub-clans have changed affiliation as a result of migration. Thus Waina clan were edtodna before they made their move to Kedewaina hamlet since when they have been agwatodna. A later offshoot of Kede clan, Kedewaba, now residing at Wehumda, is edtodna despite the acknowledged fact that in terms of clanship



Kedewaba belongs with (agwatodna) Kede. Two segments of Unid clan live in Kedewaina and Umda hamlets: the Umda-unid are edtodna, the Kedewaina Unid are agwatodna -- and so forth. Thus, although the moieties are descent groups of a kind, in that they are loosely associated with founding ancestors and it is normal for moiety affiliation to be determined by agnatic clan membership, flexibility exists for hamlets, whole clans or parts of clans, or even individuals, to change their membership, either by re-classification, in the case of hamlets, or by a change in hamlet affiliation in the case of immigrant clans or sub-clans. Movements of a temporary kind did not result in a change of moiety status however. Namos, a man of Wehumda, who lived for some time at Sinai hamlet, did not change his moiety: he danced as an edtodna in spite of his temporary residence in Sinai (agwatodna). Later he moved back to his original hamlet. Only in a case such as this is it possible for members of different village moieties to be resident in the same hamlet.

(c) The historical relationship of the village moieties

The moiety organisation has a discernible historical basis in the process of village formation. Waina-Sowanda villages, Umeda included, are collections of hamlets. The composition of villages, though relatively stable, is not absolutely so. The villages have come into being by a process of accretion. The means whereby this accretion is achieved is matrilinear alliance relationships between agnatic units (clans). I must emphasise this fact: Umeda and the other villages have not come into being through the

proliferation of segmentary units but by the forming of associations between agnatic clans conceived as existing independently of one another. There is no genealogical 'charter' -- even a mythic one -- according to which the various agnatic clan units that I have mentioned (e.g. Umda, Klalumda, Kede, Waina, Efid etc. ) can be fitted together to form a paradigm of a segmentary unilineal descent group structure. For example, to take the three edtodna groups Wehumda, Umda and Klalumda; it is not asserted that the aiyakwena group, Wehumda, (cf. above, p. 74 ) is the 'father' of the other edtodna clans. Implicitly, Wehumda, Umda and Klalumda have always co-existed as clan units. Similarly, Kede clan is believed to have sprung from Pul-tod, the younger brother of Toagtod, the aiyakwena ancestor, but this does not imply, in the minds of the people, that Kede is a genealogically related clan to Wehumda. The myth, is not concerned with establishing putative agnatic links as a charter for 'amity' between the groups concerned: it is concerned, rather, with furnishing a model for a society based on exchange relationships (the original agwatodna/edtodna exchange) between independent units.

In the mythical representation, the significant groups are the edtodna clans, and Efid, the original agwatodna clan: these are considered to have been the 'original' component units of the society. If one then turns to the situation on the ground, an interesting phenomenon emerges: it is the edtodna clans in whose territory the village ridge itself is sited: while the territory of the

agwatodna clans is to the north and east of the village ridge, extending to the Awsis, the northern limit of Umeda territory. The village itself, it will be noted, is named Umeda, after the edtodna clans, whose territory surrounds it (the same goes for Punda -- the village is named after the main edtodna clan, the clan in whose territory the village itself is sited). Thus the village as a whole can be seen as a confederation ~~between~~ a group of 'original' or 'owner' clans: the clans of the edtodna moiety, and 'peripheral' clans, that is clans who have been integrated into the village confederation through marriage alliance. The territory of these (agwatodna) clans, lies off the main village ridge: towards the Awsis in the case of Efid, or, in the case of another agwatodna clan, Waina, to the ~~south~~<sup>north</sup> and east, towards Imonda. In fact, Waina clan is very much a case in point for this whole argument. Waina, it will be remembered, lived, at one time, in an independent clan-hamlet of their own at Nissankebe, to the ~~south~~<sup>north</sup> east. When they were an independent clan, Waina informants told me, they held their ritual on their own, at Nissankebe, and for that purpose, they were divided into edtodna and agwatodna moieties, the main Waina clan being edtodna, an attached subclan (Hodedtod) now represented in Umeda by the family of Wiye, the ex-luluai, being agwatodna. Speaking in general terms, they said 'we used to be edtodna when we lived at Nissankebe'. That is to say, when Waina were centred on Nissankebe, in their own territory, they were edtodna. Now, following their

collapse in numbers and their retreat to the Umeda ridge, where they now share a hamlet with Kede clan, they have become agwatodna, that is, from being 'owners' they have become 'immigrants' and their moiety affiliation has changed, accordingly, from edtodna to agwatodna. I would argue that this particular instance shows, in a microcosm, the general processes underlying village formation in the region, though the historical detail is difficult to piece together. The elementary units entering into the process of formation are the small agnatic clans and subclans. In a later section of this chapter I will discuss the way in which these subclans combine to form hamlets -- which generally contain more than one such subclan unit. The hamlets, in turn, combine to form villages. The basis upon which this combination, or confederation of hamlets takes place is not the existence of supposed agnatic linkages between them -- though these agnatic linkages may be recognised -- but as a consequence of alliance relationships established by marriage exchange. Clans, having become allied through marriage, may take up residence together -- forming a composite hamlet -- or, on a larger scale, establish a village consisting of a confederation of hamlets sited on a village-ridge. The confederation of hamlets is essentially asymmetrical in any instance: certain clans being the original inhabitants of the site in question, the others being 'outsider' clans who have chosen to migrate thither, generally as a consequence of the break-up of whatever unit they previously owed allegiance to, by reason of military defeat, internal quarrels, or



demographic decline. The 'insider' clans will form the edtodna (male) moiety: the 'immigrant' clans the agwatodna (female) moiety.

The historical reasons which were responsible for the original migration of Efid clan from their territory to the north, to their present hamlet site in Umda territory are not remembered. Instead, we have the mythical opposition of Toagtod (edtodna) and Naimotod (agwatodna), the Coconut and the Wild Sago Palm. In symbolic language, this myth is 'saying' something about the social processes underlying the formation of the village which is fully compatible with the picture outlined in the previous paragraph. Toagtod, the 'original' ancestor, is associated both with the central village ridge (on which Iuvnugkebe, the supposed site of the coconut from which he emerged is also situated) and with the coconut palm, which, in terms of Umda culture, is the symbol of agnatic continuity, i.e. the continuity of the agnatic clan hamlet site whose distinguishing feature is always the coconut palms which grow there (see Chapter 3). Opposed to Toagtod is Naimotod, the archetypal 'outsider' -- the 'bush' man, associated with the Wild Sago Palm, rather than the 'Cultural' coconut palm, whose integration into the village society is effected through a transfer of women. Thus, the myth posits a society based on the union of complementaries: nature and culture, insiders and outsiders, wife-receiver and wife-givers, agnatic continuity and matrilateral alliance. This may seem, at present, a somewhat large and nebulous claim to make, but I hope that, as more material touching these points is introduced in



subsequent sections of this chapter, it will appear less so. For the present, I am mainly concerned to establish the basic characteristics of the village moiety organisation, which, I argue, is a hypostatisation of the process whereby the villages have come into being through the accretion of allied clans.

We can see this process in action, not only in Umeda, but also in Punda and Sowanda. The two agwatodna hamlets in Punda, Kebenai and Pobonai are both groups known to be of immigrant origin. Pobonai is an offshoot of Efid, Kebenai of Umda. Turning to Sowanda, one finds that the agwatodna hamlets, of which the largest is Namosid (cf. above) occupy sites away from the ridge on which the edtodna hamlets are sited, and are also immigrants (Namosid) or associated with the Sowanda equivalent of Naimotod. In the last of the Waina-Sowanda villages, Waina-Wyalla, the situation is rather different. Waina<sup>1</sup> (edtodna) is about half an hour's walk from the agwatodna hamlet, Wyalla, both hamlets being sited in their 'own' bush. I have no information about Wyalla's origins.

#### (d) Moieties and Exogamy

It will naturally be asked whether the moieties, founded, as they are, on the idea of marriage exchange, are in fact exogamous. In this respect the situation varies from village to village.

1. Once again, the reader must be warned against confusing Waina clan (now part of Kedewaina hamlet) with Waina village, which has the same name, but is not connected in any way to the former.

In Umeda, the agwatodna moiety is exogamous: Kedewaina, Efid, and Sinai, do not exchange women. In only one case, a non-exchange marriage between Sinai and Kedewaina, has this exogamy been violated, and this marriage is regarded by the people as 'wrong'. However, this is not necessarily as a result of a rule of moiety exogamy, since turning to the edtodna moiety, it is apparent that marriage exchanges have been taking place between edtodna hamlets for as many generations as are preserved in the genealogical record (that is six generations or so). The most numerous of such marriages have been between Klalumda and Wehumda. A Klalumda informant told me that these marriages were technically wrong, and that ideally Wehumda and Klalumda should not marry. He put these marriages down to the lust of the Wehumda men (despite the fact that the transactions had been reciprocal) -- and he also underestimated the number of generations during which there had been a precedent for such marriages. It was generally accepted that the edtodna moiety was not exogamous: being the larger moiety in absolute numbers, demographic pressures were the stronger in militating against the preservation of moiety exogamy in the case of the edtodna moiety, than in the case of the agwatodna moiety. Turning to Punda, I found no moiety exogamy rules, nor any idea that there should be any, and the Punda situation was repeated in Sowanda. In Waina-Wyalla the situation was the same as in Umeda: agwatodna (Wyalla) were exogamous, while there was some marriage within the edtodna moiety.

Thus, the situation varies; in two villages there

was not even a recognition of ideal moiety exogamy, whereas in Umeda there was at least some recognition of the principle of moiety exogamy, but considerable divergences from it in practice, particularly where demographic factors favoured some degree of moiety endogamy.

In either case, whether or not there is some recognition of moiety exogamy, it remains true that the fundamental units for marriage exchange, are not the moieties, but the constituent hamlets. When, in a later section, I come to look at the pattern of marriage in more detail, it will be seen that moiety exogamy is irrelevant to the interpretation of the actual pattern of alliance relationships. Where moiety exogamy is invoked, I am inclined to see this as an ex post facto generalisation of an alliance situation which has actually come about in response to different factors i.e. the history of alliance relationships between the individual hamlets. Sometimes it is possible to refer this actual situation to the mythic standard provided by the moiety organisation, but this standard has not provided a 'rule' which has been responsible, either in the past, or at the present, for the formation of alliances.

#### (e) Symmetry and Asymmetry

Let me conclude by reminding the reader of a point made earlier on, namely, that in practice the moieties are equal and symmetrical. No extra social prestige or status advantage attaches to the edtodna moiety, though some inequality might have been expected between the 'original' clans versus the immigrants. The asymmetry in the relation

of the moieties is not apparent at the level of praxis: its expression is confined to the myth which opposes Toagtod to Naimotod, the coconut to the Wild Sago Palm. The asymmetry is also expressed in the names of the moieties: respectively, 'of the men' and, 'of the women' (the fundamental asymmetry, one might say). This, at first sight, seems rather a paradoxical situation. The first point to be made here is that moieties only become action-groups in ritual i.e. expressive, contexts: they are 'expressive' groups rather than groups with an instrumental role. They have no corporate attributes, as do the hamlets or clans, they do not determine control over resources. Their real 'function' is to render intelligible the principles upon which the society is based, by giving symbolic expression to the structure of alliances between independent agnatic clan hamlets. This they achieve by reflecting at the 'macrocosmic' level, the alliance relationships which bind groups together at the level of the microcosm. (Meanwhile, the actual alliance relationships of particular clans may run counter, and frequently do, to the ideal alliance relationship, postulated in the agwatodna/edtodna moiety organisation.)

The moiety organisation, making possible the conceptualisation of the total society as a single relationship of alliance between opposed halves, bears comparison to the frequently encountered device whereby those societies characterised by a ramifying system of unilineal descent groups, create for themselves (fictitious) genealogies which stand as a charter both for their internal divisions and



overall unity in the face of segments of like order. The structural fictions employed are different in either case, but the purposes to which they are put are fundamentally analogous. As has been stated already, agnatic units in Umeda do not fit together to form nested homologous segments: genealogies are short, and agnatic units of higher order than the localised clan are not recognised. One does not find, in the Umeda situation, anything that can be compared to the segmentary unilineal descent groups that have been found in the highlands of New Guinea (e.g. Meggitt 1965), still less anything which would remind one of the Tallensi (Fortes 1945) or the Tiv (Bohannan and Bohannan 1953) or the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940a, b) -- the classic African examples of societies with segmentary descent systems. In all these instances, the crucial relationship upon which the whole structure is based is that between siblings, particularly male siblings. Marriage, as Fortes has put it, plays a part in the structure only inasmuch as it can provide 'a complex scheme of individuation' (Fortes 1953, p.33). Fortes' views on marriage have been contested (Leach 1961, p.10) but for the present I would be prepared to accept them simply for the purposes of making the contrast I wish to make between 'unilineal descent group' societies, and a society such as Umeda. In the latter case, though the relation between brothers is important, it is less crucial, structurally, than the relation between brother and sister, between cross-sex siblings. In this situation, marriage is not a purely individual matter, but a bond between men, of great



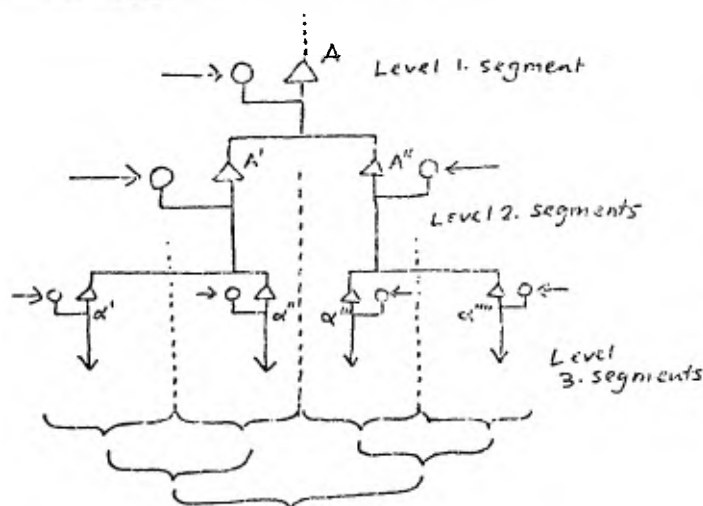
significance to the society at large, a bond which is established through the exchange of sisters. The relationships established through marriage are not only thought of as an acquisition of the groups as a whole, they are also considered as permanent relationships, which will continue, not only for the period during which the marriage continues to exist, but also for as many subsequent generations as are considered socially relevant. I will return to this point elsewhere (section vi b).

In the Umeda situation, the relationships set up by marriage alliance can take on the same 'immemorial' quality as might be attached, under other circumstances, to relationships posited in the upper reaches of the genealogies of segmentary systems. Instead of using the language of 'descent constructs' -- to use the label given to them by Scheffler (1966) to express these structural features of the total society, Umeda uses the language of what might be called 'alliance constructs' instead, i.e. a language of relationship which is an extrapolation, not from the fraternal or sororal sibling group, but of the relationship of allies, the relationship set up between partners in marital exchange.

At a conceptual level, the moiety organisation and its associated mythology is a construct which expresses certain basic complementarities in the sociological universe of the 'typical' male ego. From this point of view it is immaterial whether ego is a member of the edtodna or of the agwatodna moiety: whichever is the case, he must conceptualise his social world as polarised by a basic opposition between

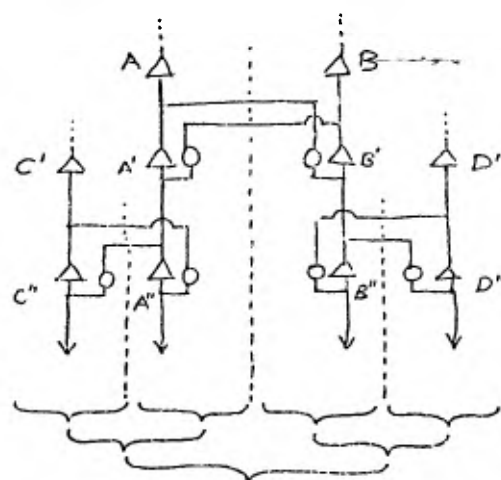
the agnatic group with whom he shares a hamlet, and those 'outsider' groups with whom he exchanges women. It is this fundamental opposition between centre and periphery, mediated by exchange, which is expressed, not ego-centrally, but socio-centrally in the moiety organisation. The conceptual 'asymmetry' in the relationship of the moieties derives from the fact that the opposition between them is founded, ultimately, on the asymmetry in the relation between the male ego, occupying the central focus of an ego-centric social field, and the alter with whom he establishes relationships, either of a positive or negative kind. When given expression in ritual action, however, this conceptually asymmetric relation (ego/alter, in-group/out group ...) is rephrased as a symmetric opposition of identical and equal halves of the total society.

I will return to these themes frequently in the course of this thesis. The point which I would stress at this juncture is the contrast between the structuring of society via 'alliance constructs' as opposed to 'descent constructs'. The distinction can be expressed in diagram form:



A.

DESCENT-CONSTRUCT



B.

'ALLIANCE'-CONSTRUCT

Fig. 2 A shows the typical model of nested homologous segments linked by relations (real, or merely putative) between same-sex siblings. Marriage is not a structurally relevant feature here. Fig. 2 B shows a model based on 'alliance constructs'; here, the crucial lateral bonds are relations of cross-sex siblings, combined with marriage exchange. I have no wish to argue for the absolute merits of either model -- I merely wish to establish that the 'alliance-construct' model is better adapted to the Umeda situation. This is not to say that it does not have its problematic aspects; in particular, it is difficult to see how, in the absence of a rule of preferred marriage, a model based on alliance constructs can provide a truly stable structural paradigm for a society. This problem will be taken up below.

#### v. Bush associations

At this point, it is necessary, more for the sake of completeness than anything else, to mention another form of social grouping found in the area, not a ritual group this time, like the moieties, but a purely secular form of association.

The distinguishing feature of bush associations -- as I call them: they have no native name -- is, that the members of one such association are familiar with the topography of the territory of the whole association. Hamlets which form a bush association together are, to use a pidgin expression wanbus (one bush); this does not detract from the fact that each hamlet has a separate territory, it merely means that members of a particular hamlet are

used to moving about in the territory of the other hamlets in the association, particularly the areas which abut onto the territory of a man's own natal hamlet.

The hamlets grouped together in this way are:

1. Kedewaina, Efid, Sinai
2. Klalumda, Umda
3. Wehumda, Namosid (Sowanda) Asila (Punda)

It will be seen that, in the case of group 3 this form of association may cut across village and connubium lines. In this instance, the three hamlets concerned, all of which are rather populous by local standards, are situated relatively close together. The territory wherein they share an interest is situated on the confluence of the Anwa and Uda rivers (Map 2), an area much used for gardening, and also good for hunting in, since pigs tend to be attracted into the garden areas. Although certain trees are pointed out as markers of accepted territorial boundaries in this area, it was apparent that some gardens were made in areas not forming part of the territory of the natal hamlet of the garden-makers. One garden was specifically pointed out by some rather angry men of Wehumda as being so far inside their territory as to have constituted, in days gone by, a matter for fighting over (it was a Sowanda garden). On the whole, though, it seemed that Wehumdas and Sowandas who cultivated cheek-by-jowl in this intensively exploited bush area enjoyed excellent relations.

The anomalous position of Wehumda, in respect of its close association with Sowanda and Punda groups may be the result of a migration of this particular group westward:

they now occupy a site on the extreme western end of the Umeda village ridge. This movement is said to have taken place when a lake, which originally inundated that part of the bush, was drained, apparently by the Wehumda ancestors. Before that, they may have been more closely associated than they are now with the other edtodna hamlets, Umda and Klalumda, who today form a bush association together.

Bush association between Waina (clan) now for most purposes amalgamated with Kede and the Kede/Efid/Sinai bush association still persists with Imonda, a relic of the days when the Wainas still occupied their site at Nissankebe. The collaboration between Wiye of Waina and Amos of Imonda in hunting (above p.57) is a typical instance of the practical significance of bush association.

The assertion that members of a common bush association have 'one bush' should not be taken too literally. Each hamlet possesses a clearly defined territory and for the most part all their activities, gardening, sago-working, and hunting, are confined to it. The areas outside ego's hamlet territory but within the range of his bush association are a kind of penumbra surrounding his own territory within which he feels moderately at home, as much from mystical danger as from physical assault -- since fighting could take place between members of the same bush association. It is the area within which visits take place, garden help may be exchanged, quarry may be tracked, etc.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that if Wehumda is left out of account, for the reasons just given, then there is a correspondence between moiety organisation and



bush associations: all the agwatodna hamlets form one association, the edtodna hamlets, minus Wehumda, the other. This arrangement lends support to the view, expressed above, that the moiety organisation reflects the coalescence of territorially discrete groups engaging in marital exchange.

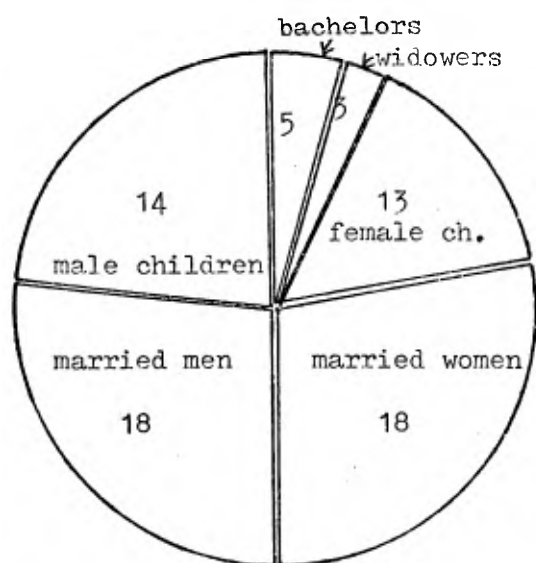
vi. The hamlet

(a) Hamlet and clan

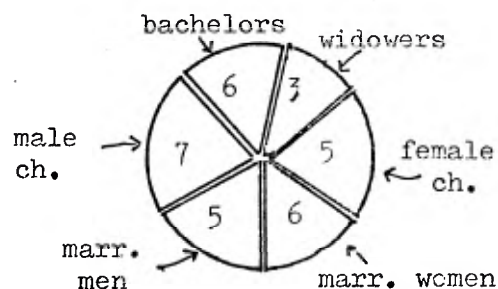
The hamlet is the most obvious, the most physically discrete, the most frequently\*referred-to organisational unit. Its physical appearance has been described; a roughly circular or oblong plaza surrounded by the familial huts of the inhabitants, sited on a ridge-top and surrounded by coconut palms.

Hamlets may vary considerably in size. The 'pie-diagrams' (Fig. 3) show the social composition of the six hamlets which make up Umeda village. Each hamlet is a residential group, comprising one or more clans or parts of clans (sub-clans). It is exogamous, and also corporate, in that the territory of the component clans is exploited in common by all of them. It is also a ritual unit, and is divided into moieties (see below, section ix).

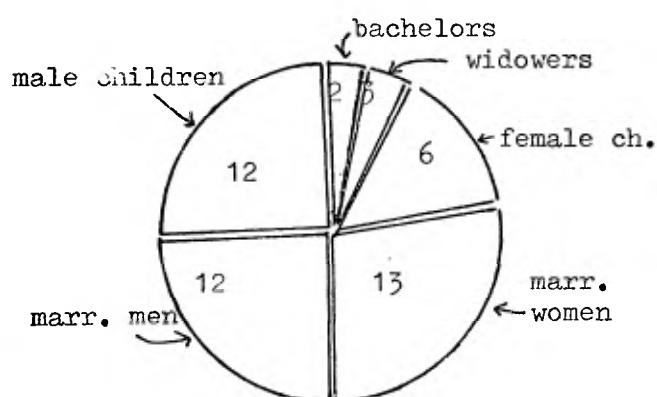
Hamlets may be known either by the name of the founding clan (e.g. Umda, Kedewaina) or, alternatively, by the name of the site on which they are built, e.g. Umda=Siaiikebe 'The place by Siai water', Klalumda=Yatunekebe 'The place of the garden shelter' (Yatuye) -- and so on. Here I use clan-names only. Where the hamlet-designation used is that of the founding clan, the distinctions of clanship are



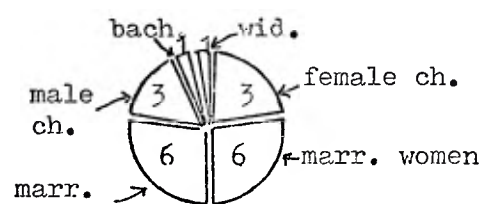
Wehumda (total pop. 68 )



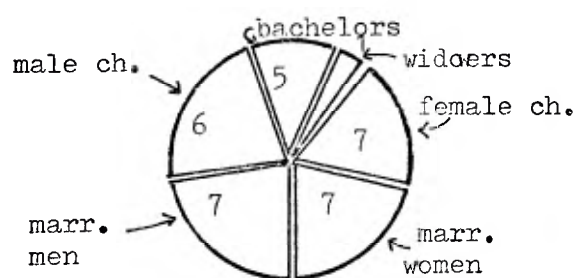
Umda (total pop. 32)



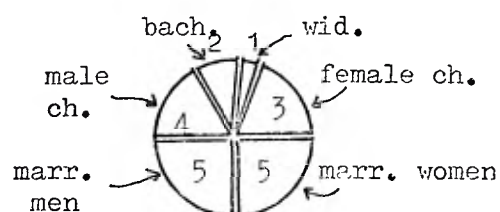
Kedewaina (total pop. 47 )



Sinai (total pop. 20)



Klalumda (total pop. 33)



Efid (total pop. 20)

Fig. 3 THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE SIX UMDA HAMLETS

ignored when speaking of the occupants of a particular hamlet. Thus the designation umda-tod may refer to all the occupants of Umda hamlet, including those who are not actually members of Umda clan. If it is necessary to be more specific a double-barrelled designation will be used, thus umda-unid 'men of Unid clan living in Umda' (as opposed to kede-unid 'men of unid living in Kede' or Klalumda-umda 'men of Umda (clan) living in Klalumda, and so on.

The relation between clanship and hamlet membership raises some rather difficult issues. It is necessary to decide, first of all, whether the social units which engage in marriage exchange are the hamlets or the component clans, where a hamlet has composite clan membership. Secondly, it must be asked whether, in the long run, the separate clans within a single hamlet become amalgamated, so that distinction of clanship is lost.

The difficulty arises because the people themselves talk about their society in terms of hamlets: only a much more detailed investigation of social relationships brings to light the distinctions of clanship within the overall framework provided by the hamlets. Because the people themselves talk mainly in terms of hamlets, as the basic exchanging units of the society, I have on the whole followed them in this myself. Fig. 4 'Coconut Compatibilities' shows the alliance pattern in terms of hamlets: this follows from the fact that my informant (Mada of Kedewaina) outlined the pattern of alliance using this idiom. To describe the society in terms of alliance relationships

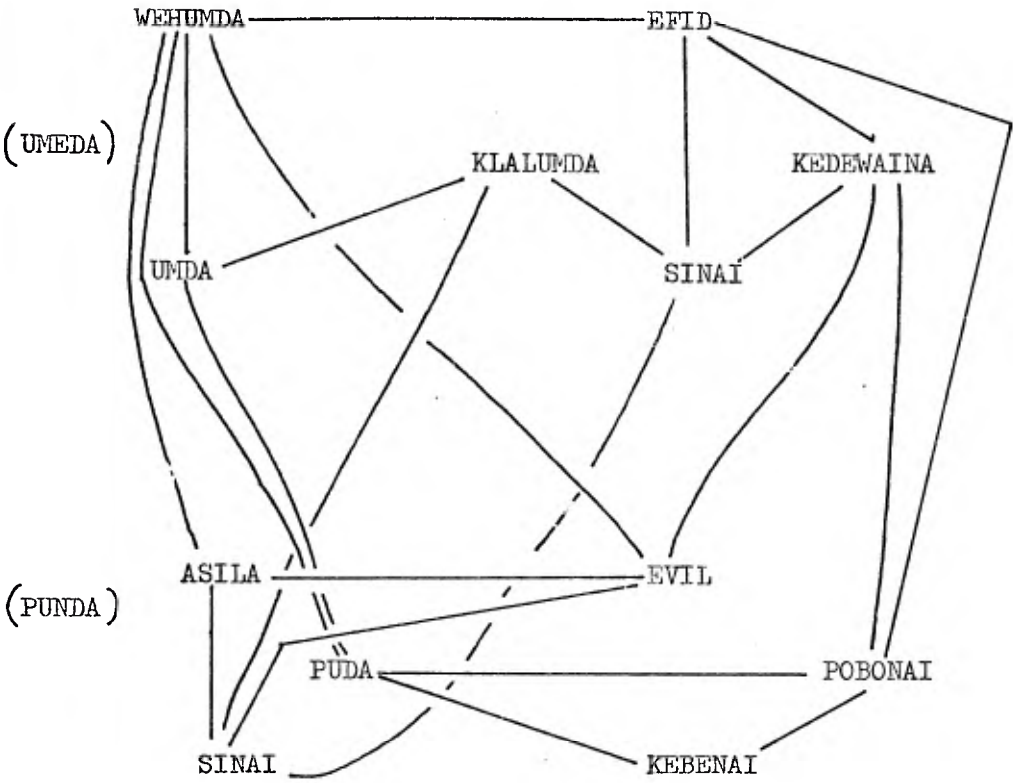


FIG.4 'COCONUT' COMPATIBILITIES'

between hamlets has the advantage of being a convenient short-hand way of describing social reality. It is, moreover, more-or-less accurate: the hamlets can be treated as units for marriage and alliance. But it must be emphasised that the hamlet is a residential unit, not a kinship group, though co-residence has an influence on the maintenance of kinship relations between allied clans, as I will describe. The basic unit for marriage exchange is not the hamlet but the clan and to describe the situation in terms of alliance relationships between hamlets, as I shall, is a convenient, but not strictly accurate procedure. It might be objected that the hamlet is clearly a kinship group of a kind, in that it is rigidly exogamous. However, clans are also exogamous, even when a clan is divided into sub-clans living in different hamlets. The taboo on marriage between different clans occupying a single hamlet can be interpreted as a result of the taboo on marriage between allies (below section iv) i.e. clans occupying a single hamlet do not intermarry because they are in a relation of 'perpetual alliance', not because the hamlet, per se is an exogamous unit.

Next, I must say something about the second problem, i.e. whether, in the long term, distinctions of clanship within the hamlet are lost: because local usage tends to treat hamlets as undifferentiated units, do they, over time, actually become undifferentiated? This would be a natural thing to suppose on the basis of, say, Meggitt's material on the Mae-Enga on the Central Highlands. (Meggitt 1965, pp. 54-84). Meggitt found that after a lapse of



three generations immigrant 'quasi-agnates' -- attached members of agnatic clans -- became indistinguishable from the original stock, genealogies of the group being modified to accord with this situation.

Nothing of this nature seemed to be taking place in Umeda: no matter how fragmented, the separate sub-clan or clan units in a hamlet showed no tendency to merge together. There was no assimilation of immigrants into the agnatic descent group of those with whom they found refuge. One 'clan' for instance, Wehumda-ubanid, consists of one adult man only, others consist of only two or three. Yet Wehumda-ubanid does not disappear, despite the fact of its having been attached clan in Wehumda for many generations. Not only does Wehumda-ubanid retain its separate identity, it is still recalled that Ubanid is an offshoot of Kede clan -- though how long ago it broke away is quite impossible to say. This means that Kede treats Wehumda-ubanid as an agnatically-related group, which precludes hostility between them, and also marriage exchange, although Kede and Wehumda are otherwise considered groups which exchange women. This striking persistence of the social identity of separate clans within the hamlet, and the recognition of clanship-links across hamlet lines after the lapse of generations contrasts strongly with the 'fluidity' or 'plasticity' which is frequently pointed out as a feature of descent groups in New Guinea. How is the persistence of clanship to be explained? I would argue that this comes about as a natural consequence of the

contrast, made above between societies whose structural paradigms are based on 'descent constructs' and 'alliance constructs' respectively; in the former case, of which the Enga provide an example, clanship is the basic idiom for expressing the status quo, the actual disposition of people on the ground, and moreover, it is the clans which are the territorial and political units. Where this is the case, the tendency will always be towards making clanship, in the last resort, a 'porous' classificatory scheme, even though, as Meggitt himself stresses, where the clans control genuinely scarce resources, the tendency will be for this flexibility in the definition of agnatic relationship to be reduced (Meggitt 1965 : 260, 282).

Turning to Umeda one finds a very different situation: the idiom of territorial rights and political action is the hamlet; the internal structure of the hamlet, and its external relationships with other hamlets, are both based on alliance. A clan by itself is nothing, in political action the group which is mobilised is an alliance of a number of clans. Clans never acted alone -- in fact, clans could not act alone since the demands of the kinship system would not permit them to act without the participation of their allies: the stake which a particular clan has in its allied clans, having been established by an exchange of women, is absolute in its demands: the solidarity between cross-cousins, or between mother's brother and sister's sons is as inescapable as that between full brothers.

Because the clan was not the territorial or political action-group, there was no motive for assimilating outsiders into it. The processes whereby outsiders were assimilated into the political group are, as I have said, and will show further below, the creation of 'perpetual' alliance relations.

This is not to say that clanship or descent were not important in the Umeda situation compared with Enga. 'Alliance' of the kind found among Umeda clans, can only take place among descent units of some kind: where the difference lies is in the type of descent groups involved. In both cases the vertical continuity of the clan, from father to son, defines the basic axis of social continuity: the difference lies, as I have said before, in the relative weight given to two possible forms of horizontal relationships: between same-sex siblings in the case of a society based on segmentary descent groups, such as the Enga, cross-sex siblings in the case of an 'alliance' society such as Umeda. In Umeda, the significance of agnation was confined, more or less, to the vertical axis; it defined the smallest local units who might enter into alliances with other such units. Clans (or rather sub-clans) were 'local lines' very much in the sense defined by Leach (1961 : 57). The fact that such 'local lines' might proliferate, break up, form offshoots in different localities and so forth was rather insignificant: the only agnatic unit relevant to ego was the strictly local sub-clan. Outside the range of this agnatic unit, the

important relationships, so far as ego is concerned, are those based on alliance relationships. Hence, in Umeda, one finds no attempt to create grandiose genealogical classifications, specifying an hierarchy of lineage, clan, or phratry ancestors by means of which social relations with surrounding groups may be legitimised. Clan and sub-clan genealogies tapered off after two or three generations, and never exceeded six generations or so. Umedas were content to think that the clans had always existed, and had always been independent of one another, exchanging women and forming alliances. Clanship was not forgotten because it provided the vertical axis of the system of alliance: on the other hand, it was not manipulated or made into a charter for political relationships because the political action group was not the clan on its own, but always an alliance of clans.

(b) The pattern of alliance between hamlets

In the relationships between hamlets, there are two basic possibilities: they may be in a state of mutual marriageability, which also means a state of potential mutual hostility, or they may be in a condition of alliance, which excludes the possibility both of further marriage between them, and also of hostility between them; while allies' enemies are in common.

The idiom in which informants discuss alliance is a ritual idiom: the idiom which I have called 'Coconut compatibility'. (Fig. 4). That is to say, alliance relationships are in existence when the hamlets concerned can wear each other's masks (made of coconut fibre) at

rituals. Wearing a mask made of the coconut fibre belonging to a marriageable group would be unthinkable, besides, it is believed that it would result in immediate illness. Another expression, of a related kind, which is used to refer to the existence of an alliance relationship is to say 'we can eat the sago of such-and-such a group': this is actually an euphemism for wearing the masks belonging to that group, which is used when there are women and children about -- who are not supposed to have any insight into the existence of such things as coconut-fibre masks. Actually, Umedas will eat the sago of potentially marriageable groups, on occasion.

This particular idiom -- i.e. coconut compatibility -- is employed because it is in ritual, above all, that the relation of allied groups comes to the fore, and is given public expression. The interchange of ritual masks between allied groups is the most potent symbolic marker of their social identification. Fig. 4 shows the relationships of 'coconut compatibility' in Umeda and Punda.

This gives a synoptic picture of the total society, and though it is inaccurate in certain instances, it is, broadly speaking a faithful picture of the actual state of affairs between the hamlets. What is interesting though is that the informant who listed the relationships for me (Mada) spoke of this particular pattern of coconut compatibilities as something permanent, an immemorial and traditional arrangement, like the village moieties. This propensity to think of the pattern of alliance relationships (i.e. coconut compatibilities), as fixed, unchanging,



permanent features of the social structure is, as I have emphasised before, a very characteristic feature of Umedas' thinking about their own society. Yet here is a paradox: such a stable pattern of alliance relationships can only be sustained, over a number of generations, by a system of preferential or prescriptive alliance (Needham, 1958 : 203-6; Fox 1967 : 209). But this, precisely, is what we do not find.

Before going on to look at this problem, I will look at the other side of the coin: if this is the pattern of alliance, what is the pattern of exchange, remembering that although alliance is the outcome of marriage exchanges having taken place in the past, actual marriage is permitted, not with allied groups, but with non-allies, the residual kinship category awk 'outsiders' 'non-kin' -- hostile un-related groups.

Table 1 categorises all the extant marriages in Umeda and Punda. Two categories are distinguished: exchange marriages, in which the gift of a wife has been reciprocated in kind between exchanging groups and non-exchange marriages (most commonly resulting from the remarriage of widows) in which no such reciprocation has been made. A total of 56 fall into the former category, 40 into the latter. In sister-exchange it is normal to find that real sisters (or half-sisters) have been exchanged. It was an acknowledged fact that a man without a sister would be hard put to it to find a wife. Where a non-exchange marriage takes place there is no compensatory payment by way of brideprice or the like to the wife giving group.

TABLE 1 .

## MARRIAGE AND ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE UMEDA-PUNDA CONNUBIUM.

|          | U M E D A |          |          |          |         |               | P U N D A |     |          |     |          |          | Total             |
|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|----------|----------|-------------------|
|          | Weh.      | Um.      | Kla.     | Ef.      | Sin.    | Ked.          | Pu        | Ev  | As       | si  | Pob      | Keb      |                   |
| WEHUMDA  |           | 1x       | 3x<br>1n |          | 1x      | 3x<br>1n      | 1x        | 1x  | 3x       |     | 1n       | 1x<br>1n | 14x<br>4n         |
| UMDA     |           | A        |          | A        |         | 3x            | A         | A   | A        |     | 1x<br>1n |          | 4x<br>2n          |
| KLALUMDA | A         |          | A        |          |         |               | A         |     | A        |     |          |          |                   |
| EFID     | 2x<br>1n  | A        |          | 2x       | 1x      |               |           |     |          | A   | 1n       | 2n       | 5x<br>4n          |
| SINAI    |           | 1x<br>1n | 2x<br>1n |          | A       | A             |           |     | 1x<br>1n |     | A        | 1x<br>1n | 5x<br>4n          |
| KEDE     | 1x<br>1n  | 1n       | 1x<br>1n | A        |         | A             |           |     |          | A   |          | 1x<br>1n | 3x<br>3n          |
|          | 3x<br>1n  | 3x       |          | A        | 1x<br>A |               |           |     | 2x<br>1n |     | 1n<br>1n | 1n<br>1n | 9x<br>4n          |
|          | P U N D A |          |          |          |         |               | U M E D A |     |          |     |          |          | Total             |
|          | Pu.       | Ev.      | As.      | Sin.     | Pob.    | Keb.          | Weh.      | Um. | Kla.     | Ef. | Sin.     | Ked.     |                   |
| PUNDA    |           |          | 3x<br>2n | 1x<br>2n | A       | A             | A         | A   |          |     |          |          | 4x<br>4n<br>(1n)* |
| EVIL     |           |          | 1n<br>A  | 1n<br>A  |         |               | 1x<br>A   |     |          |     |          | A        | 1x<br>2n<br>(1n)* |
| ASILA    | 2x<br>A   |          |          | 2x<br>A  | 1x      |               | 2x<br>A   | A   |          |     |          |          | 6x<br>(5n)*       |
| SINAI    |           |          | 1x       |          |         |               |           | 1x  |          |     |          |          | 2x<br>(2n)*       |
| POBONAI  |           | A        | A        |          |         |               |           |     | A        |     | A        |          |                   |
| KEBENAI  |           |          | 1n       | 1x       |         | 1x<br>1n<br>A | 1x        | 2x  |          |     |          |          | 5x<br>2n          |
|          | A         |          |          | 1x       | A       |               |           |     | A        |     | 1n       | 1x       | 2x<br>2n          |
|          | A         |          | 1n       |          | A       |               |           |     |          |     |          |          |                   |

x='exchange' marriage  
n='non-exchange' marriage  
A= Alliance relationship ('coconut compatibility').

Married women living in each hamlet are listed in the row opposite the name of that hamlet. The hamlets of origin of the women are listed by columns.

\* Bracketed figures refer to marriages outside the connubium.

To be sure, small gifts -- an axe, a pair of trousers (significantly, both items of foreign origin) were considered good form -- but it was never suggested that the motive of the wife-givers in such instances was the acquisition of such return gifts. On the contrary, the father or guardian of a girl given to a sisterless man would, my informants said, be actuated by motives of a purely social kind: he 'liked' the man, he 'marked' him ... i.e. he saw in him a desirable son-in-law.

I might add at this point, a remark about the 'orthodox' form of marriage, that is, direct sister-exchange, which is also the most common form of marriage. Because sister-exchange is 'orthodox' that does not mean it is the most desired form of marriage: on the contrary, marrying a widow, or still better, abducting the wife of another man, carried far more social prestige than tamely acquiring a wife through a reciprocal exchange. So little did some informants esteem the practice of acquiring a wife by sister-exchange that they told me that it had been introduced by the Dutch, to further the process of pacification. Before that, women were obtained by more ferocious means. I am certain that this is not true, and that the Dutch cannot be credited with this particular piece of social engineering. Of extant marriages in Umeda, only two are the result of abductions of married women. Sister-exchange is not a new practice, but it has, no doubt, become more important as a result of pacification, which, apart from anything else, has resulted in fewer

women remarrying after losing their husbands in fights, and presumably a lower male mortality altogether. I was consistently told that the age of marriage for girls was higher in the past than it is now, and the age of boys at marriage correspondingly lower. Perhaps this is only wishful thinking, though. At any rate, there is now very serious imbalance in the sex-ratios, as will be apparent from the 'pie-diagrams' showing the social composition of the Umeda hamlets.<sup>1</sup> This has resulted in a situation in which girls are officially 'married' at the age of 10-14 years (puberty coming at approximately 16-18 years) to youths between 18 and 23 years old. Not only are there many 'married' men in their twenties or even thirties whose wives have not yet reached puberty, there are also many youngish widowers. There are no adult unmarried women of any description, except one very old, twice-married widow who cannot live long and is past childbearing, and she remained unmarried by her own choice, not because no husband came forward. Under these circumstances marriage by sister-exchange, though it is a sure means of obtaining a wife, generally involves some disparity of age, of between five and ten years, between the husband and the wife: the female contemporaries of any male (even if he has a sister) generally having been married off before he is in a position to be able to get married himself. Hence the desirability of obtaining a widow, for in this case there is no tedious wait while the

1. On the causes and consequences of the process of 'masculinisation' in Saarmi, in West Irian, see Oosterwald 1959).

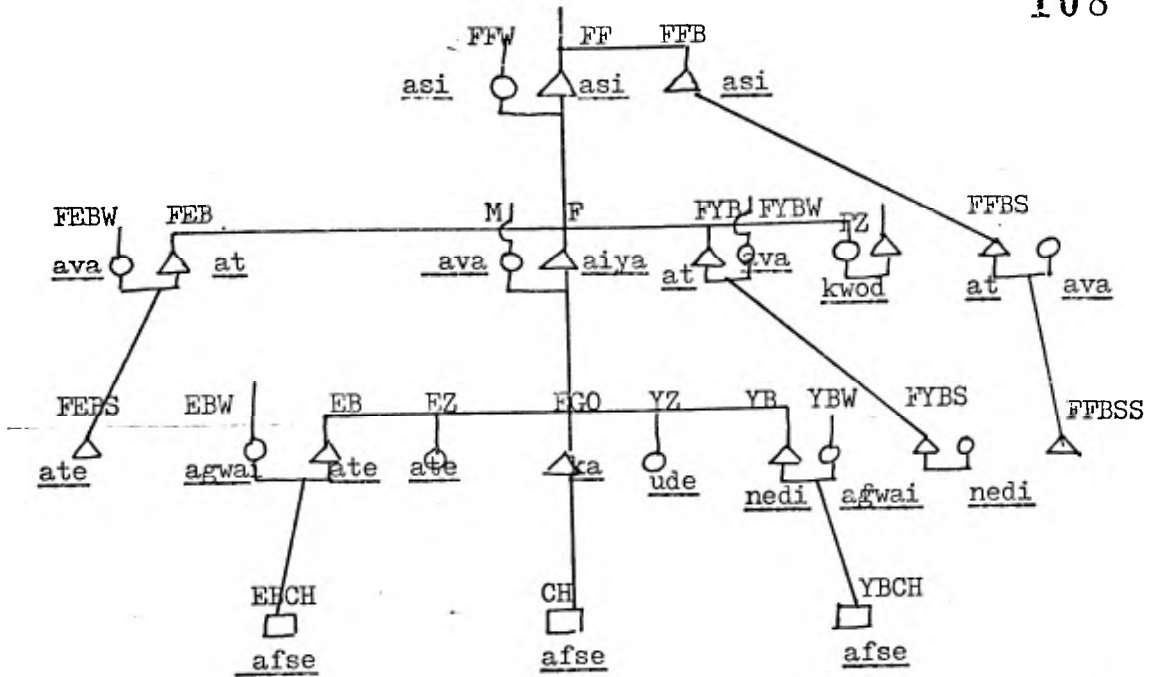
little girl, betrothed by sister exchange, grows up. Furthermore, while little girls are betrothed by their fathers or guardians, and have no say in the matter, widows can, and do, choose their subsequent husband, and they may even migrate between villages to give themselves to the man of their choice (a widower or bachelor normally). It is accepted that an exchange cannot be asked for a widow, who is an absolute gain to the group to whom she goes, though much persuasion is applied to make widows choose a new husband from her late spouse's group, or from an allied hamlet. Allied hamlets have a standing arrangement, sometimes, to exchange widows with one another. This is a way of being 'exchange partners' without actually breaking the restriction on direct exchange of women between allies. Such arrangements will founder if a widow shows any obstinacy, however. To capture the affections of a widow, a free woman, against the pressure of her affines, is a great coup.

However, to return to the picture presented by Table 1, it will be seen that though by no means all the marriages shown are legitimate in terms of the ideal scheme of coconut compatibilities between hamlets, the majority of marriages do conform (the proportions are 12 : 49 in Umeda, 12 : 28 in Punda). The two most prominent transgressors of the ideal scheme are the two largest hamlets in Umeda and Punda respectively, i.e. Wehumda (Umeda) and Asila (Punda). It will be appreciated that, as the largest hamlets, these groups are under some demographic constraint to spread their exchanges widely, since they would otherwise have some

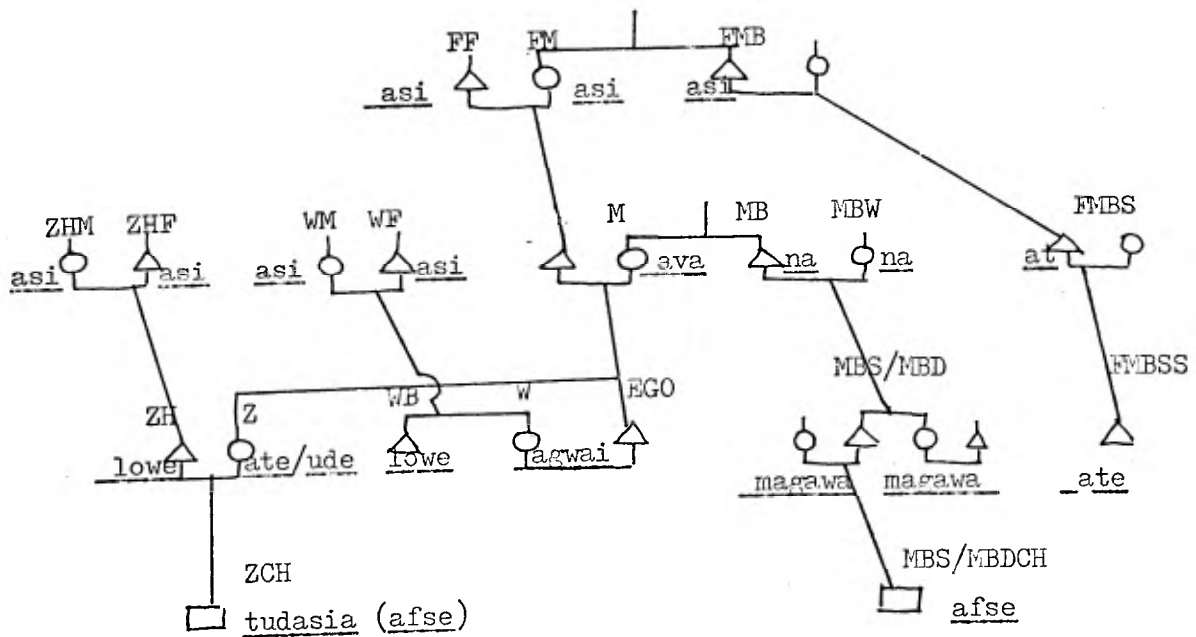


difficulty in finding wives at all. Moreover, relations between Asila and Wehumda are close at all times, because, as I pointed out in the previous section, these hamlets are part of a single bush association, close relationships which favour the exchange of women. Other divergences from the ideal scheme are the result of the fact that within each hamlet are usually to be found members of more than one clan, and differing clan affiliations may mean that separate clans within a hamlet are slightly differently situated, with respect to the ideal system of coconut compatibilities. Thus the marriages between Klalumda and Sinai, which otherwise run counter to the ideal scheme, involve a subclan within Klalumda, Klalumda-umda, who, having come from Umda, (who exchange women with Sinai) are not under the same constraints as the rest of Klalumda in this respect. On the whole, though the actual picture conforms fairly well with the ideal, at least so far as Umda is concerned.

Whatever is the case as regards divergences from the ideal scheme at the level of the hamlet, at the level of the clan it will be true that the social world is dichotomised into two main categories, namely, marriageables and non-marriageables, i.e. enemies and affines on the one hand (awk) and allies, on the other. But when we come to consider the kinship system in more detail, it is apparent that four major categories must be distinguished within this basic dichotomisation.



A. TERMS FOR LINEAL KIN AND THEIR SPOUSES.



B. TERMS FOR ALLIES AND AFFINES.

fig 5 . BASIC KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY.

vii. (a) The kinship system

Four basic categories are distinguished in the kinship system:

- i) Ego's own clan/hamlet group
- ii) The group(s) with whom ego could, or has, exchanged women in the present generation
- iii)= The group(s) with whom the generation senior to ego in his clan/hamlet have exchanged women (mother's brothers).
- iv) The matrikin of generations senior to the first ascending generation, mothers' brothers of past generations.

I will deal with these in turn.

- (i) Ego's own group (see Fig. 5a)

The clan and the hamlet are both exogamous units. Despite the distinctions of clanship within the hamlet, to be discussed further below, a single set of kinship terms is applied within the hamlet. Ego's genitor is called aiya 'father' -- this term is not applied to a foster-father or guardian, but only to the biological father. To refer to a foster father the term at is used. At, translated in pidgin as 'wasppapa' (foster-father, guardian) is applied to all men of the generation of ego's father within the hamlet. It is accepted that all the men of the father's generation are in loco parentis where ego is concerned: the senior generation has a generalised 'parental' role vis-a-vis the junior generation, which extends throughout the childhood of members of the junior

generation and into early adulthood, since social maturity and social autonomy are late acquisitions in Umeda -- a phenomenon widely reported in New Guinea.

Ego's mother, and all women of her generation married into the hamlet, are called ava (mother) -- this term is also extended to women of the senior generation outside the hamlet as well, except in the case of the father's sister, or sisters of men classified as at, who has a special term kwod. Where the father's sister = mother's brother's wife, as will be the case when an orthodox sister exchange has taken place, the father's sister will be referred to by the mother's brother term na, rather than the father's sister term kwod which has negative associations (see below Chapter 4, section xv : 3).

Ego distinguishes, within his own generation in his own hamlet his elder and younger real and classificatory siblings. Elder siblings of either sex are ate, younger brothers nedite, younger sisters ude. These terms are extended to cover classificatory siblings in ego's generation. Irrespective of chronological age ego's father's elder brother's children will be ego's elder siblings, and, conversely, ego's father's younger brother's children will be younger siblings of ego.

Also within ego's own generation within the hamlet are ego's own wife and the wives of his real or classificatory male siblings. These may be referred to as agwai (wife) without distinction. I noted above that members of a hamlet consider themselves to have to some extent

rights over all the in-married women in a hamlet, and that they attempt to exercise control over the destiny of widows of deceased members of the hamlet. There is no formal right of widow-inheritance, though it is common to find a widow married to a younger brother of her first husband. It very much depends on whether the widow had good relations with her husband's agnates prior to his death. The whole area of control over women, and widows particularly is a major internal source of social conflict. The supposedly widespread practice of adultery will be discussed below. Conflicts over women are adduced, for instance, as the cause of the dispersion of clans.

The terms applicable to members of the generation junior to ego within the hamlet are afse (child; either sex) and amoi daughter.

Persons separated from ego by more than one generation are referred to as asi, this term is used reciprocally between members of alternating generations. (I should add that all the terms listed so far can be used both for reference and address).

(ii) The marriageables (fig. 5b)

From the restricted group at the centre of ego's social world I turn to the residual category which lies on its periphery. Persons with whom direct or classificatory relationship are traced are classified as awk. This includes both groups within the connubium, whom ego may marry, and also those groups entirely outside the connubium i.e. Sowanda, Imonda, Walsa etc. These groups are commonly



dismissed as 'rubbish' nsok, a term which is etymologically related to awk. The prevailing attitude towards awk is a combination of hostility and fear: awk are the external enemies with whom ego fights, and, in the case of Pundas (if ego is an Umeda) -- whose sorcery he fears. Marriage with awk, of course, brings them within the social universe, and though affines are regarded with a more-or-less covert hostility (and are avoided), in the long run marriage transforms awk (enemies) into allies and friends. Within the category of awk, therefore, are ego's affines, who are referred to as agwavie (wife-people) or lowengai (brothers-in-law).

Ego's brother-in-law, and those of his siblings within the hamlet, are called lowe. (This term is used reciprocally, whether or not brothers-in-law have exchanged sister, or the transaction has been one-way only). Lowe also means 'shame' or 'embarrassment'. (See section xiib below for an account of affinal relations). The wife's father and mother, and members of their generation within her natal hamlet, are called asi (i.e. by the same term as is used between alternating generations).

(iii) Mother's brothers, cross-cousins (fig. 5b)

The term for mother's brother is na, and this term is extended to cover all the men of her generation within her natal hamlet. The mother's brother calls the sister's child tdasia ('garden-child'). The term na is extended to all those whom members of the father's generation call lowe (brother-in-law). The children of his na ego calls magawa (cross-cousins). Cross-cousins may not marry, but sexual relationships between them are said often to occur

and are even at a premium, like the technically incestuous relationship between clan siblings described by Malinowski (1929) in the Trobriand Islands, which, likewise confers special erotic prestige. The relationship of cross-cousins is a joking relationship very much of the kind first described and analysed by Radcliffe-Brown (1952 : 90), i.e. it combines, in a single relationship, elements of intimacy and social distance. However, I should add that joking is very much part of everyday social relations between generation-equals even where no special 'joking relation' is in existence: joking between cross-cousins is not, therefore very distinctive at a purely behavioural level. What is distinctive about the magawa-magawa relationship is the great ideological stress that is laid upon the joking aspect of the relationship; it is the joking which gives it its particular value, while this aspect is not stressed in the relation, say, between clan brothers, who do not have to joke when they meet. Besides which, magawa are looked upon as a source of frequent small gifts, tokens of friendship -- and also of distance. A certain amount of light is cast on the magawa relationship by the fact that it was the term most frequently extended to me, the foreign anthropologist, when it became necessary to give me some courtesy kinship appellation. It was indicative of friendship and social distance, reciprocal generosity in material things, and also a kind of latent absurdity in the situation: to apply the kinship term used between joking-partners, was, in itself, a joke.

## (iv) Allies of ascending generations

So far I have dealt with categories that are not at all difficult to define. The fourth category, while simple enough in principle, is much more ambiguous in practice than might appear at first sight. In fact, it is the flexibility of this particular social category which allows the system as a whole to function: i.e. it is because the class of what might be called 'residual' allies is ill-defined, that it is possible for Umedas to think and talk about the alliance structure of the society as something permanent, stable -- a paradigm of social relations in the abstract. It is in the definition of what constitutes a 'residual' allied group that manipulation of the system can occur: here is the functional analogue to the manipulation of genealogies practised by societies with segmentary descent systems.

Allies of ascending generations form an intermediary category between allies proper (i.e. Matrikin) and unrelated awk. Men whom ego's father addresses as magawa (i.e. Fa-Mo-Bro-Chi) ego will address as hmini, the class of such distant allies is ego's hmun a word which connotes both kinsmen and, in another usage 'ancestors' i.e. persons related, rather distantly, to ego. The same term, hmun can also be used to refer to those who are related to ego, not through alliance, but through a distant tie of clanship: the kind of relationship, for instance, as links Kede clan with <sup>Kedewabn</sup>Wahumda-~~uhand~~id (cf. above p. 76 ). Members of ego's own generation falling into this category are referred to as ego's atenagai or awangai, for terms of

address the sibling terminology used in the hamlet may be used (i.e. ate, nedhi etc.) or some special terms sava-tod, or ai, used between distant kinsmen, and translated in pidgin by informants as 'brother.

All this would perhaps be of little importance were it not for the fact that awangai are, like magawangai (cross-cousins, unmarriageable. In theory, having once contracted a marriage with a particular group, Umedas are debarred from ever doing so again. Informants discussed alliance in terms which suggested just this: I was told, for instance that the children of men who called each other magawa (cross-cousins) should themselves be magawa-magawa, and their children, naturally, would also be magawa-magawa and their children would be ... and so on and so on. In this way, with every successive generation a new marriage 'option' would be taken up, and would thenceforth turn into a relation of perpetual alliance between the groups concerned, with a consequent ban on marriage ever taking place between them. Eventually, if this were the case, the entire complement of possible marriages would become exhausted, and no more marriages would be possible, because the whole field would be saturated with alliance relationships. Now of course this does not actually happen, nor do the Umedas draw this particular inference. The let-out comes because, beyond a certain range, the application of terms indicative of an alliance relationship is essentially an optional matter.

To take the instance quoted just now; it is quite true that the children of cross-cousins, might, if they so



wished, call each other magawa and indulge in the joking-behaviour characteristic of cross-cousins. In fact, the term magawa might be applied to individuals who could not conceivably stand in this relation, simply as a pretext for the joking behaviour (e.g. when the term is applied to the anthropologist, or some other total outsider) -- to call someone magawa is, in itself, a joke, an expression of friendly relations. To use a kinship term in this way is to create a relationship, rather than to conform to a relationship previously laid down in the kinship system; i.e. one determined by genealogical criteria.

Rather similar considerations apply where the terms for distant or residual allies are concerned. The use of these terms (with the implication of the impossibility of marriage exchange between the parties concerned) is a function of social, rather than purely genealogical criteria. Terms indicative of residual alliance-relations are maintained while the relationship is valued as such. On the whole, there are good reasons for maintaining residual alliance relations with outsider groups, since this is an addition to the 'security circle' of the group; if it is recalled that the alternative to some relationship of alliance, though it be only residual, is open hostility, then it will be appreciated that such relations are not allowed to go into abeyance out of mere indifference. But go into abeyance they must, eventually, or the position of 'saturation' of alliance relationships would come about, and, as we have seen, this does not happen. Only in the case of relationships based on clanship are exogamy restrictions



maintained indefinitely. Eventually the renewal of marriage relations must break into the circle of alliance.

The theory that residual allies -- awangai -- may not marry is belied by the facts: residual allies do marry, but when they do so, the relationship is rephrased as one between awk. The transformation of alliance relations into awk-awk relations may occur after three generations. The essential flexibility of the system resides in the fact that the decision to reformulate a relation of alliance as an awk-awk relation, with a concomitant re-opening of marriage exchange between the groups involved, is a matter of choice or policy: a balance must be struck between the advantages of maintaining a shell of alliance relationships versus the necessity of contracting affinal relationships. The overt system, the system which is implied by informants' statements to the effect that marriage sets up relations of a permanent and inalienable kind, stresses the former aspect. The enduring structure of the society is conceptualised as a set of permanent alliance relations: at the village level, the relation between moieties, at the hamlet level, the picture of 'coconut compatibilities' shown in Fig. 4, and at the level of the localised clan or sub-clan by relations of residual alliance with the matrikin of ascending generations, i.e. with groups classified as awangai. Because of the fragmentation of the society into a relatively large number of small units (6 hamlets and 19 localised agnatic clans or subclans in Umeda alone) it is possible to maintain this ideological emphasis on the permanence of alliance relationships

because marriage exchanges are usually made with distantly-allied groups or with groups who are not allied at all.

Here again, I return to the idea of the 'alliance construct' as a functional analogue to the 'descent construct'. Like 'optative' agnation in the New Guinea Highlands (Barnes 1962; Kaberry 1967) this flexibility in the recognition of residual alliance relationships provided for the redefinition of social relationships as the need arose. At one level, the society could be conceptualised as a coherent pattern of alliance which legitimised social and ritual relations between allied groups, while from the standpoint of the individual clan, there was nothing to prevent the piecemeal redefinition of relationships, the reclassification of residual allies as awk, and the emergence, over time, of new structures of alliance.

(b) A model

Having described the major kinship categories and their interrelations I now wish to present a model which shows, in the simplest possible manner, how they interact over time. Fig. 6 must not be taken as a literal representation of events on the ground: for instance, a great many more groups are involved than the four shown. The diagram is intended to be nothing more than an abstract representation of the logical structure of the kinship system: the logical 'core' of a system whose working-out, on the ground, is much less neatly ordered. Having issued the necessary caveat, I may turn to the explanation of the diagram itself. The four vertical lines represent agnatic descent lines, the cross-ties between them (the diagram as a

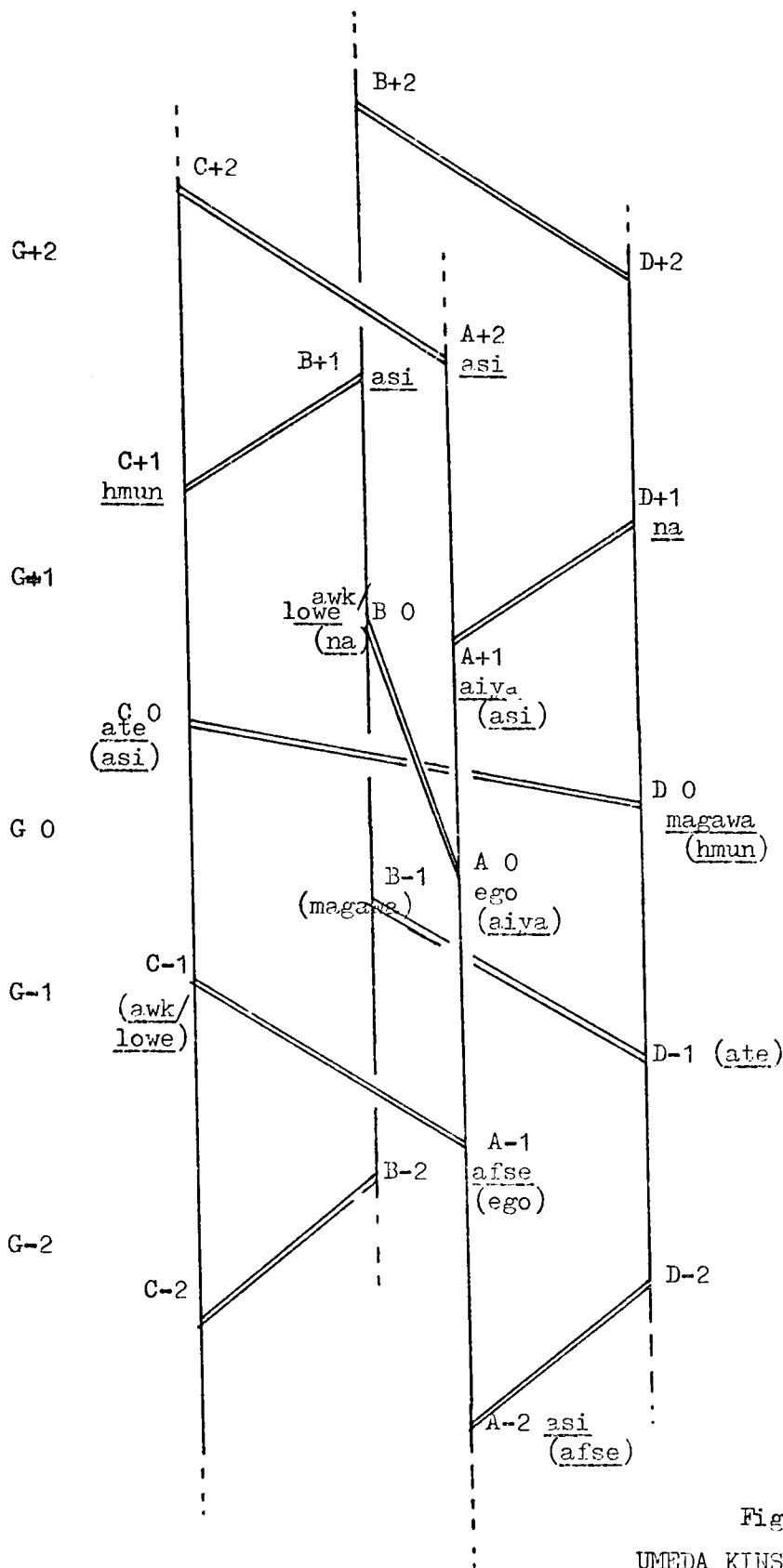


Fig. 6

UMEDA KINSHIP CATEGORIES

whole being seen in three dimensions) -- as marriage exchanges (i.e. sister exchange). Five generations are shown, starting with the second ascending generation above ego (AO) down to the second descending generation below him. (A+2 equals ego's Fa-Fa, A-2 his So-So).

Fig. 7 below shows how the four basic kinship categories, 1) ego's own group 2) his affinal group(s) 3) his matrikin and 4) his residual allies are ranged around him:

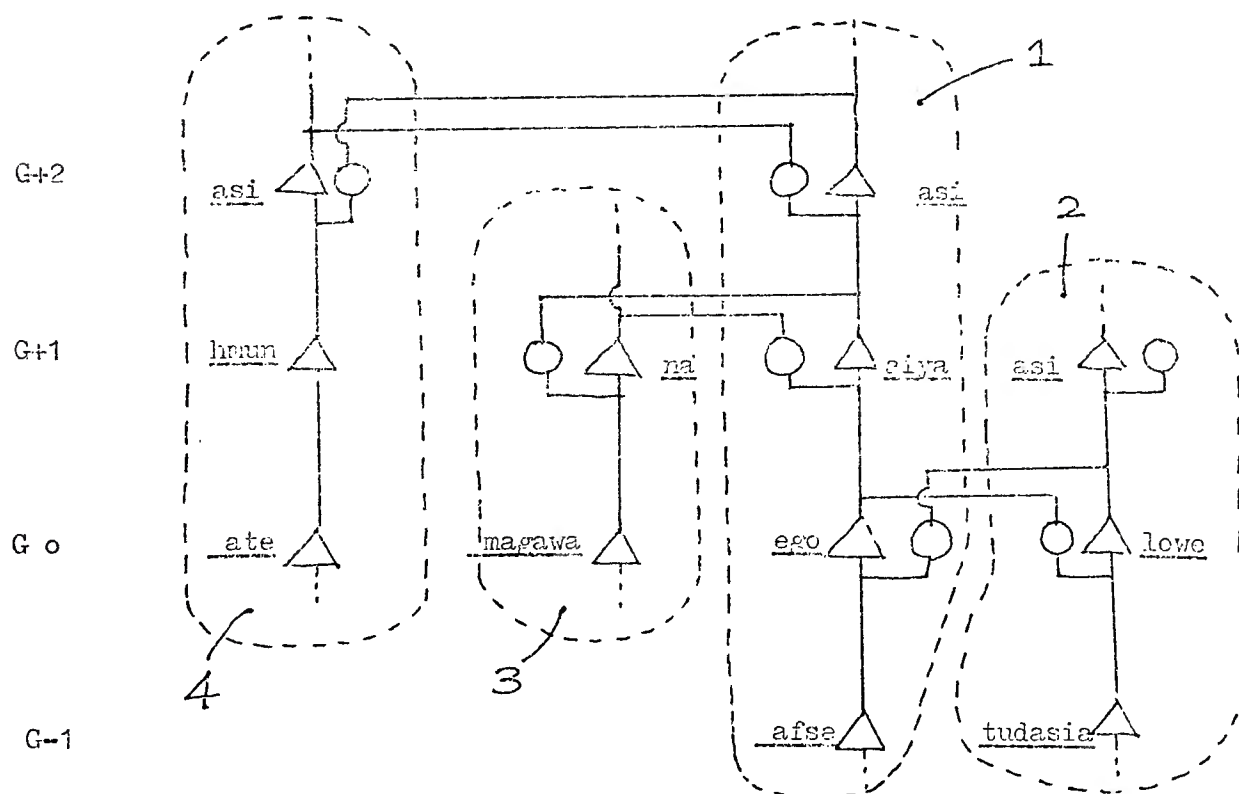


Fig. 7. THE FOUR BASIC CATEGORIES.

It is important to note that while the vertical line on which ego stands (A+2 ...A-2) can be taken as representing one agnatic descent line, a 'local line' in the sense of Leach 1961 p.62-63, this would not necessarily be true of the other lines on the diagram i.e. ego will have more than one line of matrikin, residual allies, and affines; as I remarked before, the diagram is an abstraction from the kinship terminology, not a representation of events on the ground.

What the diagram shows, is the way in which, over successive generations a regular shift takes place in the overall system, relative to any one line. Here, the shift is shown relative to line A on which ego is placed. The kinship terms used by ego are shown (ego = A 0) and also those used by his son (A - 1) -- these being added in brackets. Thus, relative to A 0, B 0 is awk/lowe and B - 1 is tudasia, while for A - 1 B C is na and B - 1 is magawa.

It will be seen that, according to this model, the kinship terminology is consistent with a pattern of alliance relationships whereby marriages are repeated every fourth generation. Thus the situation at G + 2 is identical with that at G - 1, while G + 1 = G - 2 and so on. Within this cycle the relations of lines B, C and D, relative to line A go through an uniform sequence of transformations (fig. 8).

With each generation the manner in which a given line (here, line A) classifies the groups which form its



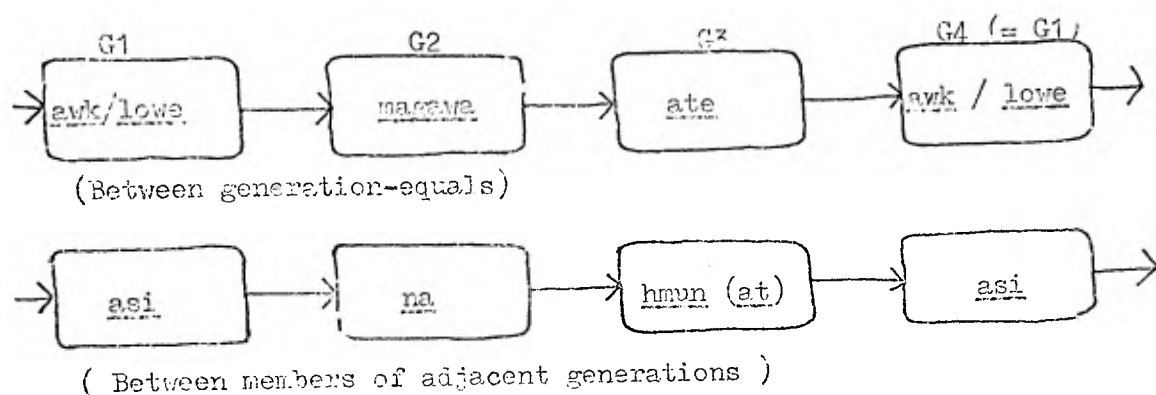


Fig. 8 THE SEQUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE RELATION OF INTER-MARRYING LINES.

social environment (lines B, C, D) undergoes a systematic shift; affines become allies, allies become residual allies, residual allies become unrelated marriageables, who can subsequently be re-incorporated into the scheme as affines. The pattern of marriages is determined negatively by the existence of prohibitions on marrying into allied groups; it is not determined, as is the case in Australian systems, by injunctions to marry into a specified category of kin. Marriage is, above all, a means of integrating un-related groups into the security circle -- where a relation already exists marriage is redundant, for marriage is a means of creating -- or perhaps recreating -- relationships. The determinant of marriage is the absence, rather than the presence of relationship; metaphorically, the marital option of a given group might be imagined as similar to the rotating beam of light on a radar display screen, forever moving into the area of darkness lying before its circular path,

leaving behind it a pattern of gradually decaying scintillations.

At this point, it may be interesting to ask where this particular kind of system stands in relation to Lévi-Strauss' well-known dichotomisation of kinship systems into 'elementary' (those characterised by positive rules governing the choice of spouses) versus 'complex' systems wherein the choice of spouses (at least, as far as genealogical criteria are concerned) is determined only negatively by the institution of prohibited degrees. (Lévi-Strauss : 1969 xxiii). In effect, this poses something of a dilemma. The Umeda system is 'elementary' in that it is based on the direct exchange of women, but at the same time it is 'complex' in that, unlike the Australian systems described in Chapter XI of Lévi-Strauss' book, it is not predicated on the idea of prescriptive marriage or marriage classes. This is a difficulty not unforeseen by Lévi-Strauss himself. He writes:

'The whole eastern area (including Melanesia, Polynesia, and the Americas) ... thus forms a sort of theatre in which restricted and generalised exchange meet each other, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony ...' (p.466).

Nor is this all: in the preface to the English edition, Lévi-Strauss outlines what (in 1948) he had conceived to be the 'intermediate' form between 'elementary' and 'complex' systems:

'systems which only set up preventions to marriage (i.e. complex systems) but apply them so widely through

constraints inherent in their kinship nomenclature that, because of relatively small population, consisting of no more than a few thousand persons, it might be possible to obtain the converse, viz., a system of unconscious prescriptions which would reproduce exactly and in full the contours of the mould formed by the system of conscious prohibitions.

The systems invoked are known in social anthropology as the Crow-Omaha systems ...' (p.xxxvi).

Alas, seventeen years later (in 1965, when the new preface was written) Lévi-Strauss has come to the conclusion that the Crow-Omaha system does not constitute the looked-for transitional type:

'I have come to see more and more that (the analysis of Crow-Omaha systems) raises tremendous difficulties which are the province, not of the sociologist, but of the mathematician' (ibid.)

No mathematician myself, I entirely agree with what Levi-Strauss says about Crow-Omaha. The difficulty arises from the fact that, as Lévi-Strauss says, (while) 'it is easy to construct a diagram of an asymmetrical system ... no one has yet managed to give a satisfactory graphic representation of a Crow-Omaha system in a two- or even a three-dimensional space. As one generation follows another, another lineage is involved, and to represent these requires as many reserve planes as there are new lineages involved. ... The anthropologist is only entitled to make these planes intersect once in the space of three or four generations ... the result is that a diagram limited to even

a few generations requires many more spatial dimensions than can be projected onto a single piece of paper.' (xxxvii).

Rather than see Crow-Omaha systems as intermediate between 'elementary' and 'complex' exchange systems, Lévi-Strauss' more recent position is to view them as polar opposites: 'an asymmetrical (elementary) system operates to change kin into affines, contrary to a Crow-Omaha system which operates to turn affines into kin' (xxxix).

Lévi-Strauss attempts to save his original insight by saying that Crow-Omaha systems 'provide the connecting link' because 'they relate to elementary structures in so far as they formulate preventions to marriage in sociological terms, and to complex structures in so far as the network of alliances is aleatory, an indirect result of the fact that the only conditions laid down are negative' (xxix).

This is very weak, unfortunately. As Lévi-Strauss himself admits, virtually the same argument applies to our own society, with the sole qualification that in Crow-Omaha systems whole lineages, rather than individuals, are placed under marital prohibitions.

I would like to suggest that the Umeda system, just described, is in fact a better instance of an 'intermediary type' than the Crow-Omaha systems discussed by Lévi-Strauss in this connection.

Now, first of all, is the Umeda system an 'elementary' system, and if so in what sense? Fig. 6, it would seem, suggests that it is, in that there appears to be a

preferential marriage tending to unite distant bilateral cross-cousins (the offspring of an original exchange of sisters three generations before, who will repeat the exchange in the fourth generation.) This inference would be correct only in a very qualified sense, since no actual preference is accorded to distant bilateral cross-cousins in Umeda (but see below). What would be truer to say is that the 'logic of the kinship terminology' points towards a 'closed' marital universe: while the marriage system, as such, 'turns affines into kin' (and we have noted that alliance is ideologically regarded as a permanent relation, once instituted by marriage) -- the kinship terminology 'turns kin into affines', or, more precisely, into 'potential affines' i.e. marriageables.

This arises naturally from the awk-low-maqawa-ate-awk sequence just described. In this, the Umeda terminology differs profoundly from the Crow-Omaha terminologies which are notable, after all, for their stress on the 'unity of the lineage' at the expense of the generational principle. Thus, whereas in an Omaha system, ego classifies all male members of, say, his mother's lineage, under a single term, irrespective of generational criteria, in the Umeda system a man classifies as allies those whom members of his parent's generation classify as affines. Generation is crucial here, much as it is in terminologies associated with prescriptive marriage systems such as the Aranda. Conversely, those whom his parents may classify as allies, he may classify as potential affines.

Moreover, a point not mentioned by Lévi-Strauss,



whereas the 'kinship universe' (the classification of neighbouring lineages) of an individual Crow or Omaha, is determined only by the marriages of his parents and parents' parents etc., in the Umeda system it is determined by the marital history of his group. That is to say, if X exchanges sisters with Y that means that the whole of X's group will refer to the whole of Y's group as affines, and that marriages may not take place between any of their offspring. (Just as the offspring of two Aranda marriage sections may not marry). This is in sharp distinction to the Crow-Omaha situation where nothing prevents an individual contracting a marriage with groups into whom members of the parental generation in his own lineage may have married, granted only that his own parents or parents' parents etc., did not originate from, or marry into, that lineage. It is this indeterminacy which makes Crow-Omaha systems 'complex', and the Umeda system relatively much less so.

In short, granted the postulate that marriage takes place by sister exchange -- and this, though not mandatory, is the accepted method -- the Umeda system can be satisfactorily represented using only four lines. I would accept that this grossly simplifies social reality, but no more so, in fact, than conventional diagrams of prescriptive exchange systems. At the same time, I would insist that the Umeda system is, in certain crucial respects, 'complex'. Sister exchange, by itself, does not automatically imply the presence of an 'elementary' system, as sister exchange is compatible with all marriage systems, elementary or

complex, with the sole exception of asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage. As Lévi-Strauss has said, (of patrilineal cousin marriage, and the remark is still truer of sister exchange itself) 'it is not a system but a procedure' (1969 : 446).

What makes the Umeda system 'complex' is precisely the absence of positive prescription. We can verify this by referring to data from elsewhere in the Sepik, where Fa-Fa-Fa-Si-So-So-Da is found as a stated preference, rather than as in Umeda, an empty possibility suggested by the logic of the kinship terminology. Gilbert Lewis, in an unpublished personal communication, has described the operation of such a system among the Gnau-speakers of the Lumi sub-district, some 40 miles east of the Wainasowanda area. In Lumi, a marriage sets up a sequence of reciprocal payments between wife givers and wife receivers, the balance going to the wife-giving group, who perform certain richly-rewarded ritual services for their sister's children and sister's children's children -- these prestations may pass in both directions as sister-exchange is also favoured by these people. These ritual relationships, accompanied by prestations, form a set sequence which lasts for three generations; in the fourth, it is thought advantageous to re-open the relationship, and the sequence of prestations, with a fresh exchange of sisters between the two groups. In certain neighbouring villages, the same cycle is found, only shortened by a generation, in which case the preferred marriage is with the Fa-Fa-Si-So-Da (G. Lewis personal communication 1971). This, in turn, invites

comparison with the Iatmul situation, originally reported by Bateson (1936) and recently subjected to re-examination by Korn (1971) and Forge (1971). Korn shows that the Iatmul terminology is consistent with their stated preference for iai marriage, that is, with the Fa-Fa-Si-So-Da, and Forge, in a comment on this paper, remarks that iai marriage 'is essentially an option to repeat in the third generation a marriage contracted in the first' (ibid. p.139) which 'renews a relation of unequal exchanges at that point in the third generation when the relationships set up by [a previous] marriage are about to be extinguished' (p.142)

I would argue that the underlying system is similar in all these instances, with the important difference that, in Umeda, the complicated cycle of prestations is lacking, which is a feature of the Lumi system described by Lewis, and also (probably, though Bateson's account is not very specific on this score) of the Iatmul as well. The prestations, which, in Lumi, might extend over three generations, provided a yardstick for calibrating the alliance relations of groups, tending to produce formal prescriptions of marriage partners as an integral part of the total system; while in Umeda, in the absence of such a system of formal prestations to 'hold the system together', no such prescriptions are found.

(c) The mol cycle (Fig. 9)

Despite the absence of preferential marriage the negative constraints on marriage sufficed to restrict the actual marital options of any individual very severely --

quite as much, arguably, as a system of preferential marriage might have done. The actual range of the prohibitions was only vaguely determined, but certainly covered all first and second cross cousins, real or classificatory i.e. ego had to find a wife in a group from whom members of his own hamlet had not taken wives for at least two generations. Given the small absolute size of the connubium, and the demographic situation (chronic shortage of women of any kind) this imposed serious limitations -- limitations at the level of 'reality' that is to say, rather than limitations on the system as such. If at least one 'function' of prescriptive systems is to give specific males rights over specific females, as a means of reducing the incidence conflicting claims for women, then it would be true to say that in a demographic isolate as small as the Umeda-Punda connubium, this function can be served as well by negative as by positive rules about marriage. The factors which influenced the eventual apportionment of spouses, granted the negative rules were observed, were basically arbitrary, the product of demographic contingency rather than political strategy. Men lucky enough to have sisters in exchange, would exchange them for the most intrinsically desirable bride available in a marriageable group: such control as was exercised was in the hands of the senior generation, the bride's and groom's fathers, who might intervene to prevent a marriage. In the cases where this occurred which I was able to study, the reasons given were

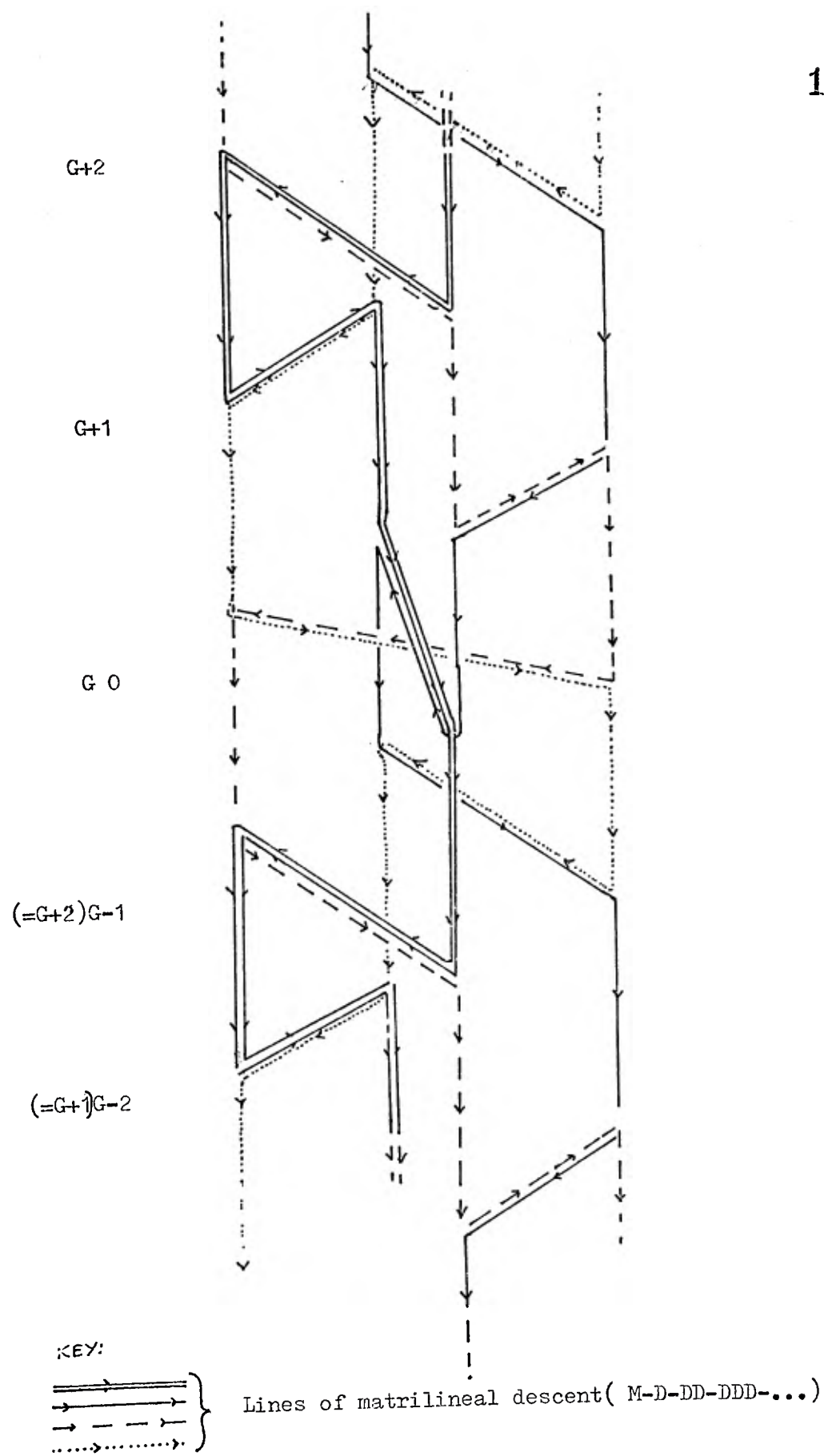


Fig9 . THE MOL CYCLE



that the couple were not in marriageable groups, i.e. the negative prohibitions would be infringed, or that the girl had already been betrothed in some other direction. Explicitly 'political' reasons for promoting or preventing marriages were not put forward: though the relationships established through marriage were valued, in the first instance it was the absolute worth of the in-marrying wife to the group that counted.

The number of girls who were possible spouses for a young man with a sister to exchange was very limited. Quite apart from the existence of any restrictions at all, the absolute number of girls in the age-bracket 7-14 (the age at which girls would be betrothed to their future husbands), was in the order of 30 in the whole connubium, many of whom were already promised. This paucity in the supply of available spouses combined with the negative constraints on marriage, had the result that the Uredas were prone to thinking in terms of 'long cycles' of matrimonial exchange without actually having any institutionalised means of ensuring that this circulation of women came about: this is what I mean by the 'mol cycle'.

The name is my own, but the idea it represents was unsuspected by me until it was spontaneously suggested to me by informants. Mol is the word meaning 'daughter(s)' -- of an individual or of a group. The mol cycle can be represented by tracing in the cycles of matrilineal kinship that are implied in the diagram showing the kinship terminology. In the second version of the diagram (Fig. 9) I have traced in these cycles, using a different treatment of the

line for each cycle. The reader will appreciate from the diagram that tracing out matriline in this way results in a repetitive pattern every fourth generation, just as the transformations of the kinship terminology repeated themselves every fourth generation when mapped out on the same diagram (i.e.  $G+2=G-1$ ,  $G+1=G-2$  etc.).

The idea of the mol cycle as I encountered it in the conversation of my informants was, I hasten to add, far less abstract and formal than the expression I have given to it in Fig. 9. In the minds of the informants, the idea of a circulation of women in matrilineal cycles was a logical consequence of the operation of the negative marriage rules in a limited, closed, matrimonial field. An informant asserted -- as a matter of some obviousness -- that 'we' (that is, his group) send out daughters to such-and-such a place (he pointed), and their daughters go to such-and-such a place (they cannot come back because that would be a breach of the negative rules, or, as it is put by the people themselves, 'a daughter must not retrace her mother's footsteps' ...) and their daughters go to yet another place, (he pointed again) and their daughters go to another place still (and here my informant made an expansive circular gesture, as if to encompass the entire locality) ... and eventually they come back, and we marry them.

How should this idea be interpreted? First of all, my informants were not conscious of the mol cycle as something they actively brought about by marrying in a particular way; it was, rather, something that simply

happened, a consequence of marriage in general, not a motive for specific marriages. The mol cycle does not set up specific integrative bonds, nor does it confer rights over specific women -- in which, it must be said, it differs profoundly from cycles of matrilineal kinship which are a feature -- for de Josselin de Jong, among others (de Josselin de Jong 1952) -- of Australian prescriptive marriage systems such as the Aranda. I say this particularly because another anthropologist (van der Leeden) working not so far away (in Saarmi, West New Guinea) has compared what is, I think, the same phenomenon to the Aranda system, calling down on his head the rebukes of Pouwer, whose views I will examine in a moment. (Pouwer and Van der Leeden 1960). The mol cycle is not to be linked with preferential marriage, just as the logical 'closure' of the kinship system, as analysed in the previous paragraphs, is not to be taken as a consequence of prescriptive marriage either. My informants would never have suggested (had they been able to visualise the possibility) that a genealogically-defined Mo-Mo-Mo-Da-Da-Da was a suitable spouse because that would involve the return to the group of the offspring of a daughter of the group, sent away in marriage generations before. Such genealogical precision would be quite foreign to Umeda thinking. While Umedas were aware of the overall sequence in the transformation of the relation between inter-marrying groups, they were not interested in tracing out specific genealogical interconnections between individuals within groups so related, and in consequence were not interested in producing

genealogies with elements of repetition in them. Quite the reverse, in fact: for them each new marriage was in theory a new departure, a stab in the dark. Because no relationships between individuals kept alive over more than one generation via reciprocal prestations were created by marriage, as they were, for example, in Lumi, Umedas had no motive for singling out specific partners when re-opening exchange relationships with a group of quondam allies. Umedas understood the logical possibility that relationships with outside groups consisted of a cyclical alternation of marriage-exchange, alliance, residual alliance, followed by a re-opening of exchanges, but although they recognised the implicit repetitiousness in the sequence of relations between groups, the recognition was purely formal and did not commit them to any institutionalisation of marriage choices, since the cycle was automatic, so long as the negative prohibitions were observed. Similarly with the nol cycle, which was not an 'institution' of Umeda society, but an interpretation of it.

It is this point, I think, that Van der Leeden failed to appreciate in his discussion of the related Saarmi material (Saarmi is a tract of country, ecologically quite similar to Waina-Sowanda, some 70 miles away to the west, in W. Irian). Here is Pouwer's summary of Van der Leeden's basic argument:

'According to the author (i.e. V. der L.) this (symmetrical sister exchange) contrasts with a much less manifest asymmetrical exchange system comprising a number of geslachten (localised clans) which leads to a matrilineal

descent reckoning. During his fieldwork, Van der Leeden was much struck by the opinion that the matrilineal relatives of a woman 'marry back' after an unspecified number of generations ... the above mentioned opinion implies a 'return' of women from ego's group (whose female children for at least two generations cannot marry there), in other words a circulation of women through an unspecified number of groups participating in the exchange ( $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow X \rightarrow A$ ).

'This view' says Pouwer 'is hardly supported by the facts ...' (By which he means the genealogical material supplied by Van der Leeden). I am in full agreement with Pouwer in thinking that it would be a hopeless task to seek to justify such a model of 'matrilineal cycles' on the basis of an examination of the genealogical record, were that recoverable. Van der Leeden no doubt went too far in making direct reference to 'long cycles' of matrimonial exchange, on the lines of De Josselin de Jong's analysis of the Aranda system (1952). On the other hand I am quite unimpressed with Pouwer's alternative hypothesis, that the women, whom Van der Leeden sees as circulating among (patrilineal) groups are in fact circulating within a bilateral group. Pouwer argues that New Guinea kinship groups are by nature bilateral; the ties of women with their natal group are never severed, and they can transmit a full complement of rights in it to their children. Such a formulation may be applicable in the Star Mountains where Pouwers' work was done, but it does not seem to me to resolve the problems posed by Van der Leeden's palpably shaky attempt to assimilate the Saarmi situation to the classical Australian



model. The very existence of localised clans argues against Pouwer's interpretation. Moreover, while the 'clans' encountered by Van der Leeden might conceivably be called bilateral in that they seem to have been open infiltration by outsiders (matrikin etc.) they show definite patrilineal bias, and, moreover, are far from being co-terminous with the universe within which the women circulate.

I do not think that Pouwer's 'bilateral' interpretation can be sustained, particularly in relation to the similar situation in Umeda, where unilineal descent is strongly marked, and I concur with Van der Leeden at least to the extent of thinking that the existence of such ideas of 'the return of women' indicate that the people do conceptualise their social field in terms of unilineal groups forming alliances with one another. This does not amount, however, to a demonstration of the existence of a system of 'elementary restricted exchange' even though the ethnographer claims to have discovered a preference for distant bilateral cross-cousin marriage. 'Australian' systems must be made of sterner stuff.

I would interpret Van der Leeden's material on the same lines as I have followed in interpreting the Umeda 'mol-cycle'. That is, I think that the idea of 'the return of women' is here the product, not of positive injunctions to marry kin, and the existence of an 'elementary' exchange system, but of the operation of negative rules within an extremely restricted marital universe.

This brings me back to certain remarks I made previously concerning Lévi-Strauss' distinction between 'elementary'

and 'complex' exchange systems. I have argued that the Umeda system is essentially 'complex' in the sense that there exist no injunctions to marry a prescribed category of kin. This material on the mol-cycle, however, does show very clearly how a system can be 'complex' and stay 'closed', that is, show the characteristic boundedness of an 'elementary' system. Here indeed is what Lévi-Strauss sought, and failed to find, in the Crow-Omaha systems -- 'unconscious prescriptions which would reproduce exactly and in full the contours of the mould formed by the system of conscious prohibitions' (1969 xxxvi). Here is a 'complex' system turned back on itself so that it is seen as possessing, by the people themselves, that 'specific curvature of genealogical space' which, for Lévi-Strauss, characterises asymmetric prescriptive systems (1965 : 17).

In conclusion, then, the models of the kinship system (fig. 6) and of the mol-cycle (fig. 9) taken together represent what may be a limiting case in 'complex' exchange systems: a system defined in terms of prohibitions (and hence complex) but so restricted that an element of prescription is implicit at a sub-institutional level -- prescriptions of which the actors may in fact be conscious, but which they do not consciously apply.

viii. (a) Agnatic units: Clans and sub-clans

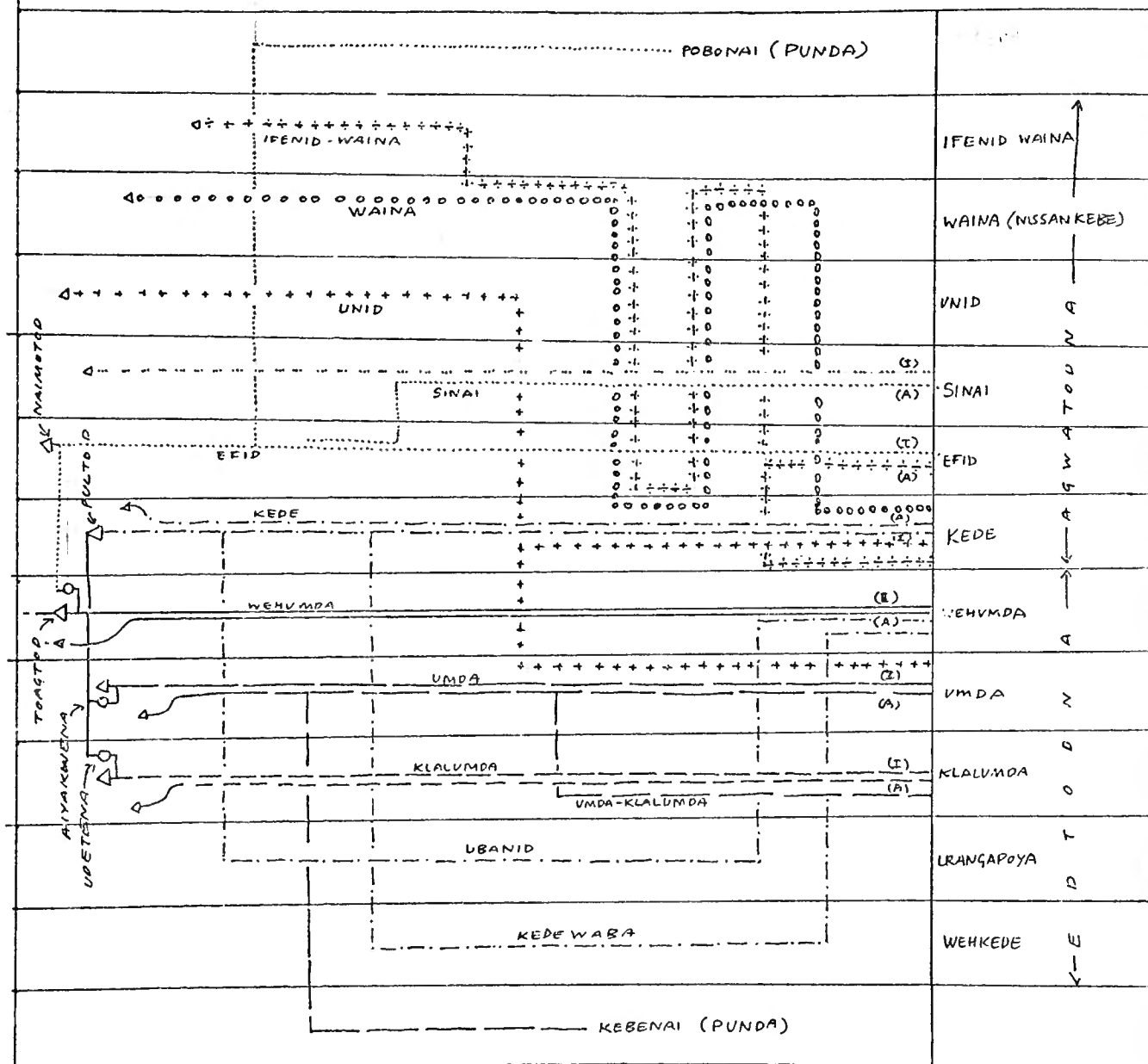
I have remarked earlier on the absence of those means reported frequently among other New Guinean societies of integrating immigrants, particularly sister's sons into agnatic (or supposedly agnatic) descent groups. It is the

prevalence of such devices which have led certain authors, of which Pouwer is one, to speak of 'ambilateral' descent in New Guinea, with a more or less pronounced patrilineal bias. Such a view has a certain amount of plausibility in societies where genealogies of descent groups often contain a proportion of female apical ancestresses. However, in Umeda, the problem does not arise --or rather, the solution adopted is of a different kind. Rather than integrate outsiders into descent groups by giving them some fictive agnatic status, in Umeda the integrity of the agnatic descent group is preserved, and immigrants are integrated into the group as allies, the 'group' in this instance being the hamlet, the basic unit of social action. The hamlet is 'bilateral' -- but it is not a descent group, and it is not conceived of as such. It is an alliance of co-resident clans or sub-clans.

Thus, though agnatic units may migrate, secede from the hamlet, split up, disperse, they can never be annihilated through absorption, only through extinction. Nor, if they are threatened with extinction can they restore themselves to a condition of viability by the recruitment of non-agnates into their ranks. Their sole recourse, in such circumstances, is to join forces with an allied group, combining with them in a common hamlet. This option, if taken, has an influence on the subsequent development in the relations between the allied groups who reside together in this way. The sequence of transformations whereby allied groups eventually, after the lapse of an indefinite number of generations, revert to a condition of non-alliance

and mutual marriageability is interrupted if the allied clans subsequently coalesce to form a single hamlet. The normal case is for the immigrant clan to move into a hamlet whose original inhabitants are classified as mothers' brothers (nenagai) and cross-cousins (magawangai). While the first generation will continue to use this terminology of alliance, the second generation will adopt the same terminology as is used within the agnatic clan, i.e. not terms for allies or residual allies (na: mother's brother or hmun: Fa-Mo-Br-So etc.) but the set at: 'guardian' ate 'elder sibling' nedite 'younger brother' ude 'younger sister'. There is, thus, as far as kin-terms are concerned, an identification between ego's own agnatic group (with the exception of ego's own father : aiya and the allied groups which are resident with ego's group in the hamlet. But despite the terminological identification of allied (immigrant) clans and ego's own clan, the separateness of the agnatic descent groups concerned is not effaced, even over a long period of time.

By means of a chart (fig. 10) I have attempted to summarise the information I have about the origins and movements from place to place of the clans found in Umeda today. The bottom line of the diagram lists the present inhabited hamlet sites, together with the names of sites no longer inhabited, but still remembered as having once been so. At the top, I have indicated the mythological relations of the clans (or rather of some of them), according to the mythological schema discussed on p. 37 above. Time runs from top to bottom, the precise



Umeda Claws

Fig. 10



synchronisation of the migrations of clans or sub-clans are in some cases rather conjectural, especially for the earlier periods. Despite its inadequacies, I hope that the diagram will suffice to convey, synoptically, the way in which the various hamlets in the village are interconnected by agnatic links, without the need for detailed explanation.

The reasons given for clan fission are generally rather unspecific -- e.g. 'a fight'. In one case, the split between Kede and Kedewaba, a sub-clan now found a Wehumda, the fight is said to have come about as a consequence of an adulterous relationship between a younger brother and his elder brother's wife: the elder brother thereupon tried to kill the younger (i.e. Waba) leading to a splitting of the clan and the secession of Waba. Another, more recent split within a sub-clan arose for different reasons. Ifenid clan, which previously had a hamlet of its own, is now found dispersed in two hamlets, Kede and Efid. At one time all the Ifenid men were living in Kede but recently some have gone to live in Efid hamlet because Efid was becoming so small that it was in danger of ceasing to exist, a situation that was undesirable, since there were some children there who (sister's children of Ifenid) had to be looked after, and moreover, Efid is the 'original' agwatodna hamlet, which ought not to disappear.

In other cases, such as the migration of Waina clan, political factors have been uppermost. Waina have migrated between Nissankebe, their original hamlet, and Kede, their hamlet of adoption, on two separate occasions. The first,

mentioned above, occurred when Waina had been decimated by an epidemic supposedly caused by Imonda sorcerers. After having become once more sufficiently numerous, they returned for a short time to their site at Nissankebe, only to be dislodged once more by their fear of outside enemies, not, this time, the Imondas, but the Pundas. The immediate cause of their second migration was not a physical attack by the Pundas, but the death, under rather grotesque circumstances, of their most important man, Waba. Waba was killed when, having climbed a tree to kill a marsupial, he slipped, and falling on his arrows stacked at the base of the tree, impaled himself. He later died of his wounds. Such an occurrence, calculated to gratify the enemies of Waina, could not have come about by chance, and it was attributed to the sorcery of the Pundas. Fearing further, equally harassing occurrences the Wainas departed, once more, to their mothers' brothers in Kede, where they have been established for a generation. When I was leaving the field there was fresh talk of Waina once more returning to Nissankebe -- which is still periodically occupied as a hunting and sago-working camp, and where in recent years coconuts have been planted by the Wainas who still regard it as their real home. This renewed talk was the result of worsening relations between Waina and their affines in Umeda hamlet, who were supported against Waina by their (Umda's) allies, Klalumda. The trouble was caused by the success of Waha, a young man of Waina, whose wife had recently died, in causing the young and widely admired widow of a Klalumda man to run away with him. Umda

have an agreement to exchange widows with Klalumda and this action of Waha was very disagreeable to them. Although the widow was not from a group with whom the Umedas themselves were in a relation of marriageability, they hoped to use her as an exchange with Punda, to obtain a wife for a young Umda man, Paulus. This manoeuvre was prevented by the flight of the widow: the Wainas were asked to recompense Umeda by giving a small girl, Yas, in exchange, but Bo, the foster father of the girl refused, saying that she had already been promised to Punda. The Wainas also argued that it was not necessary to give exchanges for widows, anyway. The Umda youth, Paulus, was said by the Wainas to have uttered threats either to find an opportunity of shooting the Wainas himself, or of invoking Punda sorcerers against them. I cannot say whether there is any truth in this tale, but it was clear that feeling was running high, and it was true enough in the eyes of the Wainas themselves, who said that they wished to move to their old site, so as to be out of reach of their Umda enemies. I left the field before any outcome could be observed.

A general point of contrast between Umeda and most New Guinea societies -- even those in the immediate vicinity -- is the low degree of mobility of the permanent hamlets. Clan migration or fission are not everyday events, but very rare ones. The norm is for men to stay put in the hamlet in which they are born for their whole lives; no new hamlets have been established in Umeda for at least a generation, all being marked by mature coconut palms as

old as the oldest men on the place. Abandoned sites are pointed out with fear and piety (for such sites are haunted by evil spirits) most of which show no obvious signs of ever having been inhabited at all, since the forest has grown back to its full height. Individuals cannot practice 'optative' residence, which is such an important contributory factor in giving New Guinea descent groups (recruited, sometimes, as much on the basis of residence as descent) their 'ambilateral' cast. Migration, where it occurs, is generally on a group basis. Only one individual was living in a different hamlet from the remainder of his clan-brothers in Umeda in 69-70; this man, Mandor of Umda, born of parents in Wehumda, had been orphaned at an early age. Migration, in short, is not a device resorted to by individuals as a normal means of finding patronage (as it is, e.g. among the Chimbu; cf. Brookfield and Brown 1963) but a response to a crisis, an epidemic, a famine, or some other rare disaster. Under normal circumstances the individual is offered no 'optative' choices either as to residence or clan affiliation. On the other hand mobility of a different kind -- not permanent change of hamlet affiliation but temporary sojourns with other groups, are possible and frequent. These take place, not in the village, but in the bush. In sago-working camps in the bush it is very common to find members of allied groups working together, particularly members of the same bush association. Although the village organisation at the centre is relatively stable, individual family units are continually on the move, because, as was

pointed out in Chapter 1, the village is not lived in for a great part of the time. Family units working in the bush have great freedom to form combinations of a temporary nature at some chosen bush site, and to invite individual members of allied groups in different hamlets from their own to come and stay with them. Thus the structural stability of Umeda hamlets is achieved at no cost in economic flexibility. The hamlets are less an arena for everyday living -- that arena is the bush and the bush house -- than a distinct focal point around which the individual households may move (like bodies in orbit) and upon which they may fall back in case of illness or danger, or for the purposes of heightened sociability; feasting on a pig, or the performance of ritual.

(b) Relations between agnatic units

I have already mentioned the fact that clans are strictly exogamous. Only one marriage I recorded (one no longer extant) was a breach of clan exogamy: while the regulations prohibiting marriage between allies were infringed more frequently. It follows that all relations between clans are based, finally, on marriage or potential marriageability, while relations within clans exclude marriage altogether.

Unrelated clans (awk-awk) fight and marry. Where marriages exist the members of the natal clan of the out-married women continue to hold themselves responsible for the protection of their sisters. In practice, the protective role devolves mainly upon the woman's own brother or her closest agnates, rather than the clan as a whole. An



instance occurred in 1970 which, though untypical under modern conditions shows what was doubtless a frequent situation in pre-contact times. A woman of Waina village died in Wyalla, where she was married. Her brother, believing that sorcerers in her husband's group were responsible for her death, attacked an unsuspecting man of Wyalla in the bush, wounding him in the thigh with an arrow. The wounded man, in this instance refused to give any evidence to the administration against his attacker, who, having been turned in to the administration by his own Councillor, was released after a few days. Everybody thought his action justified. Relations with affines are often tense; I was asked more than once to intervene in such quarrels. If tension has been building up over a long period of time a full-scale confrontation between clans within the village can result. The quarrel between Waina and Umda, mentioned in the previous paragraphs, was exacerbated by the fact that there are many affinal relationships between these two clans. The outstanding example of such a confrontation, recorded by me, took place about twenty years ago between Kedewaina and Wehumda. The conflict arose as a result of Kede clan being accused of being collectively responsible for the death, by sorcery, of Wawi, an important man of Efid. Wehumda stood behind Efid as mothers' brothers and they in turn were aided by their allies, Umda and Klalumda. Kede and Waina stood alone, heavily outnumbered. There was never any direct dispute between the principles, Kede and Wehumda; Wehumda mobilised in support of Efid. The outcome

seems to have left both sides with the feeling of having scored a moral victory. All the Kede contingent were wounded, one of them, Sugu, their leading warrior, six times. They thereby vindicated their contempt for death, if they did not refute -- how could they? -- the accusations of sorcery made against them. And the men of Wehumda showed themselves worthy of their protective role vis-a-vis their sisters' sons in Efid.

A crisis such as the internal dissension just described, or brought about by an external threat, from Punda, Sowanda, or the Walsa villages, may activate an inclusive relation between whole clans linked as allies. This may be contrasted with the more exclusive relation between mother's brother and sister's son which is important in normal everyday life, and in ritual.

Where a clan is split into subclans the dispersed fragments do not form an action group in any context. For instance, in the fight mentioned above, between Kede and Wehumda, Kedewaba clan, linked to Kede by clanship ties, did not join up with them against Wehumda. On the other hand, their clanship link did prevent them from fighting on the other side i.e. from forming part of the Wehumda contingent, which they would otherwise have done, since Kedewaba is part of Wehumda hamlet. The phenomenon of segmentary coalition made familiar by Evans-Pritchard (1940 \_ 282-9) played no part in the formation of war-parties in Umeda. Common clanship will result in an attitude of non-belligerence: dispersed segments of a clan might even fight on opposite sides in a battle, but

members of such agnatically related segments would avoid one another in the melee. To repeat the essential point: the principle upon which co-resident clans or sub-clans combine with groups resident elsewhere is matrilateral alliance. An alliance relation is the only basis upon which the minimal unit -- the co-resident group of agnates -- can combine with other units, first for a hamlet, which is an alliance of co-resident agnatic units, and secondly through marriage with outside groups to form larger alliances, such as the Efid/Wehumda alliance which was brought into play in the fighting mentioned above.

I may conclude this section with an analogy which summarises the kinds of integration operative in Umeda society at various levels. The analogy is with the three forces which bind matter together, atomic, molecular, and gravitational. In Umeda, likewise, there are three binding forces or principles of association: 1) Agnation 2) Residence in a single hamlet and 3) Alliance. Without insisting too far on the validity of the analogy, agnation might be compared to the 'atomic' bond, stronger than all the rest, but operative over very short distances. Next comes the bond between agnatic 'atoms' set up by common hamlet residence -- this might be compared with the 'molecular' bond i.e. though less stable than the atomic bond, it is operative over greater distances, creating variable and flexible compounds out of the elementary building blocks. It is tempting to push the analogy a little further by adding that just as molecular bonds are formed when atoms share an electron, so the bonds between clan

units in the hamlet come into being because the two clans share a woman in their genealogies. Finally, to complete the analogy, I would compare the alliance relationships between separate hamlets to gravitational forces, the weakest, but also the most pervasive field. It is these bonds of alliance, the 'alliance constructs' of which I spoke when discussing moieties, which serve to provide the overall integration of the social field.

ix. Hamlet moieties

In discussing the village moieties (section iv) I argued that the moiety organisation represents an hypostatisation of the basic schema of matrimonial exchange: a dichotomisation of the society into exchanging halves. Although the actual pattern of alliance must, necessarily, shift somewhat with each successive generation, in the moiety organisation, which reflects, but does not regulate, marriage alliance, this pattern of alliance is represented as stable. The moieties are descent groups, but, unlike the clans and sub-clans discussed in the previous section, they are permeable: they can acquire new members by means other than descent, they can be manipulated, and if need be, groups or individuals can be re-classified in moiety terms, while this is impossible where clan-affiliation is concerned.

Outside the field of ritual, it cannot be said that moieties have much role to play: action groups are not recruited on moiety lines in mundane contexts. The integration of the society provided by the moiety organisation is at the level of ideas, rather than the level of action,



in that the moieties make explicit the structure of the social field; i.e. they are a 'collective representation' in Durkheim's sense, of certain rather basic aspects of social reality, which otherwise remain unconscious.

What the moiety organisation makes explicit is the basic relationship, observable at all levels of the social structure, between centre and periphery, which is also the relation between men and women. This basic relationship will be discussed exhaustively in later sections of this thesis. Umeda village moieties are 'concentric' as opposed to 'diametric' (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1958 ch. VIII): they raise to the level of the total society, the ego-centric oppositions I/other, us/them, agnates/allies.

The oppositional character of these dyads, whether at the level of the individual, or of the total society, is logically necessary; one half of the dyad cannot exist without the other. The moieties are logically necessary to each other, while the particular agnatic groups of which they are composed, are contingent. A clan may flourish or become extinct without prejudice to the social or ritual arrangements of Umeda society, but it is inconceivable that a moiety should disappear altogether. Consequently, should a moiety be threatened by adverse demographic trends, the moiety affiliation of agnatic units can be re-adjusted to maintain the system in being, whereas clan-ship itself cannot be manipulated in this way.

Granted that the external relations of the edtodna and agwatodna are hypostatisation of alliance -- though actual marriage alliance may run counter to this scheme -- what is



the internal relation of the component clans comprising each moiety? Are they to be considered, at least notionally, as descent groups, stemming from a common ancestor in each case? This might appear, at first sight, the logical answer, but it is belied by the fact, which I have tried to emphasise all along that Umedas do not think of agnation as a means for conceptualising social units larger than the localised clan. Clanship links cross moiety boundaries at will, and moreover, each moiety contains a collection of clans acknowledging no common ancestor. The three clans who form the core of the edtodna moiety, Wehumda, Klalunda, and Umda, do not consider themselves as forming collectively an agnatic unit of higher order, and this is even truer of the rather motley collection of clans in the agwatodna moiety. On the contrary, the principle of solidarity within the moiety is the same as that between moieties, i.e. a hypostatization of alliance. Just as the principle of logical integration of the whole village is alliance, raised to the status of a permanent (though purely ritual) relationship, so one finds, looking at the individual hamlets, that the same device is repeated at hamlet-level, in the form of the hamlet-moiety organisation. The same basic principle of alliance operates at both levels.

Each hamlet is divided into two moieties, known as ivil and asila respectively. This is the same for each hamlet, so the two sets of moieties (village- and hamlet-) cross-cut one another thus (fig. 11).

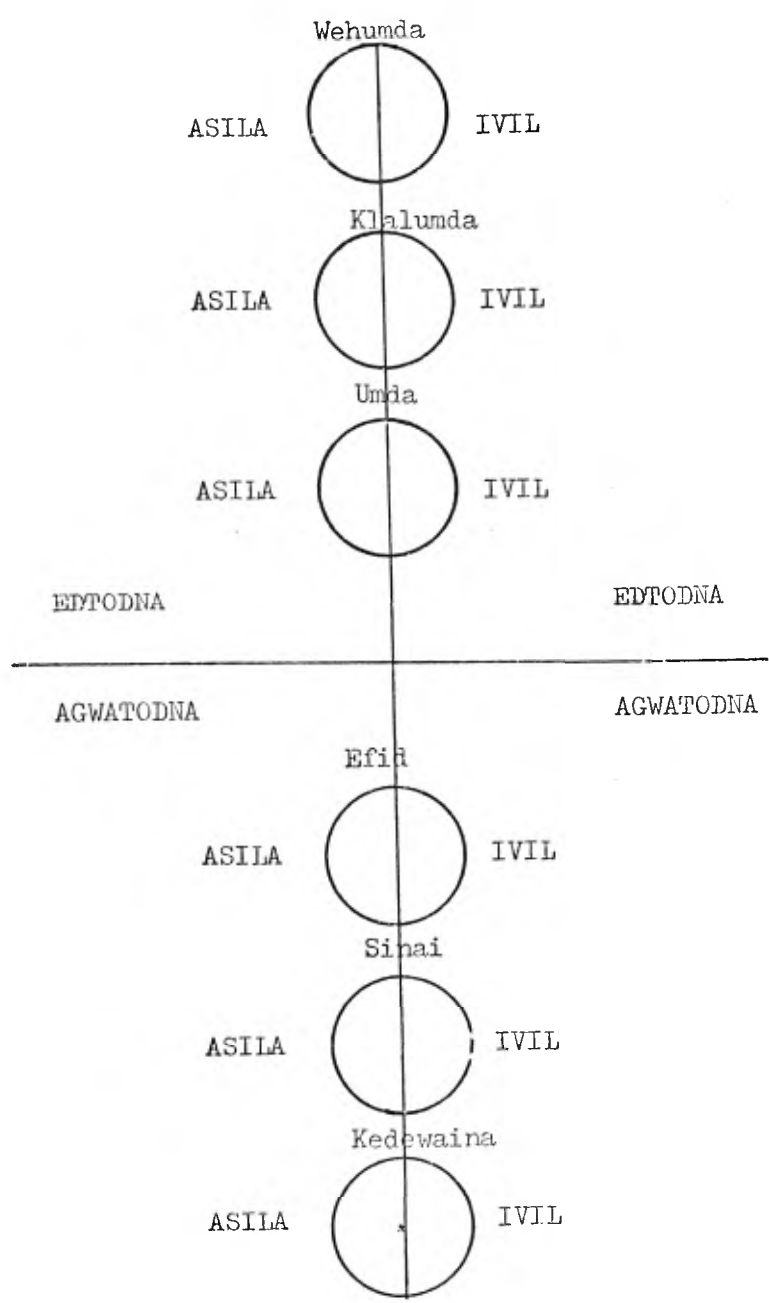


Fig II . VILLAGE AND HAMLET MOIETIES.

Like the village moieties the hamlet moieties are important only in ritual contexts. Village moieties are important in ritual involving the whole village, especially the ida sago fertility ritual, whereas the hamlet moieties are important in lesser ritual involving primarily members of one hamlet. Curing ritual is an instance of this. When a man falls ill, (let us say a man of ivil) in a particular hamlet, then the members of the opposite moiety in his hamlet (i.e. asila) will collaborate to perform a ritual called akovana smiv 'salving with ako-leaves' to cure him. This involves the men of asila washing themselves, and then painting their bodies with designs representing the subudagwa spirits which are presumed to be the cause of the illness. Having adopted the personae of the spirits in this way the men proceed to brush the patient with nettles (ako) and perfumed leaves while reciting a refrain which symbolises the spirits removing their arrows from the body of the sick man. This ritual service cannot be performed by members of the patient's own hamlet moiety, who can play no part at all in the ritual, but only by the opposite hamlet moiety. These may be assisted by the patient's matrikin from other hamlets, his mother's brothers. In the case of these latter, it does not matter which hamlet moiety they are members of, since the asila/ivil opposition is only relevant in intra-hamlet contexts. Another instance of reciprocal services being performed by asila and ivil is garden magic: the gardens of one moiety being bespelled by the other.

What is the sociological basis of the asila/ivil moiety opposition? The symbolism of the names of the hamlet moieties provides a clue here. Asila is derived, by informants, from asa, a garden: ivil, the other moiety, from ip, meaning breadfruit (iv). Thus, moiety A is opposed to moiety B as 'garden' to 'breadfruit tree'. The symbolism of breadfruit and gardens will be discussed in more detail below (chapters 3 and 5) here, let it suffice to say that gardens are feminine in relation to breadfruit trees which are masculine. Breadfruit trees are found planted in groves round garden houses, which are generally sited on ridge-tops, with the gardens themselves on the slopes on the ridges. Thus the breadfruit trees represent the central/masculine dimension, the feminine gardens the peripheral field (fig. 12).

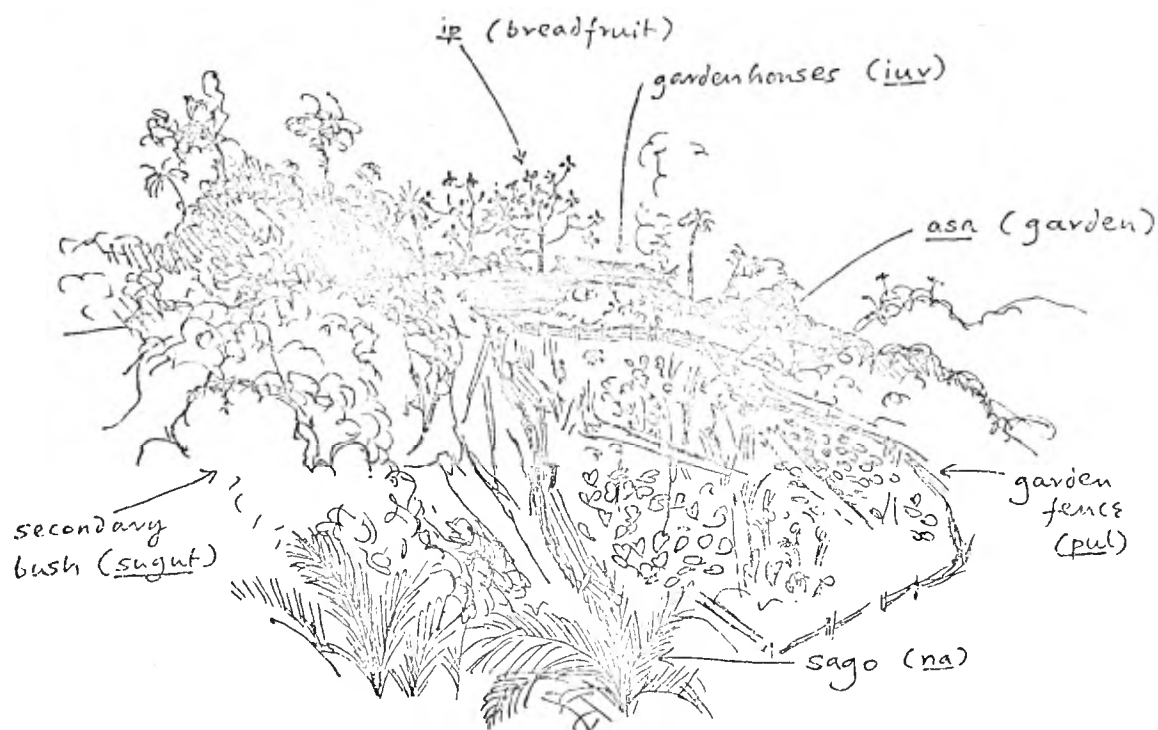


Fig 12 . BREADFRUIT (IP) AND GARDEN (ASA).

This arrangement is highly significant, since this central-peripheral opposition is basically identical to the opposition which I have already isolated as the sociological basis of the edtodna/agwatodna moiety opposition: i.e. an opposition between centre and periphery, which is at the same time an opposition between male (edtodna) and female (agwatodna).

|                 |   |                            |
|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| male            | : | female                     |
| central         | : | peripheral                 |
| agnates         | : | allies                     |
| owners          | : | immigrants                 |
| <u>edtodna</u>  | : | <u>agwatodna</u> (village) |
| ( <u>ivil</u> ) | : | ( <u>asila</u> ) (hamlet)  |
| breadfruit:     |   | garden                     |

On pages 78-82 I argued that the village moiety organisation reflects the processes of accretion of 'peripheral' groups, with territories away from the main village ridge, onto the 'central' group of clans whose territories adjoin the village area. The peripheral groups form the agwatodna (female) moiety, and the central groups the edtodna (male) moiety. Turning to the hamlet moiety organisation, it becomes apparent that essentially the same schema can be applied. The hamlet moieties reflect the processes whereby hamlets are formed through an accretion of allied clans. This is suggested by two facts: first of all, the moieties in the hamlet apportion the clans into two groups, just as the village moieties apportion hamlets into two groups. Secondly, the relation between these two groups within the hamlet reflects alliance



relations between them in that it is, essentially, a relation of mutual succour -- a kind of succour which excludes close agnates, but is characteristic of matrikin. Thus in the curing ritual quoted above, the parties who combine to salve the sick man with herbs are a) his matrikin (nenagai) and b) the opposite hamlet moiety -- a conjunction which indicates a logical identity between matrikin and members of the opposite moiety within the hamlet. Why, it may be asked, can such ritual succour not be provided by agnates? Informants were not explicit about this, merely asserting the fact that agnates could not participate in curing ritual: but it is reasonable to think that the very closeness of close agnates forbids them to perform services which, to be effective, must be performed by outsiders. In fact, while a man was lying ill, his close agnates would stay with him, lying on beds beside him, for all the world as if they were ill too. Indeed, they often complained of depression, lassitude, fever: symptoms which seemed to mimic the more serious ailments of their clan brother. They could not participate in the curative ritual, because they participated in the illness itself. Succour had to come from an external source -- the sick could not cure themselves. Succour is the duty of matrikin -- both in the broader political arena, and also in the relative intimacy of the hamlet -- and in the hamlet moieties we find an institutionalised means of distributing members of the hamlet into mutually succouring groups.

Granted the relation between the hamlet moieties,

based on mutual succour, is ideologically an alliance relation, i.e. a hypostatisation of the relation between matrikin, can it be said that the relation is actually one of alliance -- the consequence, that is, of mother's brother/sisters' son relations which have become ossified into a permanent institution within the hamlet? Logically, it is apparent that asila and ivil must have different agnatic origins, since otherwise they could not be separate (agnatic) moieties. In Umeda, agnation, as I have stressed, does not form cross-ties between solidary units: such a cross-tie between agnatic 'vertical' elements in the social structure is always conceptualised as a relation of alliance. The same applies to asila and ivil: being themselves recruited patrilineally their mutual relation is one of alliance. I would maintain this even in the face of what might seem a contradictory piece of evidence, namely, that in certain clans some members are asila and some ivil. How can a single clan have an alliance relationship with itself? Unfortunately, this problem only occurred to me after having left the field, and I never investigated it. It was suggested to me, by Jean La Fontaine and Antony Forge, during a discussion of this material in a seminar, that the moiety division within the hamlet might be the means whereby, in the long term, distinctions of clanship within the hamlet are forgotten, i.e. two clans in opposite hamlet moieties become identified as one clan divided into two sections according to moiety. I find this argument attractive, though I have none but inferential evidence to support it. Meanwhile the evidence I have

does support the idea that just as the 'original' Umeda clans are members of the 'male' edtodna village moiety, and the 'immigrant' clans are agwatodna at village level, so, at hamlet level, the 'original' occupants of a hamlet are ivil (breadfruit/male) and the 'outsiders' are asila (garden/female). Thus Kede clan in Kedewaine is ivil and the immigrant Wainas are asila, the original inhabitants of Wehumda are ivil, the later immigrants (Kedewaba etc.) are asila and so on. The single exception to this is Sinai, which is an offshoot of Efid. The reader may have noticed that certain hamlets, i.e. Efid and Sinai in Umeda and Sinai, Asila and Evil in Punda bear names which recall the moiety-designations ivil and asila. This seems to be a consequence of fission of hamlets along moiety lines, leading to the establishment of a new hamlet named after each moiety. This fission in the case of Proto-Efid took place along moiety lines, giving the two present hamlets of Efid and Sinai. The original inhabitants of Efid, are, naturally, ivil, and subsequent immigrants (i.e. ifenid-waina) are asila. In Sinai hamlet the position is the reverse, the main Sinai clan being asila and the subsequent immigrants (at present represented by one man only, whose origin I did not determine) being ivil.

In short, whether or not members of ivil or asila within a given hamlet are immigrants or not, the general rule holds that hamlet moiety affiliations reflect the process whereby clans, related originally through alliance, come together to form a composite hamlet. The hamlet moiety organisation is thus a reflection of the alliance

structure of the hamlet, given permanent institutional form, as a ritual relationship of mutual succour between the two moieties. The hamlet moiety organisation is structurally analogous to the village moiety organisation. In this double arrangement of moieties we have what is not so much a 'cross-cutting' of moieties as a two-tier hierarchy of moieties: the small scale moieties within the hamlet being writ large in the village moiety organisation. Two diagrams (figs. 13, 14) are provided here to aid the reader in visualising this; like the other diagrams, they should not be taken too literally.

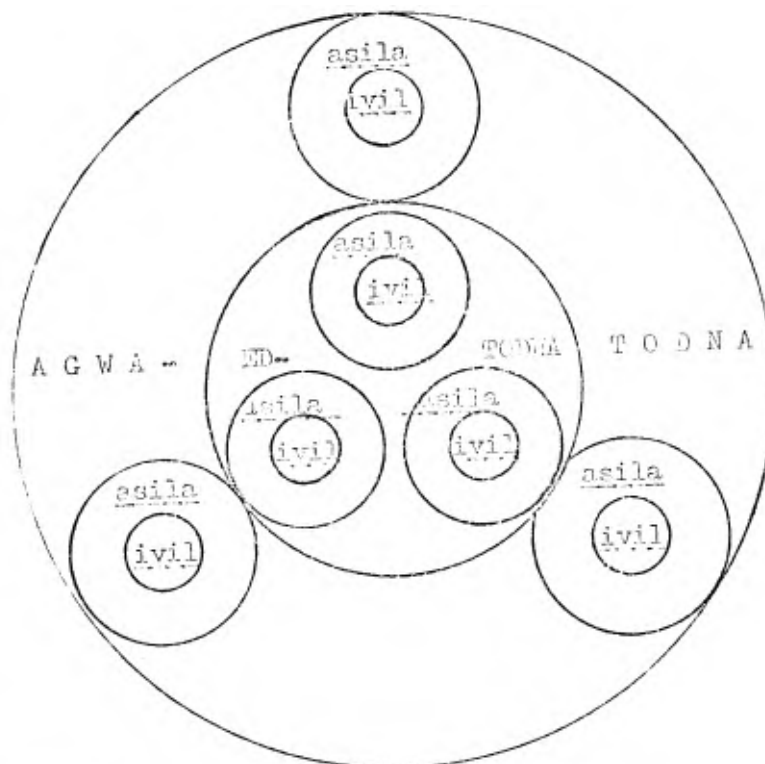


Fig. 13. NESTING OF HAMLET- AND VILLAGE- MOIETIES.

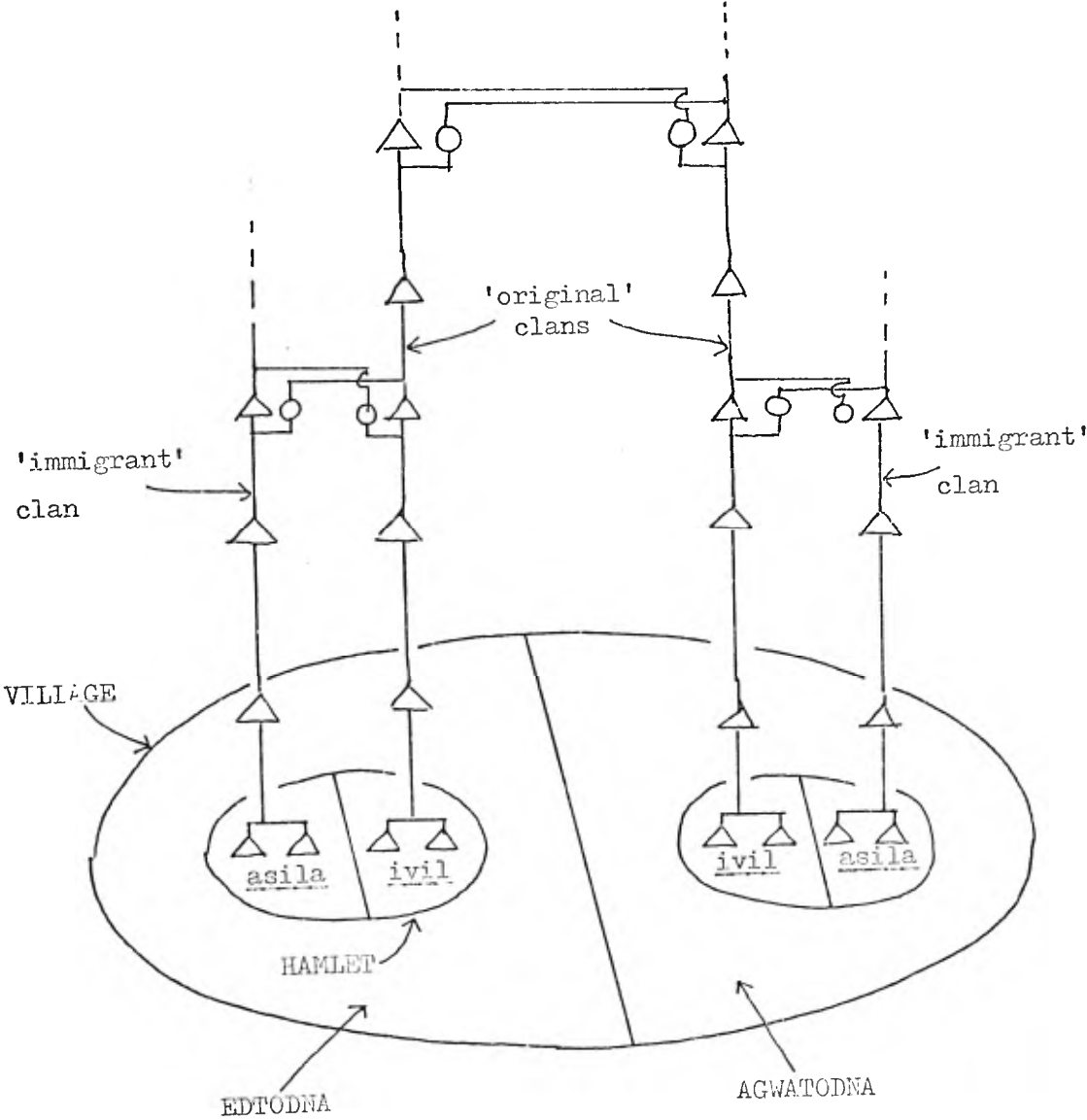


Fig. 14 . ALLIANCE RELATIONS BETWEEN VILLAGE- AND HAMLET- MOIETIES.



x. The Household

The hamlet is the largest and most important face-to-face group, but the high degree of mobility imposed on the component households by the pattern of economic activity means that the hamlet will be inhabited by its full complement of members only for short periods at a time, and will be deserted, or all but deserted, for much of the time. The hamlet is in fact not so much a group for quotidian action, as a 'pool' from which action groups -- for hunting down a pig, forming a sago-working party or a gardening group -- can be constituted as the need arises and as convenience dictates.

The core of any action-group drawn from the hamlet must inevitably consist of a productive household unit of an adult member of each sex, generally a man and his wife, plus auxiliary elements who can participate in the work but cannot undertake it independently, i.e. children of both sexes, unmarried bachelors, immature wives, widowers and the aged -- not that there are many in the latter category. It was most common to find more than one such productive household participating in a particular task; thus, if sago was being worked, one household head would take the upper end of the log, and the other household head take the lower. Their respective wives would build their sago washing apparatus together by the stream, and in this way the work would be shared, though the product of each separate household would remain distinct.

The most important factors in determining the combination of households for work purposes were common

interests in a particular territorial area. This in turn was roughly correlated with clan affiliations, each clan or sub-clan having one or more areas in the territory of the hamlet wherein their gardens and sago stands were concentrated. Actual brothers or clan brothers co-operated the most frequently. It was also common for unmarried youths to stay for long periods with their mothers' brothers. Personal friendships played an important part. Some brothers-in-law got on badly, and these, naturally, would not co-operate with one another in work. In certain cases, though, brothers-in-law co-operated extensively, combining to form working groups that were genuinely bilateral -- though perhaps I should stress that informal groups of a bilateral kind do not contradict the essentially unilineal character of the formal social structure. One such group is shown in the sketch below (fig. 15); it consisted of Sowai, a widower of Kedewaina (c. 45), his son-in-law Wasa of Wehunda (c. 35), his stepdaughter Mag (Wasa's wife), a very sturdy and capable girl of about 25, with two children aged about 5 and 8, besides which the group contained Amasu, Sowai's stepson, aged about 23, and his wife Mon (Wasa's sister) aged about 16, and finally Sowai's own son, Wiyai, aged about 13.

This heterogeneous group were all basically dependent on Mag for the essential female share in their economic activities, Mon being as yet too young to play much part (girls develop late, physically). Besides which, Mag also had her children to look after. Nonetheless the arrangement seemed very stable, so that Wasa spent a large part of his

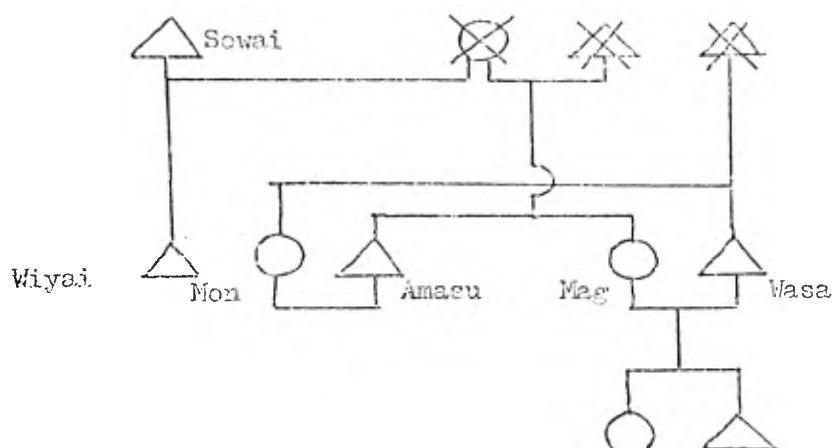


Fig. 15 The Sowai-Wasa work-group.

time in the territory of his affines, and Mag was evidently able to cope; indeed, she caught a large pig in a trap, which was credited to her, an event which caused much admiration. This particular combination was relatively unusual: most married men with families restricting themselves to their own territory, only the bachelors and young girls moving freely between working parties in one territory and another. Bachelors and other male auxiliaries of such working parties contributed their labour in felling, stripping, and pounding sago, but spent more time hunting.

Children begin to participate in the work appropriate to their sex very early on, and increase their work output gradually, so that by the age of about fifteen it becomes a really significant contribution. In adolescence and early adulthood, men specialise in hunting, and their contribution to sago-processing is relatively little. After marriage (generally at about twenty to a girl some five or ten years

younger), men progressively spend more time working sago, as their maturing wives become progressively capable of washing it independently. 'Bachelorhood' is therefore a loosely defined period between the ages of about sixteen to thirty devoted to hunting, whereas married life (mainly devoted to sago) occupies the subsequent period -- needless to say many of these 'bachelors' are technically 'married' men, but to girls still immature.

The upper limit of bachelorhood and the lower limit of married life merge together, and equally, the lower limit of the bachelors merges with the upper limit of the 'small boys' peer group'. This particular sub-category, even more than the bachelors, like to roam about as an independent labile, force, between camp and camp, now and then helping in the work, but spending most of the time pursuing small game and gathering produce in the forest. They also make tiny gardens, which they tend. They are most in evidence (curiously enough) at meal times. They distribute their miscellaneous edible prizes among themselves, neatly done up in little green packages, while their elders provide them with cooked sago.

#### xi. Parents and Children

Having examined the major aspects of the formal social structure, I want, in this and ensuing sections, to look more closely at the content of kinship relations. In doing this, I shall follow, very roughly, the 'biographical method' advocated by Malinowski i.e. I will deal sequentially with the relationships ego enters into in the order in which they become important in the life-

cycle, beginning with parent/child relationships, sibling relationships within the hamlet, and then with relations outside the primary socialising group, with matrikin, and affines.

The discussion will be conducted from the standpoint of a male ego. This is a consequence of the sad, but true, fact, that I have none but very indirect evidence on the 'woman's point of view' of Umeda society. Due to my social identification with the rather segregated 'bachelor' group in the communities among which I worked, I had little opportunity to discuss anything with women. However, I hope that this deficiency will be mitigated by the fact that my main arguments concern symbolic structures whose frame of reference is the 'typical' male ego's outlook on life, and which can be interpreted in the light of male social experience alone. Let the sequel show whether this assumption of male hegemony in the domain of ritual and symbolism can be justified. Meanwhile, I can only point to the existence of this lacuna in my material, with appropriate apologies to the women of Umeda, whose voice I have failed to record, and whose opinions I never fathomed.

(a) Theory of conception and early socialisation

Umedas believed that the child's substance came from both parents. The familiar blood/bone opposition, whereby male substance is bone and female substance is blood, is found in a mythological guise, but seemed to play no part in the overt thinking of informants about conception. The idea of community of substance between parent and child was understood, less as a mystical bond, a projection of



familial ties, than as a way of phrasing the very mundane fact that the parent/child relation is essentially a relation between feeders and fed. I got the most uncompromising statement of the Umeda notion of the relation of parents and children when news was brought to a camp in which I was staying of a severe beating administered by a father and mother to their small child (aged about three) when he mischievously doused their only fire in particularly annoying circumstances. This incident (i.e. the beating) scandalised the whole camp; how could a father beat a child who was his own semen, or a mother, likewise, willingly injure a child whose very substance was her own milk? How could they injure themselves in beating their own child? The point of these reproaches against the parents was always the same: the feeding relation between parents and child established a continuity of substance between them. The father's 'feeding' role is symmetrical to that of the mother: the father feeds the child with his semen before the child is born, the mother feeds the child with her milk afterwards -- no mystical ideas were invoked as the basis of the relation, since the child's spirit or ghost is only acquired later, when the child has a name and a social personality, and is not derived from either parent. Because semen was considered the food of the unborn child, copulation was continued for the first four or five months of pregnancy -- a phenomenon widely reported in New Guinea. Semen was explicitly compared with various edible substances, notably sago-jelly (yis) and the contents of eggs (ali). The child

was called his father's 'egg'. (This will be discussed further in Chapter 5, in relation to ritual).

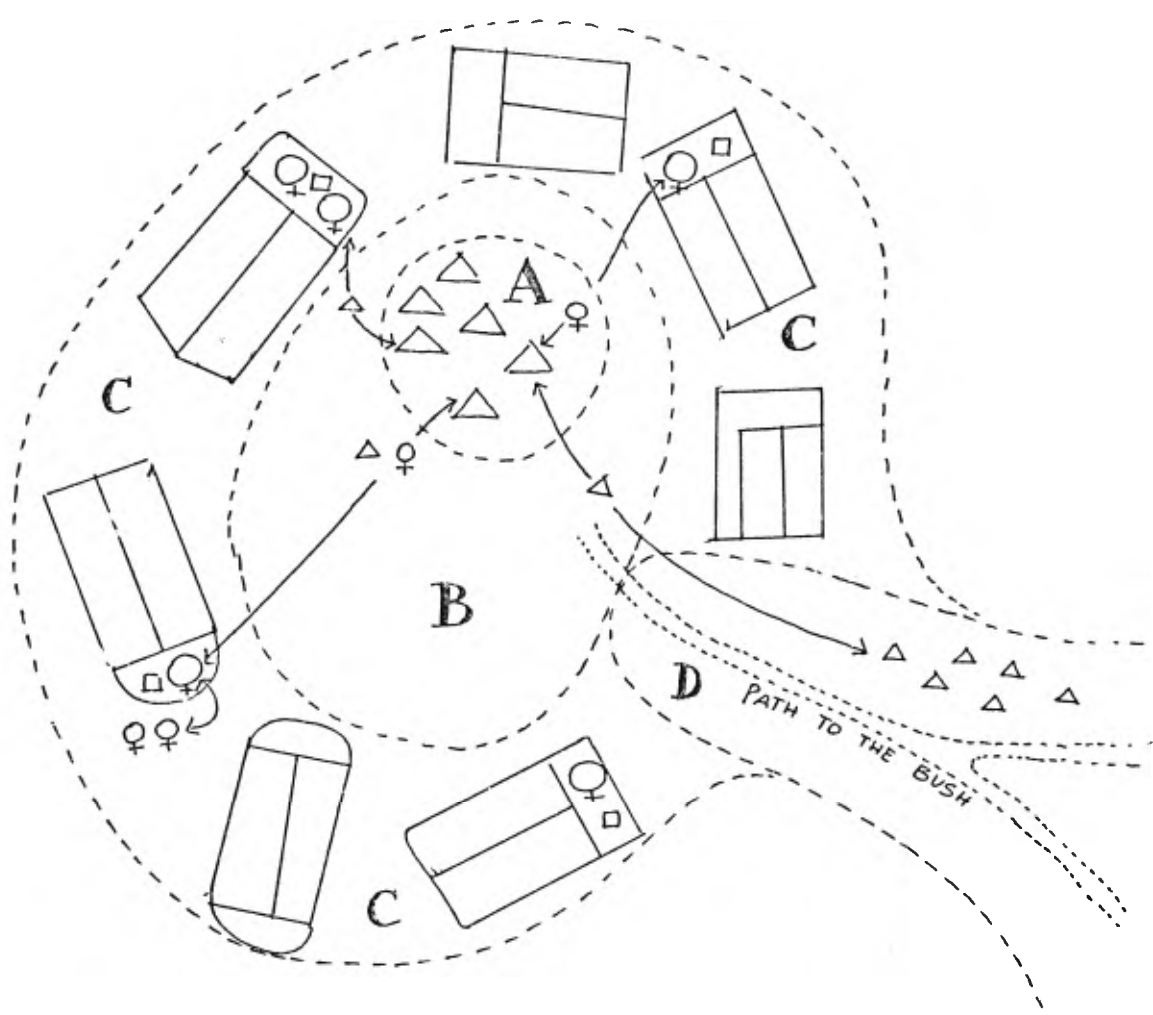
As will be seen, Umeda parents are, under normal circumstances, very permissive where babies and small infants are concerned, never using physical coercion, or the withdrawal of sympathy, as a means of exerting control over their behaviour (except when direly provoked, as in the instance quoted above) until well after the child has been weaned, at about four years. Births take place in garden houses, in the bush, well away from the main settlement. The husband is present at the birth, but does not participate, and the mother is assisted by one or more experienced women. The rest of the hamlet stays well away from the area. Men do not discuss what is going on, as birth is a taboo subject. After the birth, the couple and the new baby stay put in the garden house for about a fortnight, while the 'heat' of the birth -- which is dangerous to other people, is dissipated, and they are in a fit condition to return. A new-born baby has no name and no soul. If it dies it is buried at the foot of a tree. Some female infants, and perhaps males as well are exposed, and die. The practice of infanticide was admitted to, though I did not gather details on this sensitive topic: perhaps it has now been abandoned definitively, especially since the administration is known to have imprisoned women in other groups in the area, for this offence. But as far as I can see, no other explanation can account for the present highly-unbalanced sex ratio, even granting that women have a shorter life-expectancy than males as a

result of the fact that many women died as a result of complications of pregnancy and childbirth (cf. The pie-diagrams on p.93 above, which show this demographic imbalance: it will be seen that it is almost as marked in the category 'female children' as in the category of 'adult females'). I should add that all the women who were pregnant while I was in the field either gave birth to children who survived, or who died of causes which were natural rather than induced.

Very small infants are entirely looked after by their mothers, men being bound by a taboo against touching small babies, which are believed to cause certain illnesses. Only later will a father feel it is safe to fondle or play with his child, when it is aged a year or more. It is also important for the parents not to mention the child by name: they should refer to it only by some circumlocution. I was told that the child would die if it was discussed in its own hearing: perhaps because its grip on life is weak, and its soul easily detached from its body. Until the child can walk, the parents observe a post partum-sex taboo: which leads to a spacing of the family by three or four year intervals. No doubt, though this was never said, it is children who come too soon after an elder sibling, who are in the greatest danger of being exposed.

For the first year or two the child spends much of the time either being suckled, fed, or otherwise entertained by the mother or her female companions, and sleeping in the mother's net-bag (uda) a sort of external pouch-womb, well adapted to serve this particular function. After

this period, with, perhaps, the imminent arrival of a younger sibling, the father's role becomes increasingly important. I stress this, because my observations impressed on me the great importance of the father's role in the socialisation of the child, particularly during the period between the ages of three and eight, when the child makes its first steps in society on its own account, and the period, I think, when certain fundamental social attitudes, important in later life, are laid down. In particular, I would argue that a crisis of 'rejection' is a standard psychological phenomenon (among male children particularly) about the age of six, and that this rejection, which is the crisis during which the child marks out its identity vis-a-vis its peer-group, involves the child's relation with its father, but not with its mother, as might be assumed. In many societies (including western society) weaning is held to be a period of stress for infants being socialised, and consequently a period in which certain traumas, with effects in later life, may occur. In Umeda, however, weaning is very late, both as a result of the post partum-sex taboo, and the low natural fertility of lactating (and under-nourished) mothers. The arrival of a younger sibling does not generally interfere with the very gradual process of weaning, which, so far as I could see, was very much a spontaneous process initiated by the child acting on its own accord. Children would be well able to walk before abandoning the breast and even when having ceased to depend, even marginally, on mother's milk for nourishment, children would resort to the nipple



- KEY
- } Adults (c. 17+)
  - }
  - } Juveniles (3-17)
  - }
  - Infants (0-3)
  - House
  - Veranda

- A: Focal area occupied by a group of adult men
- B: 'Transitional' area (see text)
- C: Peripheral area occupied by women and infants
- D: Small-boys' peer-group

Fig16 . THE SOCIAL FIELD OF THE HAMLET



as a source of comfort in frightening or unpleasant situations. The existence of a younger sibling did not debar children from receiving maternal comfort of this sort. Moreover, for a long time prior to the actual weaning of the child, it has been receiving increasing quantities of solid food from its mother's hands, and one may infer that at no time is the child acutely conscious of a definite withdrawal of the essential nutritive 'presence' of the mother. The major crisis in childhood is not physical, but social. It is not, one could say, from the mother's breast that the child is displaced, but from the father's knee. Let me refer, at this point, to the diagram showing 'The Social Field of the Hamlet' (fig. 16 -- which shows the ground plan of a typical hamlet, with the typical dispositions of men and women, adults and juveniles, while sitting together in the morning or evening. Through this diagram we can get a 'cross-section' of the process of socialisation that I am describing. The women and the unweaned infants remain on the verandahs of the houses forming a ring around the central space (C), while the adult men congregate in the centre in a spot selected by tacit convention, smoking, conversing, and chewing areca: the reader will note the centrality of the men (A) versus peripheral status of women, a point which will emerge elsewhere in symbolic contexts. Between the periphery and the centre is a transitional area (B) in which I have indicated some children, linked by arrows both to the knot of men at the centre and the women sitting at the periphery, by the houses. This spatial

transition is also a social transition between the dependency of the infantile state and the autonomy of later childhood and youth (D). It is through the relation with the father that this transition is mediated. The unweaned child will remain with its mother, ignored by the men sitting at the centre. When the child is safe to be touched, the father will begin to take temporary charge of it: the child spends more and more time in the care of its father in the centre area, especially when it begins to walk and talk, in its second and third year, leaving the mother free for household tasks. Having learned to walk, the child begins to make the transition between the C area and the A area voluntarily, its first journey. At this stage, the child, having made its entry into the knot of adult males at A, does not participate in the general conversation going on there, but concentrates its attention rather exclusively on its own father, with whom it is becoming not so much conversationally as physically familiar. At the age of three or four, by which time the child may well have a younger sibling, the child turns to the father for physical reassurance in much the same way as it would turn to the mother. At this time too, with the coming of a younger sibling, the relation of father and child is made closer by the fact that the child ceases to sleep with the mother, and instead sleeps on the same bed as its father, moreover, the mother's net bag having been pre-empted by the younger sibling, the child now travels from place to place riding pig-a-back on its father's shoulders. Altogether then,

this is a period at which the relation between father and child becomes particularly close. This relation has a very important physical aspect. I was much struck by the way in which a small child, having found its father amid a group of adult men, would engage in a minute and prolonged physical exploration, submitting hair, beard, limbs, weapons and accessories to a concentrated scrutiny, by touch, taste, and smell, as well as by sight, quite mindless of the perfunctory caresses it received in return, and still more so to the adult conversation going on around it.

It was the emergence of the child from this particularly close relationship with the father which seemed to me to be the most critical phase of socialisation, or at least the phase accompanied by the most apparent stress where the child was concerned. The child, now between four and eight years old, is progressively deprived of the solicitude both of the father himself, and of older people in general, with the exception of the mother. Where previously the child has been drawn -- inexorably, as it were -- towards the group of adult men at A, finding there both caresses and the stimulus of the male sex in general. (This involves an element of sexuality on both sides: for instance, I once watched a small boy of 4 who was playing with the penis sheath and genitals of his classificatory father, displaying a degree of playful violence which made me recoil, but which his 'father' indulged without protest or retaliation). Where previously the child has been able to rely on the father as a point d'appui for coming into

relation to its social universe, so, eventually, it must find itself excluded from the ring. While the arrival of successors within the sibling group does not materially affect the child's relation with its mother, whose nutritive role is not jeopardised, the social protection afforded in the early stages by the exclusive relation with the father is much more critically affected. At this point the child must redefine his role vis-a-vis this parent, i.e. he (male) must cease to complement the father, and must begin to copy him. This is a crucial transition; where previously the situation requires the child to adopt a purely negative position in relation to the father (child to adult) it must now adopt a role which involves the assimilation of parental behaviour (adult to adult). I was able to observe this process particularly clearly in the case of the family of Wiye of Kedewain, who had three sons (by two wives) aged about 3, 5, and 8. One day I spent together with the whole family at a sago working site. Abo, the youngest, basked securely in the favourite's position, occupying much the greatest share of his father's attention. Peda, the middle child, was at the stage of being progressively deprived of his father's solicitude -- he was fretful and weepy, and I do not think that I am merely being subjective when I say he was clearly very jealous of his younger brother's privileged position. His mother did her best to comfort him, but his father paid him little attention, and that not very sympathetic. Yankwo, the eldest, was of an age when, for the most part, he could spend his time in the peer-group of boys of his own age.



He betrayed no concern at his father's favouritism, or his younger brother's bad temper. His behaviour was at all times reserved and cool, full of charming details of 'adult' behaviour, copied from his father. These were apparent in his casual manner of breaking off speech mid-flow, to apply light to a cigar stub, his manner of spitting, his cool appraisal of toy arrows and so forth ... Yankwo was re-establishing communication with his father on the basis, as it were, of a shared commitment to adult values, adult standards of behaviour.

The lack of sympathy and even open irritation showed by Wiye towards his middle son, Peda, on this occasion was typical Umeda paternal behaviour towards children who were passing through the crisis I have mentioned. I was sometimes amazed by the callous behaviour (as it seemed to me, though of course not to the people themselves) that Umeda fathers could display. Certain children seemed to have particular difficulties in reconciling themselves to their situation. Wadwa, a foster child of Amasu of Hedewaina was a case in point. Amasu's affections were entirely bound up with his daughter, the three-year-old Wause, upon whom he doted, and his attitude towards his fosterchild, aged about eight, was often openly hostile. I was once present at a frightful scene which resulted when Wadwa, feeling himself slighted by Amasu (who gave a piece of cooked yam to Wause without offering him any) went into a prolonged and violent tantrum. Wadwa rolled about covering himself with dust and ashes, tore his hair, forced dirt into his mouth, hammered on the ground with



his fists, yelling in real and frightening desperation (I remember thinking what a good thing it was that there was nothing, like a television set or some valuable household ornaments, for him to break) -- till, after the lapse of many minutes, during which no particular attention was paid to him, a woman who was present quieted him by the simple expedient of offering him another piece of yam. Wadwa's tantrums, which were frequent, aroused no concern -- 'Wadwa always cries' people said, unsympathetically -- and nobody seemed to connect such behaviour in children with the jealousy aroused in elder siblings by the monopolisation of the father's attention by younger siblings.

This inflexible attitude towards children of Wadwa's age, who manifested similar symptoms of jealousy, seemed after all to serve a purpose, whether or not the people were consciously aware of it, of forcing the child so situated to adopt the role, either of a member of the small boys' peer group (in the case of boys) or, in the case of girls, the role of member of the female work force. It was in these contexts that education in essential skills was mainly carried out. Relationships formed in the context of the boys' peer group become the basis of relationships between the adult male members of the hamlet later on (the peer group is indicated as area D on the 'social field' diagram). Thus, during the process of socialisation, the male child will pass first from the C (peripheral) region to the A region (central), that is, from a relationship of dependency focussed on the mother, to a relationship of dependency focussed on

the father, and thence out again to the D region the independent group of small boys, who will, in time, move back into the system and take over the A region.<sup>1</sup> Girls, on the other hand, cycle back into the C region, and, on marriage, move out of the system altogether.

Without wishing to suggest that I can prove anything on the basis of such a brief, impressionistic, account, I should like to suggest that this particular pattern of events during socialisation sets up a persisting set of attitudes and sentiments. First of all, the relation of the senior to the junior generation, fathers and sons, is coloured by definite feelings of strain and antagonism, moderated by some degree of actual avoidance, after early childhood. The opposition of the generations is, I think, established during the period of enforced exclusion of the male children from the centre of the social field, occupied by the group of older men. Relations between fathers and adolescent sons tend to be cool and respectful, rather than intimate. The senior generation maintain their advantage because of their superior control of resources (through having access to female labour, and also having better access to game, which adolescent boys have not the skill to obtain in the quantities they will later achieve). The complaints of children and young men against their fathers generally revolved round the issue of their meanness in meat, the father being in control of the family supply, kept in the family smoking basket in the rafters. This image

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1. Later still, men in their forties and fifties, who have reached the ultimate stages of the male career-pattern, tend to move out, once more, from the centre. Old men tend to become rather lonely recluses, with a few intimates of their own (advanced) age.

of the father as 'lord of the smoking basket' is reflected in the name of the Umeda culture-hero Toagtod ('smoked-meat-man'). One myth tells how 'smoked-meat-man' had a house filled with game (live) pigs, cassowaries, etc., from which the children were excluded. Instead of hunting in the bush, he simply had to go into his house to shoot whatever variety of game he wanted. His children were too greedy, however, and one day one of them disobeyed the taboo on entering the house. He broke in and shot a pig, but in the process all the other animals escaped, and ran away into the forest, which is why it is now necessary to hunt them there with so much time and effort. The moral of this tale being, evidently, that the inaccessibility of the food to the 'children' is the condition of its abundance.

It is not only the generations which are opposed in this way, but also elder and younger siblings, especially brothers. Relations between elder and younger brothers were close in the sense that they would, in later life co-operate together in work, and would present a solid front in disputes, but, at the same time, it was apparent that relations between them seemed to preclude gaiety in favour of sober politeness, rather similar to the punctilio observed between partners in a firm or practice. Full brothers would not fall into one another's arms, weeping with mirth, as was often the case in meetings between cross-cousins or more distantly related age-mates. There were definite jealousies between brothers, and a particularly strong feeling of competition in hunting. It was easy to see how cast down a young man would become, for days on end, following some

conspicuous success of a full brother. There were also 180 sexual jealousies, which could result in open quarrels (e.g. the quarrel which led to the fission of Kede clan). Sexual antagonism existed both within and across generation lines: members of the senior generation frequently suspected adulterous relations between the younger wives and the older, unmarried, members of the junior generation in the hamlet (who boasted privately of their successes) while elder and younger brothers had definite conflicts of interest over wives, particularly in the cases, which were not uncommon, where two brothers had only one sister to use as an exchange. The Pultod myth, the basic myth in the Umeda corpus, deals extensively with the theme of fraternal/filial envy and conflict over women (see Appendix II). Suffice to say here that it is rich in the most classical kind of 'Oedipal' symbolism. The outward appearance of solidarity vis-a-vis like units generally shown by members of a hamlet, did not preclude the existence of strong, though mostly latent, antagonisms between the senior and junior members. Although death itself was blamed on outsiders (i.e. Punda sorcerers) it was asserted that a man could be 'softened up' -- made so weak that he could not fend off a sorcerer's attack -- by lesser techniques which might very well be utilised by a senior man against a rival within the hamlet. One informant, with how much psychological penetration I cannot say, asserted that the origin of all illness lay in the fear (pevm) aroused by the angry glances of a close kinsman, an elder brother, father or guardian.



In short, the rather traumatic circumstances whereby the child is ejected (I do not think that that is too strong a word to use) from paternal solicitude and the associated sibling rivalries, sets up a pattern of inter- and intra-generational antagonism among male hamlet members which are carried over into later life. But against this must also be set the shared commitment of all the male members, of whatever age category, to certain solidary male values: all male members of the hamlet are basically alike in competing for the same things, their solidarity and their antagonism stem from the same set of values. We can see this by examining the contrast between the relations typifying hamlet members and the very different tone of the relations which exist between them and their matrikin.

It is notable that while the relations of children with their fathers (especially sons) seemed to go through this period of stress, this was not the case where relation of children with their mothers was concerned. I detected a considerable contrast between the apparent favouritism of Umeda fathers and the scrupulous fairness with which Umeda mothers treated their children, not only the youngest. This was relatively easy for them in that their responsibility lay mainly in the distribution of the staple sago jelly which is a commodity in relatively abundant supply, compared with meat. Informants stressed the absolute reliability of the support given by the mother. A man whose mother is alive never goes hungry, I was told, while the death of the mother was a calamity with grave practical consequences. It is at least arguable that the generous, permissive,



relation between ego and his matrikin (na, magawa) is a function of this indulgent maternal presence, while the restrained quality of relations between agnates reflects the more stressful father/child relation. A linguistic detail brings out rather clearly the cognitive contrast between agnatic and matrilineal relationships. A man has two ways of identifying himself socially; first as a man of such-and-such a hamlet, i.e. the hamlet where he lives, where his father and brothers live etc. Thus a man is a Kede-tod, an Umda-tod and so on. But there is another idiom which is used when a man identifies himself via his matrikin as a child of such-and-such a hamlet (i.e. his Mother's brother's hamlet). Thus a man might be a Kede-tod (man of Kede) and a Puda-tuda (a child of Punda). As a 'man' of a particular (agnatic) hamlet, ego stands on his own feet, whereas as a 'child' of his maternal hamlet ego retains a lifelong inferiority, a right to be protected and succoured. The protective role of the mother's brother is played out in public in ritual (see Chapter 5) but is also important in purely mundane affairs. The mother's brother is a kind of parent whose parental role is not played out in the domestic unit, but in the ritual and political arena of the total society. In a society in which, until recently it was considered entirely reasonable to attempt to kill any individual not protected by some specific relationship the importance of the political umbrella provided by real or classificatory 'mother's brothers' can hardly be over-estimated. This is a well worn theme on which it is hardly necessary to dwell.

xii. Bachelorhood, betrothal and marriage

The peer-group of small boys, alluded to in the previous section, forms the basis, eventually, of the group of bachelors, who, like the small boys themselves, form a relatively autonomous group within the general framework of the hamlet. The bachelors specialise in hunting (as opposed to sago production, which is the major task of the married men). Their concern with hunting does not reflect the purely economic value of this activity alone but even more its prestige value to the individual. It is as a cunning hunter that a youth makes his mark in the eyes of the society at large, attracting, perhaps, the favourable attention of potential fathers-in-law, not to mention that of erring wives. Their somewhat marginal social and economic position gives them the leisure, not only to pursue the time-consuming occupation of hunting, but also to adorn themselves and cultivate their appearance more assiduously than is normal among older men. Unlike the latter category, they always maintain the practice of wearing a penis-sheath, or some other form of genital covering (cf. The analysis in my article on this topic (Gell : 1971)).

The Umeda word for 'bachelor' (muh-tod) does not indicate simply an unmarried man -- in fact, many men falling into this category are actually betrothed to wives -- but rather a man going through the penultimate stage of socialisation -- here, as elsewhere in Melanesia, social adulthood is a late acquisition for males, coming only at the age of thirty or more, with the birth of one or more children. Marriage, as such, may not detract from bachelor

status, especially in the cases where the wife, betrothed as a child to a man of about twenty, has many years to go before she is capable of sustaining an independent female productive and reproductive role. Very young girls 'married' in this way do not take up residence with their husbands immediately. The transition, when it occurs, is gradual, the girl spending more and more time with her husband's group and less and less with her own. During this phase in the marriage, conflicts may arise between affines over the girl's labour, the groom and his kin insisting on her co-operation, the bride's group claiming that she is still too young to work alone.

Bachelors too, may stall at the prospect of accepting their new role as married men, since despite its tribulations bachelorhood has certain advantages at least in the eyes of younger men. They were supercilious of marriage, and placed a definite value on celibacy as such as conducive to bodily well-being and hunting success. The gradual 'easing in' of the 'bachelor' (aged 25+) and his wife (aged 17+) into the routine of married life was the final crisis in the process of socialisation. The first crisis, one could say, comes when the child (male) is forced out of the centre into the small boy's peer group, and the final one is the crisis of re-integration, when the boy returns to the centre, as a mature adult.

The difficulties of 'married' bachelors may be illustrated by the case of a youth of Kedewaina, aged about 17, who, by a fluke in the exchange system, was married to a nubile girl of his own age, who, had she been married

to an older husband, would certainly have been sufficiently mature, physically, to set up an independent household. Despite possessing this nubile wife, the youth's behaviour conformed, not to the standard of the married men, but to that of the other bachelors of the hamlet with whom he associated. His wife was a source of embarrassment to him, which he betrayed by the curt, bossy, manner he adopted when speaking to her. While he was unable, either from his own diffidence, or as a result of the coyness of the girl, to play the 'husband' role towards her (both reasons were suggested, and both tended to make him seem ridiculous) he must have remained conscious all the time that the girl was fair game to all the other young men in the hamlet, who, though they scorned marriage, as such, were none of them averse to sexual forays of a more casual nature. One of them claimed not only to have seduced the girl, but also to have confessed his misdeed to the husband later, out of shame. He told me that the young husband had shown no anger at this, claiming, whether truly or in affectation, that he was indifferent to his wife. The young man himself said to me, on another occasion, that his young wife disgusted him, and that the only women he cared about were the prostitutes on the coast (where he had never been) -- a sexual paradise whose mythology is constantly replenished by the tales of returned labourers, prisoners, policemen, catechists etc. (He was particularly impressed by the detail, brought back in some report from the outside world, that the prostitutes continued to puff cigarettes nonchalantly during the act of sexual intercourse. He thought this very



exciting -- which casts a curious light on Umeda male sexual attitudes. Passivity is favoured; all the young men I talked to were evidently very ambivalent about any display of passion on the female side, perhaps because it represented a threat to their freedom and masculinity. Bachelors had very clear cut ideas on their sexual role. While they remained averse to any institutionalised sexual relations, they remained amenable to fleeting encounters. They did not pursue women actively, but cultivated their appearance so that the women would be moved (they hoped) to pursue them. Sexual initiatives were supposed to be made by women, though I cannot tell whether this was what happened in practice. There was a very marked category-separation between copulation and reproduction. Bachelors had few reservations where the purely copulatory aspects of sexual relations were concerned (copulation being part of the aggressive masculine stereotype, and an analogue of their occupation par excellence, hunting), while towards reproduction itself they maintained an attitude of disdainful prudishness, rather reminiscent of the prudishness of the test-tube-bred inhabitants of Huxley's 'Brave New World'. Only regularised sex had reproductive implications, the idea of illegitimacy not being current at all, and it was towards the specifically reproductive sexuality of married couples that the bachelors had such disdain, not towards sexuality as such.

Hence the embarrassment of this married bachelor. The situation was, however, resolved somewhat during my time in the field. I often loaned my gun to this youth,



and he soon managed to kill with it a large pig, his first major hunting success. As a result of this success, I was told, he also succeeded in seducing (or being seduced by) his own wife. This paradoxical conquest restored his prestige somewhat, but he was still intent on going to the coast, largely, I think, to avoid the issue of his marriage. This course had been taken by two other young men of Umeda married to nubile girls not much younger than themselves, and there was no doubt that below a certain age (c. 25) men were genuinely afraid of marriage. More usually the age-difference between spouses is sufficiently great to ensure that by the time the wife reaches puberty the husband is psychologically adapted to the prospect of marriage. Local Government Councillor Pom, for example (aged about 30) was only too eager for his wife (about 15) to grow up since otherwise he was an adult of outstanding achievements.

I will say more about the position of bachelors in a later chapter, in the context of ritual. The essential point which I should like to emphasise is that Umeda kinship ideology makes a strong disjunction between bachelors, and their way of life, and that of the married men. Moreover, while this category opposition is hard and fast, the sociological process of transition between the two modes of existence appropriate to the two opposed stereotypes is only gradually achieved. In the process of transition the individual male is subject to role-contradictions stemming from the desire both to preserve his freedom from the marital and familial responsibilities of marriage, duties

towards affines, etc., while at the same time becoming increasingly envious of the alternative freedoms conferred by marriage itself, the monopoly of a woman, the economic autonomy of a self-supporting household and so on.

In many societies this transition is mediated, to some extent, in ritual terms via initiation rites and a hierarchy of initiatory grades (e.g. the Abelam: see Forge 1970). It will be shown later that the major Umeda ritual festival, though not overtly initiatory in character, does fulfil this role in the sense that it provides a hierarchy of progressively more senior ritual roles, which are correlated with the life-cycle of the individual. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

In the preceding paragraphs I have touched on the fact that the bachelor state implies only a relative absence of sexual outlets, and that this relative celibacy has a positive value placed upon it, at least by the younger bachelors, as conducive to personal success, and corresponding prestige, within the context of the masculine ideal, the potent hunter, the adorned and beautiful man, the admiration of the women and the envy of other men. Given the ever-present possibility of extra-marital sexual relations -- without the disadvantage of familial or affinal responsibilities, the crucial disabilities under which bachelors lay can be seen as being more within the economic than the sexual sphere. For all their relative freedom from the routine duties of sago production the bachelors remained always at the mercy of their married elders for the staple item of diet, since at best hunting

and gathering, in which they specialised, produced only relatively small quantities of high-value foods. And the married men were by no means as dependent on them for these foods (yob: 'relish' abus in P.E.) as the bachelors were on them for their sago; married men also hunted, and being experienced men, were often the more successful. The fact that the bachelors were economically dependent on the married men was the fundamental sanction in social control within the hamlet. Female labour was the crucial productive resource, for, though male labour was equally essential from a technological point of view, it was in more abundant supply. The married men, who controlled female labour, might thus be said to own the means of production. At any rate, the bachelors remained finally subservient to them, both economically, in that they had to assist the married men in their work, and socially, in that this assistance, and the reward of food which followed it, meant that their relations fell into the pattern of filial dependence on parental bounty, so serving to reinforce the superiority of the married men. Their authority derived from the fact that they gave food to the bachelors, and from the fact that they could, if they wished, cease from doing so.

With increasing household autonomy, the older married men became careless of externals: they were frequently naked, bearded and unkempt unlike the decorative bachelors. The carefulness of the bachelors in these respects, was besides being an index of their greater leisure, also a sign of their subservience to the norms of masculine

competitiveness, norms towards which the married men, having achieved the major goals open to them in their society, became increasingly indifferent. They held the positions of real authority in the society, over their families, and collectively over the bachelors, and they did not need to bolster their prestige-rating with finery. Their power, moreover, was not only mundane, since with increasing age they became more experienced in magic, hoarding knowledge of magical techniques which, being the monopoly of married men, constituted another factor tending to keep the bachelors in subservience to them.

#### xiii. Marriage and sorcery

##### (a) Relations with affines

Before going on to discuss sorcery, which is the main theme of this section, I ought to add a word about affinal relationships in general. As has been mentioned, marriage payments are not a significant feature of Umeda marriage, the exchanges involved in marriage being made on the basis of 'like-for-like' - a woman for a woman.

However, reciprocal exchanges between affines do not cease with the initial exchange of women. The paramount obligation of affines thereafter is to supply one another with meat. From every pig or other large game animal killed by either side (wife-givers or wife-takers) one hind leg is reserved specifically for affines. This rule is very strictly adhered to, the leg being sent uncooked, on the bone, to prevent any argument arising over cheating. Since the only 'scarce goods' circulating in the Umeda economy -- in the absence of livestock or shell



valuables as a medium of exchange -- are women and meat, their linking-together in the reciprocal exchanges of affines is important and significant. Despite the absence of marriage payments of the elaborate kind found in richer societies on the Middle Sepik (such as Lumi, mentioned above) it is arguable that the underlying 'exchange mentality' is as present in Umeda as elsewhere, moderated only in its expression by the lamentable poverty of the people. The gifts of meat are continued in the next generation, since it is customary to send part of any large kill to the mother's brother of the successful hunter (who, himself, cannot eat any part of the animal he has killed -- a kind of incest taboo on meat).

Nor do the mutual obligations of brothers-in-law cease there. They are expected to co-operate in garden work, particularly the communal fencing bees, and in housebuilding operations which involve outsider participation (roofing and thatching). When visiting takes place between affines, gifts of cooked food are exchanged, and larger gifts of garden produce are sent at garden harvest times, though these are of an informal nature, not to be compared with formal harvest gifts such as the Trobriand urigubu. Although the relations of brothers-in-law have relatively little economic significance, as compared with other New Guinea groups, the relation, such as it is, is highly valued, at least in ideal terms, since alas not all brothers-in-law come up to the hoped-for standard. Through the brother-in-law relation contacts are acquired in outside groups, and the very tensions and ambiguities in



the relation could contribute, paradoxically, to the value that was placed upon it, since these were customarily dissipated in joking behaviour. The kinship term meaning 'brother-in-law' (lowe) also means 'embarrassment' or 'shame' but this did not result in avoidance behaviour (at least when brothers-in-law were otherwise on good terms). The contradictory feelings ensuing from the brother-in-law relationships were expressed, for the most part, in resolute hilarity, a joking relationship of the standard kind. Where affines of the senior generation were concerned the situation was different, for here the difference of generation made joking, typical among men of equal generation, impossible, and avoidance behaviour was marked. The son-in-law could not mention the names of his parents in law, referring to them by a kinship term or a circumlocution, and they were as far as possible avoided. One of the ways of teasing young men practised by older men was to give graphic accounts of the excruciatingly embarrassing hospitality their parents-in-law would force on them ('your mother-in-law will sit you down beside her -- she'll offer you pieces of sago -- she'll invite you to stop over for the night ...' 'I won't stand for it, I'll run away into the bush if they try it, you will see!' 'What are you so frightened of? It comes to all of us in time!'). Because of the avoidance which characterised the relation with parents-in-law, this was a relation of purely negative significance. One man was said to have even wounded his father-in-law in battle (the latter had got stuck attempting to escape up a tree

and apparently formed an irresistible target). This was not standard behaviour between affines, however, who did not generally behave with open hostility towards one another.

(b) Relations between husband and wife

After an initial period, marriages were very stable. I encountered only one case in the Umeda-Punda connubium where a woman had left her husband after bearing him a child. Cases where a marriage had not survived the period of betrothal prior to the setting up of an independent marital household were more frequent. There was no recognised procedure or grounds for divorce.

The permanent nature of Umeda marriages did not ensure that spouses were faithful to one another, or abolish the possibility of conflicts between them. To outward appearance marital relations, it must be said, appeared placid enough: violent outbursts of anger against a wife, such as the incident to be described below, were decidedly abnormal, and wife-beating was not a normal resort for a suspicious or frustrated husband. On the other hand, with the exception of a couple of rather weak-willed individuals, Umeda husbands were not hen-pecked stooges, either. Husbands and wives, used to sleeping in the same house (unlike some New Guinea societies where men sleep apart in men's houses) had, by and large, very close and harmonious relations. In camp, at night, married couples of long standing would converse together for hours on end, on a basis of complete mutuality. Wives did not behave with any overt deference towards husbands, and had a

say in all matters affecting the household.

And yet, and yet ... To listen to the private conversation, much of it highly malicious, of my young bachelor informants, it was apparent that under this placid surface, a most complicated pattern of intrigue, jealousy, betrayal and revenge was constantly in motion. The prevalence of sexual antagonism arising out of adultery is central to the whole problem of sorcery with which I intend to conclude this chapter. Adultery is the ultimate motive of sorcery, and sorcery is, for Umedas, the explanation of death. In a previous section I have touched on the ideas Umedas hold about sorcerers, who are identified as Pundas. However, as an informant once remarked to me, 'Sorcerers don't come uninvited'. Before a sorcerer makes an attack on a particular individual, he must be solicited by some other person who bears a grudge against the intended victim. A sorcery attack is always an 'inside job'.

#### (c) Sexual antagonism

Perhaps the matter is best expressed in the pithy, if not altogether accurate saying of an informant:

'The men kill the women and the women kill the men'

In so speaking, my informant was not referring to the physical business of killing, which is always in the hands of (male) sorcerers, but to the underlying conflicts of which death, when it occurred, was a consequence. These conflicts arose generally in the relations of the sexes, both as a result of specifically sexual antagonism, and also jealousies over the supply of food. Thus a woman,

tiring of her lover, would induce a sorcerer to eliminate him; or a man, frustrated in an attempt to seduce a woman, might have her, or her husband, killed for sheer jealousy. These were type cases mentioned by informants in discussion. In practice, many complexities intervened. Sorcerers were capricious in following their instructions, and in more than one instance recorded by me the sorcerer killed, not the intended victim but some other party quite unconnected with the original quarrel, or even the malefactor who was responsible for inviting the sorcerer in the first place. Here is an example of a train of deaths by sorcery.

In June 1969 Yaba of Umda was seriously ill. This illness was said to be the result of a sorcery attack by Yip of Asila (Punda). Yip was said to have been called in by Bona, the wife of Sugu of Kedewaina, who wished to be rid of her lover, Amasu of Efid. The sorcerer did not attack the victim marked out by Bona, but Yaba, the innocent outsider, whose only connection with the principles in the affair was, that he was a member of Bona's husband's clan. In the event, Yaba did not die, because (according to the Umeda view, anyway) Wab of Pobonai (Punda) came and performed the arrow removal ceremony, which cured him.

A few months later all three members of the triangle (Bona the wife, Sugu the husband, and Amasu the lover) were dead. Amasu's death was brought about by his half-brother Kwi of Efid, with whom he had a long-standing quarrel over Habaga, the widow of a third man of Efid, whom Amasu had married, to the disgruntlement of Kwi. (The two men moved



their houses to the opposite ends of the hamlet site and kept up a tacit enmity for years, making life unpleasant for everybody else). Kwi had a wasting sickness, for which Amasu was blamed. He died soon after, too. Some said Habaga, the widow, was responsible, but others, exceptionally, said that Kwi's death was not sorcery at all, but sheer disgust with life aroused by the spectacle of a liaison, which started shortly after the death of Amasu, her second husband, and Fagia, a mere youth, her classificatory son. (This was a tremendous scandal). Habaga fled to Puda, her natal hamlet, shortly after this, as a result of the many evil things being said about her. A man of Klalumda died at this time and this was also blamed on her, the man being said to have once been her lover. (People attributed her flight to Puda not to her increasingly unsavoury reputation but, characteristically, to her wish to get away from her juvenile lover, Fagia, it being thought that she had grown tired of him, too). Meanwhile, Bona and Sugum, who were both quite old by Umeda standards, had also died. Bona's old affair with Amasu was brought up to explain this, Habaga being suspected of inviting a sorcerer to kill her, out of jealousy. It was a curious experience to listen to all this from the lips of Kiwe, Bona's thirteen-year-old son, who discussed his parents' tangled sex-lives with perfect equanimity. He told me that the sorcerer (Pom of Kebenai) was supposed to kill Bona, but managed to kill Sugu as well, another instance of a third party being caught in the cross-fire.

And so it went on. The apparent friendliness of



relations within the hamlet could conceal the most unlikely antagonisms. For instance, Mada of Kedewaina, the only member of the 'grandpaternal' generation in that hamlet seemed, to all outward appearances, to occupy a position of liking and respect among the young men of Kedewaina with whom I associated, even though they complained that I was too generous to him with food (self-interested giving on my part, since Mada was a useful informant). I was interested, as well as rather surprised, to hear Pogwa, a young man of Waina clan, assert, when I remonstrated with him for running Mada down behind his back, that Mada had been responsible for the death of his (Pogwa's) father. This resulted, (he said) from a quarrel between the two men over the disposal of Wause, Mada's brother's wife, who married, against Mada's opposition, Sowai, a Waina man. Mada, according to Pogwa, was also responsible for the death of Wausa, his brother's widow, acting in concert with Hodai, his sister's son. They were angry with her for not giving them food (they were both wifeless men and could not work sago independently). Other informants disagreed with this version of the death of Pogwa's father. According to the second story, this was brought about, not by Mada, but by another man of Waina clan, Bo, acting in concert with Yauna, a widow, whom Pone (Pogwa's father) wished to marry (i.e. the widow was technically a classificatory mother of her lover). However, Mada connived at their affair (it was said that he stood on the path to shoo children away lest they disturb the lovers at a tryst in

the bush). Later the couple spoke to the widow's relatives in Punda, who killed off the rival to her hand.

A question which must naturally arise in the reader's mind is whether these are tales and no more, or whether, beneath the placid exterior of Umeda existence, such patterns of sexual intrigue and pursuing vengeance are really in train. In my opinion, the accusations of 'talking to' Punda sorcerers which are so widely made are, in fact, fantasy from start to finish, just as the supposed sorcery-expeditions of Pundas are fantasy. Lesser forms of anti-personnel magic (some involving leavings, some the use of magical plants) are known, and may be actually attempted, but the classic 'Sanguma' murder-by-night is not physically possible, since it involves the supposed sorcerer wandering about an enemy village by night, a thing nobody in his senses would do. The depredations of sorcerers, and the supposed malicious invitations extended to them to remove particular individuals from the scene are no more than a means of rationalising deaths after the event, by referring them to known conflicts within the group. It will be seen, from the accusations quoted above, how prominently widows figure as a source of conflict, followed by adulterous relationships and their aftermath, and conflicts over food. One may be reasonably certain that adultery is quite widespread: men roam around freely in the territory of the bush association while hunting, and women do not work under constant male supervision, hence opportunities for clandestine meetings can be found. In some cases I could be

fairly certain that extramarital affairs about which my informants told me were actually taking place. One such relation was between Sowai of Umda and the wife of his younger classificatory brother, one of the 'bachelors' mentioned above who had gone to the coast rather than take up the role of husband. The younger brother's wife, a rather desirable girl called Kib, was left in Sowai's charge while her husband was away. Sowai had maximum opportunity, and was a man of initiative. Meanwhile, he had two wives of his own, one of whom, Ada, becoming jealous, solicited three Punda sorcerers to come and kill Kib. (So the story ran, but as I have made clear, I do not believe that Ada, or anyone else, did any such thing). The three Punda sorcerers, instead of eliminating Kib, killed Agwab, Sowai's elder brother's wife. It was said that Ada was not only jealous of Kib, but angry with her husband because she got a sore on her foot which she injured while running away, having surprised her husband and his mistress at a meeting in the bush. This was not the end of the trouble caused by Ada's jealousy of Kib. One night I was woken up by a confused sound of shouting from the Umda hamlet. This, it turned out, was caused by people in Umda remonstrating with Sowai who was attacking one of his coconut palms with a bush-knife. Attacking coconut palms is the supreme gesture of anger and frustration which it is open to a man to make. Symbolically, it is almost equivalent to suicide, since a close identification binds a man to his palms, which are the gift of his mother's brother (I will examine this below). The coconut is a

central symbol of the values of Umeda society so much so that to attack a palm is to place oneself outside the society, to reject it altogether. Unless a man desists after a few blows, his very life may be in danger: since his fellow clansmen may have to use violence in order to stop him. The reason why Sowai went out of control was that he had become convinced that Ada had not only invited sorcerers to attack Kib, but had asked the Pundas to 'eat' him too. He began by beating Ada so severely that she was incapacitated for some days afterwards, getting so worked up in the process that he started attacking his own coconut palm. He was restrained before he did very much damage, fortunately. Sowai's extraordinary sensitivity about sorcery suggests that in this instance the liaison suspected by everybody else, between Sowai and Kib, was actually taking place; Sowai had put himself in a position where it would be natural for Ada to solicit Punda sorcerers against him, whether or not she had actually done so. His violence stemmed from a consciousness that he was in the wrong. But there were many other stories of adulterous relationships, past and present, about which it was impossible even to guess the veracity of the information I received. There was also a good deal of gossip about supposed homosexual relations between men. However, homosexual relations did not figure in the kind of stories of internal dissension which led to putative invitations to sorcerers. Evidently it was heterosexual relations only which could inspire the kind of passion or frustration which provided



the sorcerers with their openings.

(d) Eating and being eaten

To conclude this section, and round off the whole chapter, I should like to add some remarks about the ideological context of Umeda ideas about sorcery and death. Two features seem to me to stand out particularly, firstly the explicit association between the relations of the sexes on the one hand and sorcery and death on the other ('the men kill the women and the women kill the men') and secondly the tendency to see death in the context of eating, the sorcerer being a cannibal hunter, whose activities are thought to stem from a lust for human flesh. This linking together of sexuality, eating, and killing, is not fortuitous. The underlying association of these experiences is manifest in the Umeda language, which has a single portmanteau-verb, tadv, whose meanings 'eat' 'shoot' 'kill' 'copulate with' cover the entire range of sexual, aggressive and gustatory experience. Umeda ideas about sorcery make death intelligible by placing it within the context of such experience. The range of meanings attaching to the verb tadv have in common the fact that, in different ways, tadv-relations, (eating, copulation, hunting and killing) characterise the relations of the in-group and the out-group. Within the in-group, the activities indicated by the verb tadv must be forgone, and this, indeed, is how the group is defined. Ego's social field is demarcated by boundaries, across which relations are mediated by tadv-relations. These boundaries may be social: the boundary line between ego's group and its



allies and awk (outsiders) whom ego may kill and/or enter into sexual relations with. Furthermore, if tadv-relations (killing, copulation, eating) establish the relations of a group vis-a-vis its congeners at group level, at another level it is tadv-relations which establish ego's own identity. Tadv-relations are, in effect, the fundamental modality whereby ego and the group(s) with which he is identified relate to their encompassing environment.

Sorcery and its associated circumstances are, so to speak, the negative or passive aspect of tadv-relationships. The possibility of sorcery, even perhaps the necessity of sorcery are implicit in the very structure of ego's relations with his environment, i.e. if ego's relations with his environment are mediated via tadv-relations, ego being the sexual and physical aggressor, then the possibility exists of the relation being inverted, and of ego becoming the victim. One need not think, therefore, that sorcery beliefs can be explained simply as paranoid fantasy, detached from social reality. Not only do sorcery beliefs -- as has often been pointed out -- 'save the phenomena' by according perfectly with subjective reality as experienced by actors. Sorcery beliefs also possess the advantage of a cognitive economy of means, which is achieved by representing ego's 'passions' (in the sense of Lienhardt 1961 : 151) as the simple inversion of the principles which underly his actions. The negative and positive aspects of tadv-relations, eating and being eaten, exhaust experience.

The imaginary figure of the sorcerer, (projected onto a real Punda) is a refraction of the 'hunting' mode of life admired by men. The sorcerer and his victim differ, not in their hunger for meat, but in their definition of the edible: for though cannibalism is not part of the reality of life in Waina-Sowanda, or anywhere in the vicinity, the possibility of cannibalism is very real to them (e.g. as an almost obsessional theme in their mythology). Sorcerer and victim are both hunters: when speaking of Punda sorcerers Umeda men thought of themselves as game animals ('we are just their pigs' they would say). The logic of the system calls for the existence of cannibals to complement the asymmetry in the relation of men and game animals. Perhaps I could underline this by just mentioning one of many myths which play on the reversibility of tadv-relationships. The myth I am thinking of concerns a man who hunts in the forest killing a pig, but instead of taking it home to his wife, he eats it by himself in the forest (hubris). The wife finds out her husband's crime and turns herself and her children into pigs (by donning pig-tusk nose ornaments) and eventually gores her husband to death (nemesis). Here the wife (normally 'eaten' -- sexually -- by the husband) turns herself into a pig (also 'eaten' by him) and gores her husband to death (i.e. 'eats' him). There are many other examples, i.e. vagina dentata ogresses, cannibal husbands 'eat' their wives, and so on.

There is another sense in which it may be said that sorcery beliefs make death intelligible by articulating it to

experience. The association between death and sexual relations is close. Bachelors, when contrasting their (relative) celibacy, to the supposedly intensive sexual activity of the older men, said that they shunned sexual relations precisely because of the sorcery implications that such relations brought in their train. The price paid for active sexuality was vulnerability to the attacks of sorcerers: the bachelors, concerned above all to preserve and increase their physical prowess, avoided too close relations with women for this very reason. Thus, death through sorcery is not only the reciprocal of the 'hunting' way of life, of aggressiveness in general, but particularly of sexuality, or the sexual mode of tadv-relations. It will be seen that Umedas did not fear the sorcery of 'outsider' groups, such as Sowanda, whom they fought on occasion, but with whom they did not exchange women. Relations set up by women gave the meat-hungry Punda sorcerers their opening. This is indeed the seamy side of alliance. A wife's relations with Punda were frequently supposed to be the channel through which an invitation to a sorcerer was sent. Again, though a man stands in no direct danger from his Punda relatives, it is through such relationships that he may call down sorcery on another, and through which his rival in his own group may cause his end. The necessity to exchange women with outsiders destroyed the integrity of the group. Sexual relations shared the aggressive implications of tadv-relations in general; they also created the inner divisions within the group through which sorcery entered. The pattern

of sexual intrigues, jealousy, and revenge was the 'secret history' of the group, a history, perhaps, which was more than half fantasy and supposition, but whose consequences, in the form of sorcery deaths, were concrete enough. The lover's tragedies in which the Punda sorcerers played the roles of villain and executioner may have been pure fiction, but the denouement and the corpses were all real.

## Chapter 3

## LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

1. Introduction

The previous chapters (1 and 2) have, I hope, sufficed to set the scene adequately, giving the reader some conception of the pattern of existence in Umeda, and of the basic elements of Umeda social structure. In this chapter, some of the themes that have made an appearance above, will be taken up in a new context -- language -- so as to form an introduction to the material of the latter part of this thesis, the analysis of Umeda symbolic systems, particularly ritual.

The present chapter is divided into three main parts: sections i - v, being concerned with the nature of the linguistic evidence which I will be using; sections vi -viii being devoted to a discussion of language in relation to the structure of the social field, including some remarks on the language of kinship relations; and sections ix-x being devoted to the 'triple analogy' i.e. a series of analogies, seemingly manifest in the details of the Umeda lexicon, between the structure of the body, the structure of plants, (trees in particular) and the structure of the social field.

In the course of these discussions of linguistic evidence, the reader will become acquainted with what are, to my mind, the fundamental natural and social oppositions underlying the Umeda symbolic system. Thus, a discussion of language forms a convenient bridge between social



structure, on the one hand, and ritual and symbolism on the other. I shall try to confine my remarks in this chapter to the fulfilment of this 'bridging' design: at the same time the discussion of language raises many interesting, but unfortunately extraneous issues of a more purely linguistic order. Some of these issues are taken up in more detail in an appendix on 'Lexical Motivation' to which I will refer the reader in due course.

#### ii. Words

Before going any further, perhaps I ought at once to make a disclaimer. This thesis is not a thesis in linguistics, nor am I a proficient in the technicalities of linguistics, though I have studied the subject to some extent. Although I am going to discuss language, I shall do so from a standpoint quite different from that of a linguist making a description of the language more or less for its own sake. Such a linguist's description of a language must aim, ultimately, at a coherent account of the language as a whole, but, for my part, I shall not, and could not even if I wished,, present such a coherent overall description. My concern is less with language than with the particular social universe within which the language is used, within which it has meaning. The linguist must essay a coherent description of 'langue', an abstract summation: whereas my own efforts are directed towards a coherent description of the social universe of Umeda, and language is only an adjunct to this. Different frames of reference (language-centred and world-centred, respectively) involve differing methods of approach.

I shall have nothing to say about grammar (arguably the heart of a truly 'linguistic' study of language), and what little I have to say about phonology and morphology I have placed in the appendix. My concern with language is closest to that of the lexicographer: I make no generalisations, propound no rules, confining myself instead to the particular. I am concerned with words with the meanings of words, and the relationships between words, rather than with the 'higher' levels of linguistic descriptions, i.e. the grammatical rules governing the combination of words and the production of sentences.

A certain minimum of linguistic requirements were imposed on me by my field situation. In order to communicate with non-pidgin speaking informants I had to acquire a vocabulary -- which I did by compiling and memorising a word-list -- which in turn meant that I had to devise an orthography, since no previous work of any kind had been done on the language spoken in Umeda. This orthography became more refined as time went by. As luck would have it, Umeda does not contain many unfamiliar sounds, and by the end I felt reasonably confident that my orthography captured the relevant phonemic distinctions in all but a few instances where I remained in doubt. I hesitate to call my orthography 'phonemic' in that I have not adhered to the strict canon of linguistic methodology (as laid down e.g. in Harris 1951) but, rightly or wrongly, I am satisfied that I have missed nothing of really first-rate importance.

Adding to my stock of vocabulary was a continual

preoccupation during my time in the field. I paid much less attention to grammar, however, relying on a rather simplified 'basic Umeda' for most purposes of everyday communication, a bastard form of the language which my informants also used when speaking to me, enabling communication to take place even though I had not fully grasped all the refinements (and they are many) of Umeda grammar. I would feel more abashed about my rough-and-ready attitude towards language had there been any previous work upon which I could have based a more systematic analysis of Umeda grammar: but there was nothing on Umeda nor, indeed, on any of the languages in the same family, to which I could refer. I did, however, collect a quantity of texts of myths, as materials towards a more detailed study of the language. The process of recording myths also added considerably to my stock of words.

It was while I was compiling my first vocabulary lists, that I noticed how certain words seemed to be compounded of segments which were also found in other, different, combinations; and I also noticed that some words, which seemed at first to be homonyms, could be interpreted as single, polysemous words, if one made certain assumptions about the underlying symbolic system. By-and-by, this became a veritable Ariadne's thread suggesting many interpretative ideas to me, concerning ritual symbols used in the ida fertility rites, which I should not otherwise have considered. Later, I based these interpretations less on linguistic, and more on anthropological lines of reasoning, though a certain

residue remains, as will become apparent. But, before considering this material let me stress again the primitive basis of the whole argument, which is based on words and not, that is to say, on a sophisticated linguistic analysis. I stress this to forestall criticism of my linguistic naivety and lack of method: my excuse being, that to establish the particular points that I wish to establish, it is necessary only that I should have been able to record, with sufficient accuracy, Umeda words and their meanings: and this task I think I was able to perform.

### iii. Lexical motivation

Stephen Ullman (1963) has distinguished three kinds of lexical motivation, i.e. three ways in which the nexus between a word and its meaning(s) can be non-arbitrary. They are (1) Semantic motivation i.e. cases where a word is found to have more than one 'meaning' such that the various meanings are associated, whether metaphorically, or metonymically, or in some other way. An English example is 'star' (astral body/film-star) or 'crown' (royal headgear, or, by metonymy, the office of kingship etc.). Cases of semantic motivation (i.e. polysemy) must be distinguished from homonymy, i.e. cases where two or more meanings are arbitrarily attached to the same sounds -- there are innumerable instances of homonymy in English, e.g. 'pā' = pear (fruit) pair (two) pare (verb, slice away) and so on. How does one distinguish between arbitrary homonymy-relations and motivated polysemy-relations? There is no internal evidence within the word



itself (except possibly evidence of derivation) which can resolve this: only a knowledge of the cultural background will suffice to make one or the other answer seem plausible. In the next section I will argue, for instance that the word for 'fence' and the word for 'Areca Palm' (pul) are the same word (i.e. pul is polysemous) a contention that could have no meaning except in relation to the extra-linguistic evidence.

Ullman's second type of lexical motivation is 'morphological' motivation i.e. instances where a word is found to be a motivated compound of distinct lexical elements. (E.g. English 'bicycle' 'biplane' 'motorcycle' etc.). Semantic and morphological motivation can be combined in a single word e.g. 'kingpin' = 'kin\*pin' 'king' in this instance being semantically motivated.

Finally, Ullman distinguishes 'phonological' motivation, i.e. instances wherein it appears that the actual sounds (or articulatory gestures) used bear a relationship to the meaning of the word. Onomatopoeia is the obvious instance of this (e.g. huff, puff, bang, rattle) as well as a large class of what have been called 'expressive' words which seem to imitate their meanings in sound (e.g. the 'bash, crash, mash, dash, splash', group or the 'slither, slide, slimy, sloppy, slippery' group in English).

I shall be concerned with all three types of 'lexical motivation' in relation to the Umeda material. It is clear that instances of polysemy and 'morphological motivation' can provide very useful anthropological clues: If we can deduce the 'common factor' between two disparate



and seemingly unrelated meanings of a single lexical item, we can use this as evidence for underlying cognitive and ideological structures. Similarly, by seeing how a word is compounded of isolable elements we can analyse out the basic semantic discriminations which are contributory to the meaning of the (compound) word. This will be demonstrated at length below. 'Phonological' motivation is a good deal more problematic, however, because it necessarily raises the issue of 'universals'. Where the analysis of semantic and morphological motivation can be carried within the context of the culture which speaks the language concerned, 'phonological' motivation seems to involve the (extra-cultural) 'world', since, while 'morphologically' and 'semantically' motivated words are motivated only relative to other words in the language, 'phonologically' motivated words are motivated absolutely (i.e. with respect to the outside world).

This raises innumerable problems, which, rather than include in the body of this chapter, I have relegated to the Appendix. I have done this advisedly, in recognition of the intrinsically problematic character of all attempts to deal with the problem of phonological motivation. Moreover, to discuss them here would threaten to lead me too far from the argument of this thesis. I have also relegated to the appendix a discussion, which might otherwise have come at this point, of the whole question of 'arbitrary' versus 'motivated' in language as a whole, bearing in mind DeSaussure's famous principle of the

'arbitrary nature of the sign'. Here, let it suffice to say that I will not offer in the body of this chapter any arguments which transgress this principle, since I am concerned only with what Saussure calls 'relative' motivation (which he admits) and not with 'absolute' motivation (which he discounted). In the appendix I examine the more recent criticisms of the Saussurean doctrine, and advance my own anti-Saussurean view. (De Saussure 1959).

In short, rather than deal with problems of theory in the thesis, I have chosen to present the essential material here, and leave the discussion of some of the more specifically linguistic problems raised thereby to the Appendix. I can therefore turn immediately to the material itself, without further preliminaries, starting with two examples to show the principles of 'semantic' and 'morphological' motivation respectively.

#### iv. Pul -- an instance of semantic motivation

The Umeda word pul has two distinct meanings which at first sight seem to bear no relation to one another. They are (i) Areca (the palm or the fruit thereof, chewed with lime and betel) and (ii) pul a garden fence, constructed round the ripening garden to protect it from the depredations of wild pigs. Pul is also the basis of the name of the mythological hero, Pul-tod (Arecanutman), the 'Oedipal' hero of Umeda mythology (see Chapter 5 below, and Appendix in which the Pul-tod myth is given).

'Pul' is not the only word meaning 'fence' (i.e. glossed as bais in Pidgin English); specifically, a pul

is a fence to keep people or pigs out, another word (awda) is used to refer to fences designed to keep pigs or people in e.g. the fences which surround certain kinds of pig-traps. (On awda see Appendix I).

A fence and an Areca palm bear no obvious resemblance to each other, nor are they associated by contiguity. Yet, on a closer examination, it is apparent that there is a relation between the two, of a less obvious kind. The semantic feature which both seem to share is 'marginality'; i.e. in different ways fences and betel-nut palms, not only topographical boundaries, but also (particularly Areca nut) sociological boundaries.

It is not difficult to see that a fence is a boundary-marking thing: that is, indeed, its practical (and symbolic) function. It is harder to see why Areca palm should fall into the same category.

First of all, let it be noted that Areca is a narcotic. The effect of chewing Areca with lime and betel is to produce a sensation of mild dissociation; an unwonted feeling of reduced gravity, a dulling of hunger and fatigue, and in addition a sharpening of visual acuity. In short, Areca induces a 'marginal' state of consciousness, putting the user slightly 'outside' himself. Areca is chewed routinely by all actors in rituals, as well as having a specific magical function, which I shall note.

Areca-chewing and spitting red betel juice mediates ritual transitions. (See e.g. the ceremony of donning the penis-sheath described in Chapter 5 below). After contact with magical substances men smear their bodies with betel



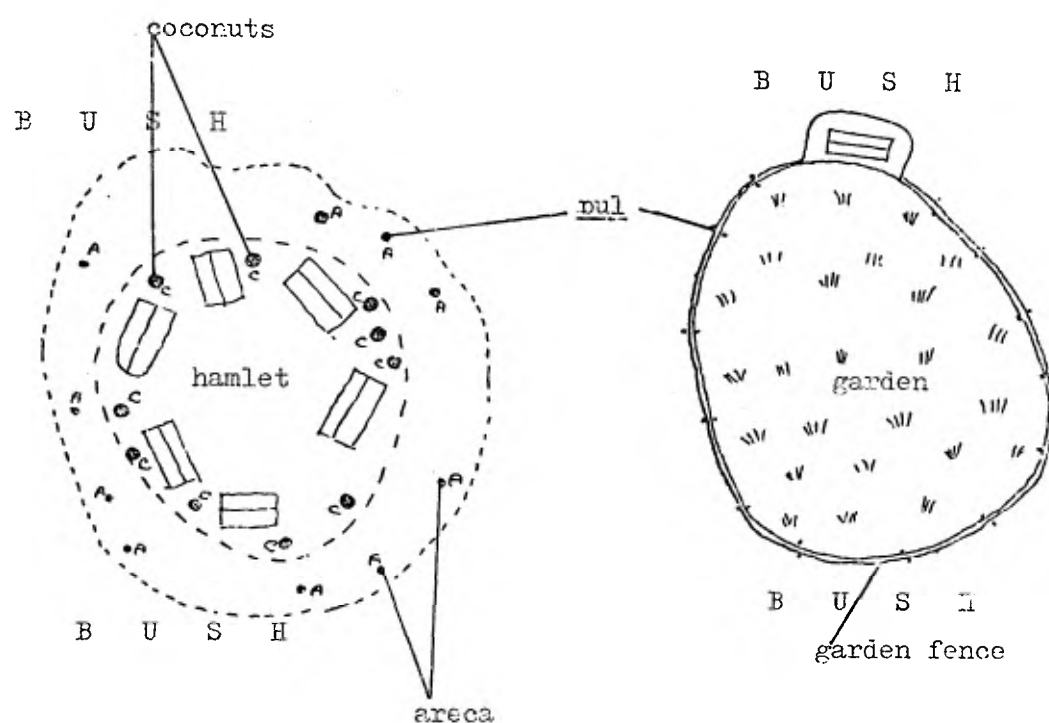
juice (pulnid) which acts as a kind of magical 'disinfectant'. As well as removing pollution, betel-spit is used to impart magical power, for example to ritual masks, just before they are to be used. And it is used in various curing rituals, both by officiants and patients.

It is not only such ritual transitions that chewing Areca mediates. Chewing is a part of daily life. The moments when Areca is chewed are precisely the points of transition in the course of the day: the early morning (as indispensable a pleasure as the first cigarette of the day) and at night, while relaxing in camp, and also before and after undertaking any task, going on an expedition, etc.

Thus, in the light of the particular role played by Areca in Umeda life it is quite natural to see it as associated with margins or transitions. This impression is reinforced when one comes to consider also the Areca palm itself; its habitat and its relation to other palm trees, particularly the coconut.

Areca palms are planted around the outer fringes of the hamlet and other inhabited sites. The inner hamlet is defined by the ring of houses and the shade-giving coconut palms; a vague outer circle is made up of plantations of Areca, thus (Fig. 17):

In terms of spatial layout, it will be seen that the Areca palms, planted in the ill-defined region between the hamlet proper and the surrounding secondary bush, stand in the same relation to the hamlet as the fence stands in relation to the garden, i.e. demarcating the boundary.

Fig 17 . Pul

This argument may be extended if one also brings into consideration the significant relation between the Areca palm and the coconut palm, the dominant symbol of Umeda culture.

Coconut and Areca, as may be seen from the figure (18) bear a strong natural resemblance to each other. Within the general similarity, certain disparities are equally striking. Coconuts are among the 'noblest' of a genus of 'noble plants' (the adjective is used by Professor Corner, the botanist and expert on Palms: Corner 1966).



Coconuts are characterised, relative to most other palms by their greater height, and slow growth. Their long life-cycle corresponds roughly to that of a man. When old they acquire a gnarled, immemorial appearance.

Areca palms are in this everything that coconut palms are not; slender, flexible, rapidly springing up, green-stemmed and swiftly-maturing. A mature Areca palm is about two-thirds the height of a mature coconut palm, slim and straight, with a mop of quite succulent green fronds bunched on top. A similar relationship obtains between the fruits of the two palms; the Areca nut is, so to speak, a miniature, succulent, shell-less coconut; very like, in fact, an immature fruit from the larger palm.

This interplay of similarity and difference between the two species (which is more readily conveyed visually than in words) is the basis of the symbolic relationship between Coconut and Areca; a relationship which can be summarised in the following formula:

'Areca is to Coconut as Younger Brother is to Elder Brother'

or

'Areca : Coconut :: YB : EB, where YB : EB :: So : Pa'

This emerges very clearly from the Pultod (Arecanut-man) myth to which reference has already been made. The relevant points in this connection are as follows.

- (i) The original man, and ancestor of the edtodna was Toagtod, who emerged from a Coconut (sa).
- (ii) Thus, the origin of human society in general is a Coconut palm. Man's predecessors, the ancestors, are sa-tod (Coconut men), humanity are the sa-tuda

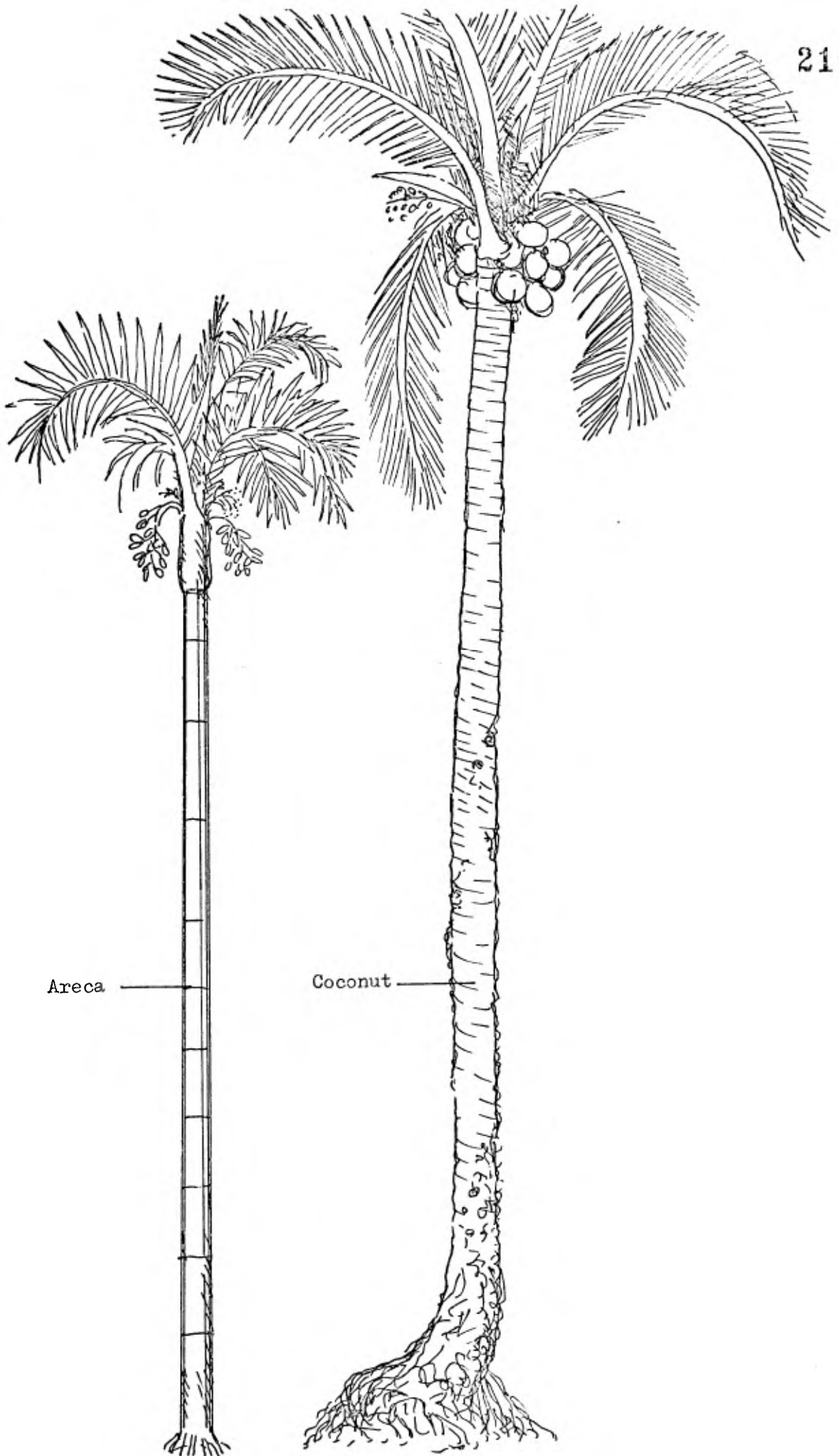


Fig 18 . Areca and Coconut

(Coconut children).

(iii) The 'younger brother' of Toagtod (coconut) is Pultod (Arecanut-man). Later, Pultod becomes Toagtod's 'son'. (For details see Appendix II). Thus Toagtod (=EB=Fa) is associated with the coconut, Pultod (=YB=So) with Areca.

But where does this get us in relation to the argument being advanced here concerning the 'marginality' of pul in its two senses, fence and Areca?

At this point it is necessary to refer back to the previous chapter, and in particular to fig. 16 showing 'The social field of the hamlet'. The reader will perhaps have noticed a certain similarity between that diagram and fig. 17 showing the arrangement of Areca and coconut palms in the hamlet. The diagram included in the previous chapter was designed to show the process whereby small boys are, at a certain stage, 'ejected' from the knot of adult men occupying the centre of the social arena (A). The ejected boys move away from the central area of the social field to form the 'Small boys' peer-group' (D) i.e. they form a 'marginal' group on the periphery. Given the formula YB=So=Areca, it is possible now to appreciate the strict parallelism between the spatial arrangement of the two species of palm (Coconut=central/Arecanut=peripheral) and the similar spatial or field-relationship between the social groups of whom the palms are symbols (Adult men = central/small boys (younger brothers and sons) = peripheral). And these relationships conform to the schema shown on fig. 17



above, whereby pul in its dual meaning, 'fence' and 'areca' corresponds to the idea of 'marginality'.

And this interpretation is further confirmed when the mythological characteristics of Pultod (Arecanut man, or, as we might say 'marginal' man) are taken into consideration. The 'marginality' of the small-boys' peer group is reflected in the history of the red-skinned 'Oedipal' hero of Umeda mythology, who, socially and spatially marginal, hovers on the edge of being human. At various points in the myth, Pultod, conforming to the classic stereotype of heroes of his kind, slays his father and marries his mother. He is also slain by his elder-brother-cum-father, and even submits to symbolic castration at two points, once by having his big toe broken, and once by being raped by an all-female village. Pultod wanders around in the bush, avoiding society (particularly feminine) and, as an informant, put it 'he is not a real man' (see Appendix II).

Thus, to conclude on the segment pul, it is apparent that the various meanings of this word form part of a single fan of polysemous referents, at the mundane level, the level of society, and of mythology. The concrete object (the fence) performs the mundane function of excluding pigs, demarcating a privileged area, while, at the opposite end of the scale, the mythological hero, Pultod, stands for the 'exclusion' (and Oedipal strivings) of the half-formed male; while the Areca palm stands in the middle, a symbol, at once mundane and magical, of the marginal condition.

v. Morphological motivation

Naimo (= nai+mo) : Caryota Palm

Once again, the discussion will centre on a palm tree, and once again I shall have occasion to refer back to material which has made an appearance in the preceding chapter.

The reader will recall that Caryota (naimo) is a wild palm species, called, in pidgin 'Wild sago' (wailsaksak), though actually not a true sago species (metroxylon) at all. Naimo can be pounded up for its starch content, though Umedas would not do this except in the most dire emergency. Mostly, naimo is exploited as a source of edible grubs (namos), being specially felled so that the grubs may breed in the trunk. The reader will also recall that it was from a naimo palm that Naimotod, the ancestor of the agwatodna moiety emerged, together with his two daughters, the spouses of Toagtod, the edtodna ancestor. (Cf. Chapter 2 section iv above). The edtodna are the 'central' clans, the original occupants of the Umeda ridge, while the agwatodna clans have been integrated into the society from the outside. Let me summarise the essential oppositions here.

|                                   |     |   |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---|
| Male Moiety<br>( <u>edtodna</u> ) | vs. | Female moiety<br>( <u>agwatodna</u> )     |
| 'original'<br>clans               | vs. | 'immigrant'<br>clans                      |
| Toagtod                           | vs. | Naimotod + daughters                      |
| Coconut                           | vs. | <u>naimo</u> (caryota) and <u>na</u> sago |
| hamlet                            | vs. | bush                                      |
| Central                           | vs. | Peripheral                                |

Given this much information, it is apparent that naimo can



pose a twofold problem, firstly, why should this particular palm be chosen as the exponent of this particular set of symbolic meanings, and secondly, in what way or ways is the lexeme naimo motivated with respect to the symbolic role of the palm?

First of all, let it be noted that naimo is a compound of lexical elements or segments which can be found in other contexts (i.e. other lexical combinations) and in isolation. The elements involved are nai and mo. In isolation, nai has the meaning 'skirt', while mo has the meaning 'gullet' (also, by extension, word, speech), mo also means 'larynx' 'Adam's apple'. Now while the latter element (mo) remains, at first sight, rather a puzzle, an immediate clue is afforded by nai : skirt. It is not simply that nai is a symbol of femininity, and matrilinear relations in general -- matrikin being called naina 'of the skirt' (as we say 'on the distaff side') as opposed to patrikin who are 'pedana' 'of the penis sheath'. Nai goes a long way towards explaining why it is Caryota, and not some other wild palm, which is seen as the origin of the 'feminine half' of the society. Once again, I must appeal to visual evidence to make my point (fig. 19).

This figure<sup>§</sup> makes apparent, I hope, the striking similarity between the dangling fruit stems which are particularly characteristic of Caryota (and not, i.a. sago etc.) and the fibre skirts worn by Umeda women. The fruit stems (agwoi) and fruit (mov), that is, the reproductive part of trees, are in fact seen as intrinsically feminine,

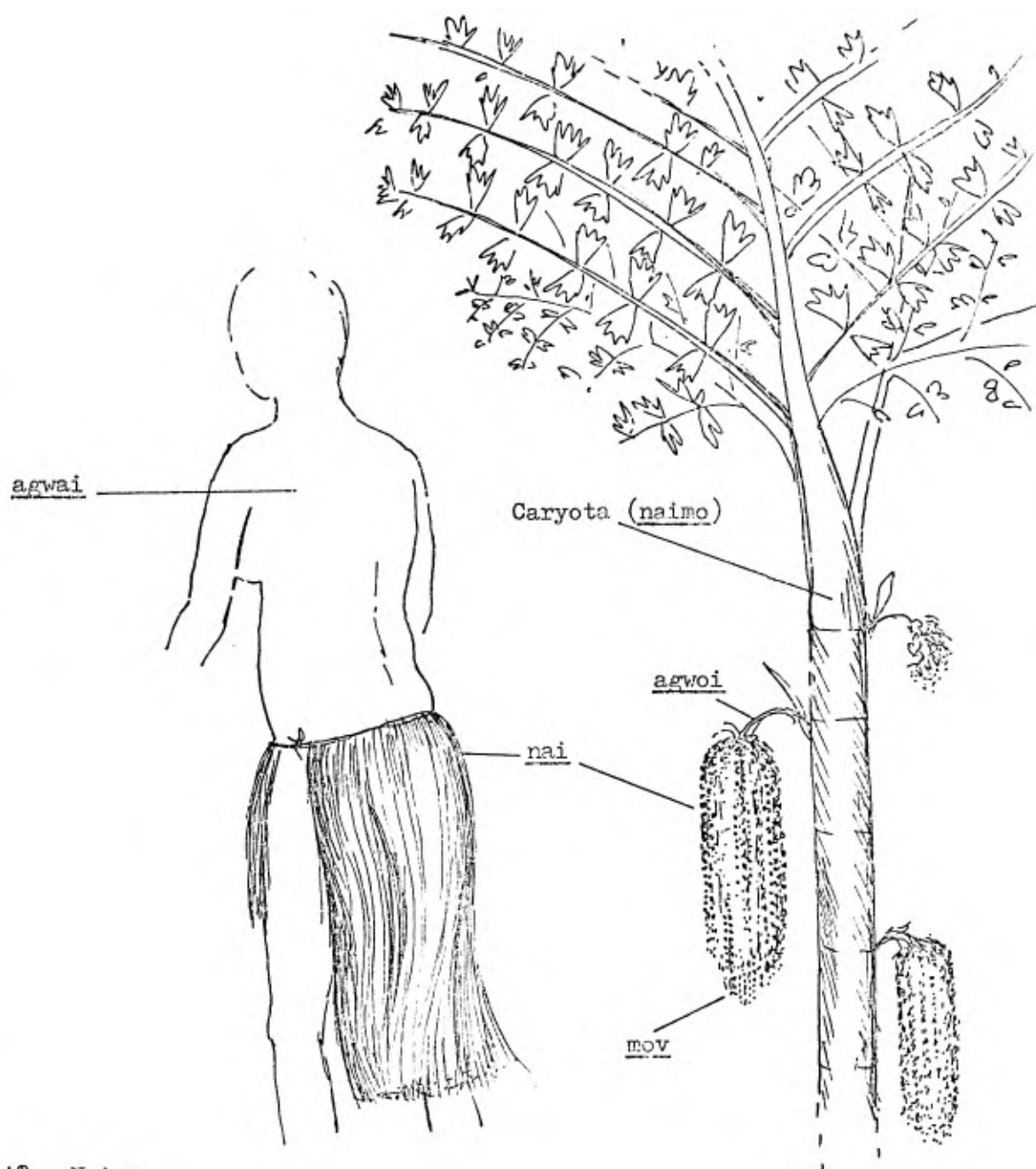


Fig. 19 Naimo

as I will demonstrate shortly. It seems likely then, in the light of this, and the diagram, that the nai- in naimo is not unconnected with nai meaning 'skirt'.

This argument can be pursued further, however. Nai would appear to me to be a modified form of the segment na which plays a very important role in the language. Consider

the following group of words:

na: sago (giving many compound forms, e.g.  
napeda = na+peda: rootlets of sago,  
nab : crown of sago, naveli = na + (v) eli:  
sago-fronds, namos = na+mos : sago grubs,  
and many more.

na: Mother's brother

nai: skirt

naina: matrikin

-nai: suffix 'suckers or runners of' e.g.  
pwinai suckers of pitpit, savanai suckers  
of taro, used in planting out (i.e.  
planting material).

(I should add that the suffix -na is also the possessive marker, thus ka'I'kana 'mine' and so on. I ignore the independent grammatical role of na in this discussion).

Womens' skirts (nai) are made from the fibrous immature leaf-material of the sago palm (na); being made of sago-fibre, skirts and sago are intrinsically linked together. Hence I am inclined to see the close relation between the segments na and nai as no chance phenomenon. Nor is it difficult to perceive the nexus between both of these and na : mother's brother; we have seen that matrikin are naina: 'of the skirt', and matrikin are simply the class of mothers' brothers and their descendants. At this point a consistent set of relationships can be seen to emerge: the nai- in naimo being motivated on several planes simultaneously, i.e. both in terms of the actual palm with its skirt-like fruit-stems, and also in terms of

the mythological role of the palm as the supposed origin of the female half of the society. For in mythological terms the relation of the moieties, the male 'village' edtodna moiety, and the female 'bush' agwatodna moiety, is a hypostatisation of the basic schema of marriage alliance, whereby the individual exogamous hamlets receive their wives from, and form matrilinear alliances with groups other than their own, which seen from the standpoint of a male ego, are 'lateral' or 'peripheral' groups 'in the bush'. It is this structural opposition between the axis of ego and his agnates, coinciding with the permanent hamlet site, versus the peripheral field, the bush, the sago stands, the foreign hamlets from whom ego's group has obtained women, and with whom he stands in a relation of affinity and matrilinear alliance, which explains the lexical identity of sago, on the one hand, and the mother's brother on the other. Caryota, which is seen as a variety of sago (na), shares with it this association with maternal and matrilinear relationships. Thus, it is not only the skirt-like fruit stems which correspond to nai in naimo, but also its characteristic habitat (bush as opposed to hamlet) and its association with sago, which is, in turn, the botanical analogue of the Mother's brother.

Granted that this goes some way to explaining the nai-element, can one proceed to make a similar analysis of the -mo element in naimo? Consider this group:



|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <u>no</u> :     | gullet, Adam's apple  |
| <u>no-tod</u> : | daughter, female child  |
| <u>mol</u> :    | girl daughter   |
| <u>mol</u> :    | vulva   |
| <u>mov</u> :    | fruit ( <u>movwi</u> )  |
| <u>mov</u> :    | vulva (polite) (also <u>amoi</u> , small girl, daughter, vulva) |
| <u>amov</u> :   | termites (cf. <u>namos</u> : grubs)                             |

Mo by itself, as I said, means 'gullet', however, with the suffix, -tod (= 'human') it takes on the meaning 'female child, daughter'. A closely related word, mol, was introduced in the last chapter during the discussion of the mol-cycle (above chapter 2, section vii). Like mol, the word mov: 'fruit' is one of a number of words which can mean 'vulva'; another is amoi. There are a number of other words involving this no segment, but I shall restrict myself to these for the present.

What is apparent in the list of no words is a series of analogies which seem to be implicit in Umeda vocabulary, between parts of the body (gullet, vulva), parts of tree and plant structure (fruit, in this instance), and a social role (daughter, girl). I shall return to this 'triple analogy' below -- here I wish to ascertain the role of the element -no in the compound form naimo. This does not present any difficulty since, as we have seen, the naimo palm is mythologically the origin of daughters (no-tod) i.e. marriageable girls. Girls (mol) are to be identified with fruit (mov) and, as shown in fig. 19 naimo is characterised by a truly incalculable number of individual fruit (movwi) -- a feature which distinguishes naimo sharply from the local sago cultigens which are almost all infertile, producing no



fruit at all.

I hope that I have said sufficient to demonstrate that naimo is indeed both morphologically and semantically motivated. Naimo represents the intersection of two overlapping fields of meaning, which are themselves closely related, i.e. the na group and the mo group. A complex word like naimo is not simply a lexical counter, an 'arbitrary' sign, but is, in itself, a complex statement about relationships. The word naimo carries with it, in its relationships to other words, a series of implicit metaphors, which point both to the palm itself, emphasising certain characteristics of its outward appearance, its relationship to other palms, (such as sago) and also hinting at its mythological significance. I have not dealt with the possibility, meanwhile, that the elements na and mo may be, themselves, motivated as articulatory gestures inherently appropriate to the meanings with which they seem to be associated: this possibility is taken up in the Appendix.

These examples, pul, and naimo, will have enabled the reader to become accustomed to the kind of argument which I will be putting forward in the remainder of this chapter. That is to say, I am attempting to draw inferences from polysemous and compound words (i.e. from semantically and morphologically motivated words) as to the system of ideas, concepts etc., which Umedas bring to the interpretation of the experience, social and otherwise. Through looking at vocabulary, I hope to be able to reconstruct the Umeda 'world-view' -- or at any rate certain aspects of it. But

rather than attack the problem piecemeal, I must at this point return to the fundamental opposition, already frequently alluded to, between the 'ego' axis and the encompassing or peripheral field -- which is also the basic sociological opposition between agnation and alliance -- and see how it works out in terms of the kind of argument I have been applying to pul and naimo. In short, the ensuing sections will be devoted to sketching in the 'social field' of ego, and in re-examining it in the light of such linguistic evidence.

vi. Cantral vs. Peripheral -- ed versus ag

Consider the following lists of words:

|            |                    |   |
|------------|--------------------|---|
| <u>-ag</u> | <u>agwa:</u>       | woman ( <u>agwa-tod</u> )   |
|            | <u>agwai:</u>      | wife  |
|            | <u>agea:</u>       | arm   |
|            | <u>aga:</u>        | ear   |
|            | <u>age:</u>        | side (of something)   |
|            | <u>ageaika:</u>    | little finger   |
|            | <u>-agai:</u>      | suffix indicating extra hamlet kin,<br>allies etc. thus:                                  |
|            | <u>nenagai:</u>    | matrikin, <u>awangai:</u> extra-hamlet<br>'brothers' <u>magawangai</u> cross-cousins etc. |
|            | <u>subul-agwa:</u> | subterranean spirits (both sexes)   |
|            | <u>sa-agwa:</u>    | tree spirits  |
|            | <u>suog-agwa:</u>  | ogress (also <u>sog-agwa</u> )  |
|            | <u>ageli:</u>      | Cassowary-mask (important in <u>ida</u> ritual)   |
|            | <u>mag:</u>        | gift, <u>magvitav:</u> exchange (gifts)   |
|            |                    | <u>magawa:</u> cross-cousin   |

|             |               |   |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| <u>-ed-</u> | <u>ed:</u>    | man ( <u>ed-tod</u> )   |
|             | <u>edite:</u> | heart   |
|             | <u>edie:</u>  | middle (of something)   |
|             | <u>kaid:</u>  | 'us' ( <u>kaid-tod</u> ) i.e. ego's clan<br>( <u>ka:</u> I + <u>id</u> = ed). |

Here is a list, which might have been extended, of ag words, and a much smaller list of ed- words. Yet the basis of the opposition between them comes out rather clearly. The key words in each list can be opposed as follows:

(A) Words indicating sex

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| <u>ed:</u>   | man   |
| <u>agwa:</u> | woman |

(B) Words indicating spatial relationship

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| <u>edie:</u> | middle |
| <u>age:</u>  | side   |

(C) Words indicating body organ

|               |                           |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| <u>edite:</u> | heart                     |
| <u>agea:</u>  | arm (and <u>aga:</u> ear) |

Taking (B) and (C) together it will be seen that the association of spatial dimensions (middle vs. side) and bodily organs (heart vs. arm, ear) corresponds to the schema, advanced previously, whereby masculine is central and feminine peripheral (or, 'lateral'). Cf. for example, the discussion of moieties (Above chapter 2, sections iv, ix). The opposition central/lateral or central/peripheral has its basis, according to my argument, in the basic structure of the social field: ego (male) stands on the central axis, which is identified with masculinity, and, in sociological

terms with the continuity of the agnatic kinship group, which is in turn surrounded by a peripheral/lateral field (into which ego may make nutritive, aggressive, or sexual forays) dominated by a kind of generalised femininity, negative to his positive. In language this basic opposition is marked (partially) by the ed/ag opposition which we are examining at present: bodily organs, dimensions -- and as I will show later, parts of botanical organisms such as trees -- are classified along with men and women according to this basic central/lateral dichotomy. The opposition ed/ag is writ large, so as to cover the whole village, in the moiety opposition (edtodna vs. agwatodna); and the same opposition is also apparent (microcosmically) in terms of the structure of the body (edtite/agea) -- and also, on a still smaller scale, in the structure of the human hand (below section ix).

However, some additional remarks are needed here. Firstly, it may be objected that edite (heart) refers to an organ of the body which is not 'central' but, as we know, on the left side of the body. To this I can only say that Umedas believe otherwise. Not being cannibals, and not being in the habit of making autopsies, Umedas are only vaguely aware of the position of internal organs such as the heart. When I asked, I was assured that the heart was dead central: I was told, for instance that an arrow wound to the chest would only be immediately fatal if it was dead central, if deflected to the left or right, the victim could survive after the extraction of the barbed point. Here, perhaps is an instance of language influencing



perception: according to the scheme of classification the heart ought to be central.

A second, and more interesting difficulty concerns the spirit-beings on the agwa list, such as subudagwa and sa-agwa. These, it will be noted are not exclusively feminine spirits. I had assumed, for a long time, that because of the -agwa (woman) termination of the names of these spirits that they must be female, and I was puzzled to discover that they were not exclusively so. Sa-agwa were said to be male (imagined as little red men living in the boughs of forest trees) subul-agwa were of both sexes.

Agwa, in these instances, is evidently not a marker of sex as such. What -agwa indicates, as a suffixed element to the names of spirits, is the relationship of these spirits to the human population i.e. these spirits, by their very nature, stand 'outside' the pale of human existence: not only do they live in the bush (which is also the realm of women) but also their very nature, as spirits, sets them apart from humanity. The aq element here functions, not as a marker of sex, but as a marker of 'distance': spirits, such as sa-agwa, and subul-agwa stand on the periphery of social experience (they are encountered in dreams rather than in waking life). Similar in function to the suffix -agwa is the suffix -agai, which, it will be seen, can be added to kinship terms to convert them into terms of reference for relatives outside ego's own hamlet. Thus ate means 'elder brother'. To convert ate into a term of reference for intra-hamlet brothers the suffix -l would be added giving atel



'brother(s)', similarly for 'father' (aiya) giving ayal 'the fathers (of my hamlet)'. But where the reference is to extra-hamlet relations the suffix -agai or (V)agai will be used giving, for instance atenagai extra hamlet 'brothers' (i.e. members of segments of ego's clan, or, alternatively, allies of distant degree). Here again the -agai termination does not refer to sex but to social distance from ego: indicating that the relation is 'lateral'.

Thus, by suffixing -agai a kinship term, normally applied within the group (e.g. aiya: father) can be modified by the addition of a ag element to refer to individuals who stand outside ego's own group: 'aingai' (aiya+agai) equals extra-hamlet 'fathers' and so on. But certain kin terms are marked by the fact that they already contain the segment ag -- these, naturally, are applied to members of groups other than ego's own. They are:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <u>agwai</u> :  | wife  |
| <u>magawa</u> : | cross-cousin  |
| <u>sag</u> :    | ritual age-mate (not a kinship term, but a term applied to members of other hamlets who first participated in rituals contemporaneously with ego. Such men, related as <u>sag-sag</u> exchange gifts and engage in joking behaviour, like <u>magawa-magawa</u> ). |

There is not much that is necessary to say about these, except, perhaps, that they accord with the hypothesis that the element ag is a marker of laterality. Magawa, meanwhile, is interesting in another way. Consider the group

magawa: cross-cousin  
mag: gift magvitav: exchange gifts  
 (or women etc.)

Magvitav: 'exchange' is distinct from another 'give' verb smiahav which means 'give without expectation of an equivalent return'. Thus agwain smiahav is the verb used in cases of 'non-exchange' marriages while magvitav is the verb used to cover cases of reciprocal marriage exchange. Mag, it may also be noted, is a common personal name given to girls (but not to boys) another girl's name is moag (mo+ag). This use of mag as a personal name, identifying Girl and Gift, could hardly accord better with the 'exchange' view of marriage pioneered by Lévi-Strauss (1969). The presence of the mag segment in magawa does not, of course, imply that cross-cousins exchange sisters with one another -- that is ruled out by the exogamy restrictions which have already been described. What it does point to is the relations of reciprocity between these relatives. Magawa exchange gifts with one another -- it will be recalled that magawa was the term applied to the wealthy anthropologist -- and engage in joking relations (and also extra-marital sexual relations) with each other. Within the hamlet such relations do not occur. Thus intra-hamlet 'giving' is of the non-reciprocal smiahav kind: implicitly, between non-equals. Thus a mother gives (smiahav) sago to her children, a father or elder brother gives meat, as superiors to inferiors. Outside the hamlet, gift relations are of the magvitav, reciprocal, kind. The existence of reciprocity in such relations is a function of distance.

(The exception to this is the non-reciprocal relation of Mother's Brother and sister's son, and the (purely negative) wife's father/daughter's husband relation: these will be discussed in due course).

The analysis of further ag words, and the related ak, ok, segments is pursued further, from a different (phonological) point of view, in the Appendix. The term ageli, an important and significant member of this group will be dealt with in the analysis of Ida (Chapter 5). At this point I will turn aside to pursue the topic of kinship, and the linguistic detail surrounding the main kinship terms, in order to build up a more detailed picture of the cognitive associations, or connotation, of these terms.

vii. Relations within the hamlet:

aiya, ava, at, ate, nedite, ude

aiya: father

Aiya cannot, like the words I have been considering hitherto, be broken down into elementary segments of a meaningful kind: nor, indeed, is it a polysemous word in itself. However, it can cast an interesting light on certain characteristics of the father-child relation which were discussed in the preceding chapter. What is remarkable about this kinship term is its 'gestural' quality: other than as a kin-term it functions as an interjection, i.e. its connotations are not conceptual, but affective. The syllables aiya! or various re-combinations of the same sounds (yai, ai, yai-aa!) came spontaneously to the lips of all Umedas in moments of fear, pain or bewilderment.



To put the matter most succinctly, the Umeda word for father is a cry for help. It would appear to me that the kinship term 'father' is derived more-or-less directly from a pre-linguistic distress-signal; at any rate it is notable that the standard cry of pain or distress seems to designate that relative (namely the father) who is most likely to answer an appeal for help. I described, in the previous chapter, the way in which the very young child first comes to explore his world via a very close relationship with the father. The father, sitting in the central arena of the hamlet (cf. fig 14) is the point d'appui from which the child makes exploratory movements into its physical and social surroundings. When frightened or hurt, the child will at this stage fall back upon the father for support and assistance, and it is the father who treats any illnesses or injuries sustained by the child, and who protects him from external dangers. When the (male) child, having become more autonomous, enters the peer-group of his age-mates, it is this loss of paternal solicitude which is most deeply felt, and perhaps never entirely accepted -- I heard grown men, as much as small children, appealing to their (dead) fathers when hurt or surprised.

There is only one other word in the language which is perhaps (and only perhaps) related to the word for father, and that is aiyai, a term which denotes a very large, black, horned, beetle, with a conspicuous red beard.

The relation with the father is very individualised and exclusive. An individual will call aiya only his own father -- the term is never extended in a classificatory

sense. Once again, I think this is related to the affective significance of the Father-child relationship, which is essentially exclusive in nature (and hence its traumatic possibilities when a younger sibling displaces a child in his father's affections). The relation with the mother ava does not have this exclusive quality, nor, I think, does it have the same kind of affective charge. For instance ava is never used as an exclamation in the way that aiya is. And unlike the father term, ava is applied indiscriminately to all women of senior generation to ego in the hamlet. A child has only one father, but many 'mothers'. The cognitive association of the maternal role are quite apparent when one looks at the group of av and ab words:

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <u>ava</u> :  | mother   |
| <u>avat</u> : | plenty, many, a lot of, etc.<br>E.g. <u>neb</u> ' <u>avat</u> ' plenty of food.  |
| <u>sava</u> : | taro (main garden crop)  |
| <u>avul</u> : | sago cultigen (the main variety)   |
| <u>avse</u> : | child ( <u>afse</u> ) (term used between mother and child, as opposed to <u>tuda</u> the general term, and <u>tdasia</u> : Si Chi. |
| <u>aba</u> :  | sago-flour (food staple) ( <u>ab</u> : adj. 'ripe').   |

Little exegesis is required here: the association between the mother (ava) and the concept of plenitude (avat) and staple foods (sava, avul, aba) makes perfect sense in terms of the mother child (ava/avse) relation; for the



mother is primarily important as the source of relatively plentiful cooked staples, sago, taro, for whose distribution the married women of the hamlet (aval) are, as a body, responsible.

at (Fa Bro etc.) ate (E Bro sis. etc.)

It will be seen that the term meaning 'member of my father's generation within the hamlet' (at) and 'elder sibling within the hamlet' (ate) are only minimally distinct: indeed, to begin with I was hard put to to distinguish between them. This is not fortuitous. From the standpoint of ego, elder siblings and members of the father's generation are alike in loco parentis where he himself is concerned. Because of the pervasive inequality of intra-hamlet relations there is a tendency for all relationships to take on a quasi-parental complexion. This is reflected in the use of non-reciprocal kinship terms, as opposed to extra-hamlet relations between generation equals (i.e. lowe-low, magawa-magawa, sag-sag etc.) where reciprocal terms are used -- as they are between alternate generations. The close similarity between the terms at, and ate, reflects, I think, the similarity in the content of the relation between ego and members of his father's generation on, the one hand, and ego and senior members of his own generation on the other.

However, the term at has another meaning:

At: Male of Fa's gen 'Guardian' (wasapapa in PE)  
at: area between the shoulderblades and the nape of the neck

pat: roofbeam of house

toat: shelf, platform, smoking platform

wat: thunder, thunder-spirit

atie: above, on top of

Just as we discovered a 'spatial' implication in certain kinship terms marked by the segment ag (agwai, magawa -agai etc.) so here with at and ate. In this instance, though the dimension is not lateral, as in the former case, but vertical. Generation and age-superiority is here associated with spatial 'superiority'. Just as central-lateral relations are the dimension of alliance and affinal relations, so the dimension superior-inferior is the dimension of paternal-filial relations.

It will be seen that the term at besides being a kin term also refers to an area of the body: the area, in fact upon which children ride pig-a-back. It will be understood that this station is indeed, from the child's point of view 'above' (atie). This continues the symbolism of the body which I have already mentioned in relation to agea (arm) and edite (heart). The body-area designated at is appropriately on the vertical, central axis of the body, corresponding to our interpretation of the central vs. lateral opposition as stemming from the sociological opposition of agnates (among whom ego counts his at versus 'outsiders' of one kind and another. The other words on the list confirm this interpretation of at as central and superior: pat, the roofbeam carries over the same idea in terms of the structure of the house (the side posts are age and the centreposts ti, a word to be discussed later). Toat, shelf, platform, also has this implication of superiority (the toat, or smoking platform where dried meat is stored, are

constructed so as to be out of reach of childish hands).  
At also functions, quite outside the kinship context as a verbal gesture for anything above the speaker, used when pointing something out. Thus my hunting-companions, endeavouring to direct my attention to some avian cunningly concealed among the tangled branches and foliage in the forest would mutter at! at-t-t-t! atage! while despairingly pointing arm, gun, and me, in the desired direction. (The interjection atage is at+age i.e. above and to the side).

Finally, there is wat, thunder, which is also 'above' of course. Thunder is also associated with masculinity, since thunder-storms are believed to be caused by the magic of senior men, who know how to rouse the wat spirits.

nedite : younger brother (also nedi)

About nedi(te) there is no necessity to say very much. Informants saw a connection between nedi and nad meaning 'a footstep'. This is not difficult to interpret, since the younger brother follows in his elder's footsteps (Umedas use this metaphor in the same sense as we do). More curious, and perhaps more significant too, is the fact that the word nedi also means clitoris. This is yet another addition to the growing list of words which express the structure of society, or of social relationships, through body-symbolism. What light does the clitoris/younger brother equation cast on the latter? Smallness, inferiority -- it is not really necessary to say. I should add, though, that younger brothers are explicitly seen as a sexual threat to their elders i.e. as potential seducers of their



elder brothers' wives. This usage may reflect, in an ironical way, the supposed propensity of younger brothers towards insinuating themselves where they should not be.

ude : Younger sister

The relation of elder brother to younger sister is close and protective. The elder brother of a girl makes himself responsible for her well-being after she is married, threatening vengeance should she be ill-treated by her husband or in-laws. This tendency of elder brothers to patronise and protect younger sisters provides the clue to what would otherwise be a rather baffling identification, for the term ude besides meaning 'younger sister' also means 'dog'.

It is the profound inequality of the relation (particularly between an elder brother and a younger sister) which seems to be at issue here. Man and dog are closely identified, as are brother and sister, but, at the same time, the dog is but a dog and a quadruped, inalienably inferior. The superiority of men over dogs is established by mythological 'charter' -- originally, it is said, the dogs had their own village (the site is still pointed out) and used to come and rape the women when the men were away hunting. This led to a battle, and the dogs, having suffered defeat, became the hangers-on they are now. Dogs live, metaphorically and literally on a lower level than men, being unable to negotiate the climb into the houses on stilts.

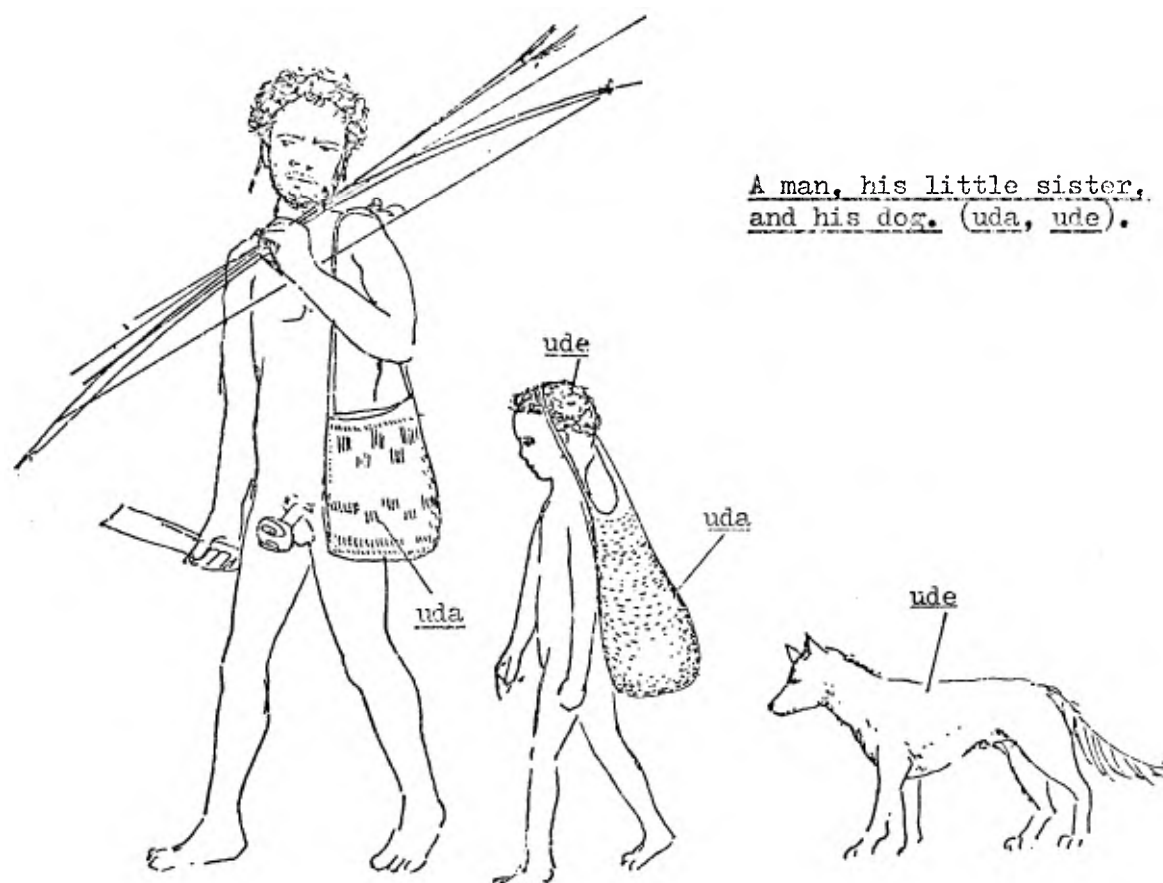
But dogs, besides being inferior, are also faithful satellites (the planets which follow the moon's course are

the moon's 'dogs'). I think it is this idea of subsidiary, satellite, existence which is expressed in the identification of younger sister and dog: in both cases the relation is, at least in ideal terms if not in actuality, of this order.

Possibly related to the word ude, which I have been considering, is the word uda, which means 'net-bag' or 'bilum'. If this is so, then it confirms the interpretation advanced here of dogs and little sisters as having a separate, parallel, subsidiary existence. A man and his bilum are inseparable partners, no less so than a man and his dog. It contains his most personal possessions and is, in fact, really part of his personality. And the same is still truer in the case of a woman, who is not really 'dressed' unless her woman's bilum (udapub -- a larger version of the male bilum) is suspended over her back. And if a man's bilum contains his personality in the form of magical materials, still more so does a woman's swollen (pub) bilum express her role in society, since it is filled with food (the nourisher) and/or with offspring (the child-bearer). The womb itself is called 'spirit-bilum' (uda-midi), and not unjustly either since a woman's bilum functionally resembles a marsupial's pouch in which the child sleeps until it is ready to venture out.

In short, the bilum, like the sister and the dog, is a subsidiary part of the self, a doppelganger. Actually, Umedas believe in a kind of doppelganger spirit, called, significantly, I think, udi. An udi is a spirit-manifestation of a living individual, seen, perhaps, in a dream. Udi can be responsible for actions of which the individual himself





A man, his little sister,  
and his dog. (uda, ude).

Fig 20

is unaware. If, for instance I enter my garden at dusk and see X vaulting smartly over the garden fence, and it proves on inspection that a certain amount of tobacco has disappeared, (and X, on investigation, was somewhere quite else at the time) -- then I have seen an udi. The udi of distant politicians and entertainers are to be heard babbling and whining unintelligibly on the radio - separate and subsidiary existences (Fig. 20).

viii. Relationships outside the hamlet:

na, magawa, lowe, asi

Na Mother's Brother

I have already mentioned this particular kinship term (above p.224). Na, it will be recalled means both 'mother's brother' and 'sago', and is also possibly connected with nai 'skirt'.

Why should sago and the mother's brother be identified in this way? In previous discussions (Chapter 2, sections vii, ix) I have argued that the basis of the mother's brother's role is succour -- material, magical and political. The mother's brother's capacity to perform this succouring role is intrinsically bound up with the fact that he is a member of a foreign group; vis-a-vis ego he is, and remains, an outsider, and because of this he is able to mediate ego's relations with the outside world.

These two factors i) succour and ii) foreignness, suffice I think, to explain the identification.

There is a profound opposition, at all levels, between sago (na) and coconut (sa) which correlates with the opposition between the 'vertical' continuity of the agnatic group, the clan hamlet marked by its plantation of coconut palms, and the peripheral field, the domain of alliance relationships, of which the dominant symbol is the sago-palm, the antithesis of the coconut. The coconut is the symbol of agnatic continuity (men descend from the sa-tod the 'coconut men') -- but for their succour they rely on the sago-palm, which is found, not in the hamlet, but only in

the bush, the peripheral field. The coconut palm is sancrosanct -- I have described the institution whereby a man expresses the most violent possible rage and frustration by attacking his coconut palms, an act of desecration which threatens the very existence of the group. Only the fruit of the coconut may be eaten and these only during times of ritual. Sago on the other hand is pounded up bodily, destroyed and eaten -- that is, it is the primary object of those tadv - relations which, as I described in the previous chapter, characterise ego's relationship with the peripheral field (Cf. Chapter 2, section xii).

Thus, na (mother's brother) is identified with sago in that both stand in a succouring relation to ego. Both, in different ways, are associated with the positive aspects of tadv-relations (nutrition) as opposed to the negative aspects of tadv-relations (aggression and sexuality) which are focussed on awk (non-allied groups). At the same time it can be noted that sago is associated not only with the mother's brother, but also with the mother herself. A sago-palm can be spoken of as a 'mother' (ava) in relation to the shoots (suckers) emerging from the base of the palm which are called the sago-palms 'sons'. And I noted above the evident association between ava (Mother) and avul, the major sago cultigen, and also the possible link between ava and aba (sago-flour). This av/ab group is discussed further, from the point of view of possible phonetic symbolism, in the appendix.

Magawa Cross-cousin

This term has been discussed already in section vi above. See also Appendix I.

Lowe Brother-in-Law

I mentioned in the previous chapter that this word has two meanings, namely 'brother-in-law' and 'shame' or 'embarrassment'. This does not require additional explanation. I might mention a 'folk etymology' an informant once made deriving lowe from longwe (meaning 'distant' in pidgin English) -- which does cast a little light on the nature of the affinal relationship.

Asi: Wi Fa, also 'member of alternate generation'

as: a wild arecoid palm, growing in the bush,  
with large scarlet fruit

asa: garden

asedtod: sorcerer

asehe: pain, illness

This group is rather difficult to interpret. First of all, why should parents-in-law and grandparents have the same kinship term? In terms of generation, this is a contradiction, since the wife's brother, lowe is categorised as a member of ego's own generation. I would suggest that what this usage reflects is the rather taboo-laden, negative, character of the relation between ego and his wife's parents on the one hand, and between alternate generations on the other. About the affinal relation, a little has been said already: it is one of marked shyness, and the name of the wife's parents must be avoided. Is the relation between alternate generations of the same kind? Not entirely, at least where intra-hamlet relations are concerned, since some contact is maintained.



But relations between alternate generations are not close and intimate, despite the fact that alternate generations are identified terminologically (i.e. asi is used reciprocally). One does not find the situation -- which has been regarded as a natural correlate of alternating generation kinship terminologies -- whereby the grandfather is categorised along with the grandchildren socially as well as terminologically, becoming their ally vis-a-vis the parental generation. Old men in Umeda do not ally themselves with their grandchildren, rather, they move right out of the system. (Some old men behaved almost as recluses). Moreover, as men become more aged, so their supposed magical powers increase, and they also become more prone to be suspected of having called in sorcerers against their fellow villagers. (It was notable that only older men figured in the stories about sorcery that I recorded). I think that the kinship term asi applied to grandparents reflects the social distance which results from membership of maximally-distant generations. In the case of wife's parents the factor of social distance is also present but is of a different kind, i.e. stemming from the 'awk' (outsider) status of marriageable groups. The same factor of distance is seemingly apparent also in the term for sister's child tudasia, which, it will be noted, also contains the as segment: asia is a variant form of asa, garden, so tudasia really means 'garden-child'. These as relations form a kind of outer shell to ego's kinship universe (fig. 21a).



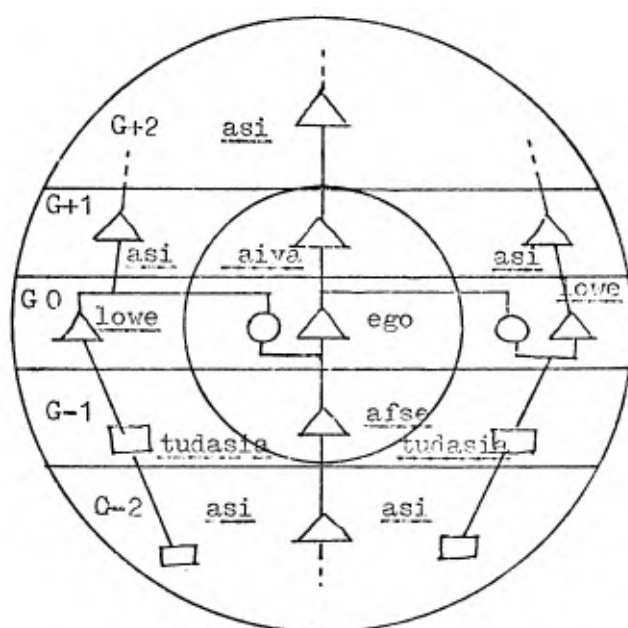


Fig. 2/a. Asi

Here, the vertical axis represents 'distance' in generational terms, the horizontal axis 'distance' in descent terms.

A few remarks are in order concerning the other as words give. Asedtod sorcerer, (as+edtod) and ased awfuné (the sickness resulting from sorcery, fall naturally into this class in that, as explained in the previous chapter,

sorcery is believed to be bound up with marriage and affinal relationships. Sorcery comes from asingai (asi+ngai) i.e. affines. Likewise asehe, pain illness.

Asa, garden, is also decidedly taboo-laden. First of all there is the idea, once again, of distance: gardens are made in the bush, at a distance from the hamlet. They are also lonely and secluded and dangerous. When seclusion is required -- as for instance, when birth is taking place -- gardens provide it. Gardens are also used for clandestine sexual relations, and also, it is thought, for meetings with sorcerers. Gardens are believed to be haunted by spirits: the subudagwa spirits who make the garden grow, and also sa-agwa the tree-spirits who may cause illness, particularly to women. Many Umeda myths tell of ogres and fiends who lurk in the gardens, terrorising people. In short, the whole atmosphere of the garden is dominated by magic, mystery and solitude. It is in gardens that birth takes place, the most highly tabooed aspect of the whole of existence, no doubt for symbolic reasons. This atmosphere of the uncanny explains, I think, the categorisation of gardens along with sorcerers, parents-in-law etc. -- the taboo aspects of life.

Finally, a word about the wild palm, as. This continues the theme of 'tree symbolism' which has figured prominently in this chapter. We have seen how the coconut is emblematic of ancestral agnatic continuity; sago and naimo being emblematic of matrilineal relationships. What can the palm as tell us about affinal relationships? Essentially, this palm stands at the other end of a continuum of palms of

increasing 'wildness'. Most 'cultural' is the coconut, the very symbol of culture; next comes Areca, marginal between the hamlet and the bush; then comes Sago ('bush' but still cultivated and exploited); next in line is naimo, like sago, but uncultivated, and exploited only for grubs -- and finally as a truly 'wild' palm not utilisable in any way (see Table 2).

| Palm                 | Coconut<br>sa                           | Areca<br>oul                                    | sago<br>pe                            | Caryota<br>naimo                                   | (Arecaid ?)<br>as |
|----------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| K-rel.               | ego                                     | Y Bro   | Mo, Mo Bro,                           |  | Wi Pa             |
| Use                  | Utilised,<br>sacred,<br>ritual<br>uses. | Utilised,<br>narcotic,<br>magical<br>properties | Utilised,<br>staple<br>food           | Utilised<br>(marginally)<br>as source of<br>grubs. | Not<br>utilised.  |
| Planted<br>/<br>Wild | Planted                                 | Planted   | Planted<br>(regenerates<br>naturally) | Not planted  | Not<br>planted    |

Table 2 . Palm Species

Exactly why the as palm, and not one of the other wild palm species should be the one identified with affines is hard to say. It is perhaps precisely because as has no conceivable cultural use that it is selected as the anti-type of the Coconut. Certainly, it is only found in the deep bush, away from habitation sites. Possibly it is singled out because it has conspicuous red fruit (inedible, apparently). The wife's father is also a source of 'fruit' (= daughters, mol), so perhaps it is for this reason that the as palm is selected as a botanical analogue of the wife's father.

The reader may have noted that as is the 'opposite' of sa (coconut) syllabically, as well as symbolically: this curious phenomenon is taken up in the Appendix. Also discussed in the Appendix is the term awk.

ix. The triple analogy

At this point let me return to the ed/ag opposition which was discussed in section vi. I attempted to show, in that section, that the sociological opposition 'central' vs. 'peripheral' or 'lateral' is reflected in the terminology applied to the human body: i.e. the structure of the human body reflects, microcosmically, the structure of the total society. I should like now to extend this argument to cover plant structure as well -- the previous sections may have sufficed to convince the reader of the importance of 'botanical' symbolism in Umeda ideas concerning the structure of the social field. Consider the following groups:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Social role:  | <u>agwai</u> : wife ( <u>agwa</u> : woman)                |
| body-part :   | <u>agea</u> : arm   |
| Part of tree: | <u>agea</u> : branch                                      |
|               | <u>agwai</u> : fruit-stem                                 |
| Social role : | <u>tiai</u> (or <u>ti</u> ) : husband ( <u>edi</u> : man) |
| body-part :   | <u>edite</u> : heart                                      |
| Part of tree: | <u>ti</u> : trunk of a tree (upright post,<br>housepost)  |

The ag group is already familiar: it will be seen that the 'lateral' organs of the body (arm, ear) and of tree structure (branch) are, like the 'lateral' social role (wife) marked by an ag element. The ed group is slightly more difficult in that there are no words based on the segment ed which refer to tree-structure, however, edi (man, a variant form of ed) is probably related to ti, the segment which carries the meaning 'trunk of a tree' and 'husband'. The basis of this symbolism is not difficult to grasp.

Tiai, the usual word meaning 'husband' is a simple modification of ti, which may itself be used with this meaning. The identification of husband and tree is carried over into local Pidgin English usage as well, as I discovered when my cat, imported by me, and the only cat for miles around (a female) began to manifest strange symptoms stemming from her unfortunate mateless condition. 'Em diwai bilong en i-lus' was the sardonic comment of an informant, of which the literal translation would be 'Her tree is lost'. The same image is utilised in jokes and stories. For instance, in one story a woman is encouraging a lover who is not making the best use of his opportunities. 'Why, that's a fine



tall tree over there' she says, 'I think I can see a little white bird perched on it ...'. This would be immediately understood by Umedas as a sexual innuendo. Ti means the trunk of a tree and by extension any upright post, such as a housepost: i.e. ti refers to the central (masculine) axis of the tree. To this is opposed the lateral appendage agea. Arm and branch are alike in being lateral appendages, and though it might seem unduly anti-feminist to speak of the wife (agwai) as a 'lateral appendage' of the husband (tiai) to do so makes sociological sense. Moreover, the idea of the branch of a tree as structurally analagous to the role of wife pays an extra dividend when one comes to consider also the mo group of words. Thus:

Social role : mol : daughter

body-part : mo : gullet

mov : vulva

Part of tree : mov : fruit

(The fruit-stems on which the fruit grow are called agwoi which is an even closer approximation to agwai: wife). Just as wives are the reproductive members of human society, so the branches and fruit-stems are the progeny-bearing members of the tree. The identification of fruit with female offspring was one which my informants made quite consciously. The appositeness of the identification rests on two features; firstly the feature of 'edibility' -- fruit have, as their raison d'etre, to be eaten (in the gustatory mode) while girls (mol) are sexually 'eaten'. (Tadv being the relevant verb in both cases). Secondly,

fruit are reproductive, just as daughters are potentially reproductive -- and in both cases the resultant new organisms will be apart from the parent stock. Let me give an example of how Umeda ideas about arboreal reproductivity work out in practice.

I have mentioned the strong sense of identification that exists between a man and his coconut palms; the palms, which, pointing towards the stars<sup>1</sup> define the 'vertical' axis of agnatic continuity, lignified occupants of the immemorial clan-hamlet sites. Each male member of the hamlet owns his palms individually, and there is a close parallelism in the life cycle of man and palm respectively, the palm planted during its owner's infancy, taking 15-20 years to mature, and bearing for a further 30 years or more, so that owner and palm pass through life synchronously. Moreover, palms have rules of 'exogamy' analogous to those observed by the human population of the hamlet. The rule is the same as that which makes the clan-hamlets exogamous, i.e. a palm may not be planted in the same hamlet as its parent palm. Thus, all the coconut palms growing in a given hamlet are the progeny of palms growing in other hamlets. A man's palms are planted for him, by his mother, about the time of his birth. She obtains the original nuts for planting from her brother, i.e. from her own natal hamlet, which is always, of course, different from the hamlet into which she has married. It will be apparent, then, that not only is the life of the palm parallel to the life of its

1. The stars, glittering in the night sky, are said to be the penes of the ancestors.

owner but the movements of the coconuts used in planting parallel the movements of women going in marriage between the component hamlets of the connubium. If one traces back the 'genealogy' of a given palm one is, in effect, tracing back the matrilineal descent of its owner, to the mother's hamlet, the mother's mother's, mother's mother's mother's hamlet and so on. This simple institution is rich in meaning. One might describe the whole framework of the society in terms of the movements of fruit and girls between plantations. The relation of mother's brother and sister's son is nowhere made more explicit than in the institution which makes him the provider of the coconut which will, developing from a shoot, become the palm which is the botanical analogue of the sister's son himself. The relation ti/agea/mov, tree, branch or stem, and fruit sums up in a single synoptic image the relation of the component parts of the society, as well as relating back to the structure of the human body, the microcosm: it is indeed, so far as the Umedas are concerned- the structure of all structures. Later, in the analysis of the ida ritual (Chapter 5) I will show how this 'model' is given concrete expression in the form of ritual masks.

But a difficulty may have already suggested itself to the reader's mind. I may be able to argue that ti, agea and mov, together summarise the relation of husband, wife and daughter -- but what of the filial generation of sons? In effect the native conceptual system is faced with rather a dilemma here -- there are a number of possible candidates for this symbolic role. However, I think the matter can best be approached by contrasting sexual reproduction in



plants with the other mechanism of reproduction, namely vegetative reproduction, or simple proliferation. The relation of parent plant to fruit is that of parent to daughter, while the relation of parent plant to vegetative offshoots (including shoots, suckers, leaves and flowers) is that of parent to filial offspring. Let me examine some of the linguistic evidence for this proposition.

First of all, as noted above, this conception is explicit in the case of sago, whose suckers (i.e. the shoots emerging about the base of the palm, from which it will eventually regenerate) are called atel 'the group of brothers' (i.e. the sons of the parent palm). The identification of the suckers of the sago-palm with young men is made the more explicit by the fact that, if these suckers are cut, an abundant trickle of oozy sweet sap is produced (this is called yise from yis : sago jelly) which is the 'semen' of the atel and is used in magic, particularly love-magic. However, this usage of atel is metaphorical -- the more usual words for shoot are ipud and li. Ipud fits very well into the schema advanced above.

|              |              |   |                  |
|--------------|--------------|---|------------------|
| Social role  | <u>ipudi</u> | : | eldest son (son) |
| part of tree | <u>ipud</u>  | : | shoot            |
| body-part    | <u>ipudi</u> | : | forefinger       |

The segment ip will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 in relation to the ipale bowmen: ritual figures whose symbolic role is that of 'new men' created during the course of the fertility ritual, ida. The ip segment is consistently associated with the idea of newness and youngness (ipude : young) -- the botanical symbol of which

is the breadfruit tree ip, which is the subject of a lengthy analysis elsewhere. (Chapter 5 section xvi). Here I would merely like to note the way in which the hand as a whole is utilised as a model of the sibling group plus the mother (fig. 21b):

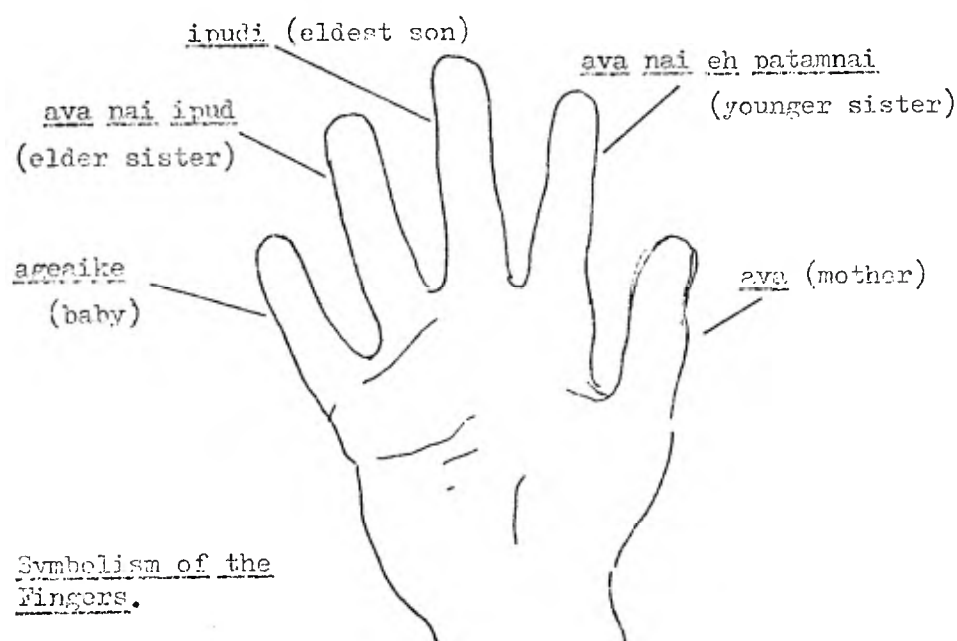


Fig. 21b. Symbolism of the Fingers.

The thumb (squat, bulbous and hardworked) is ava, the mother, standing in opposition to her offspring. Ipud,



the middle finger is the eldest son, the tallest of the brood, flanked (laterally, be it noted) by two sisters ava-nai-ipud 'mother-skirt-shoot' and ava-nai-ehpatammnai 'mother's-skirt she-follows' with the little finger as the baby of the family ageaike (age (side) + aike diminutive suffix). Note that the male member of the sibling group is central, while the females and the baby are lateral.

Ipud shoot/eldest son is only one of the ways in which the triple analogy of which I have been speaking can be extended to cover the filial generation of sons. More generally, all 'proliferation' of the parent plant -- whether leaves, flowers, shoots or suckers, carry this connotation, or rather, to be more precise, a 'phallic' connotation which opposes them to fruit (mov) as male to female. The segment which distinguishes this masculine significance of flowers, shoots, etc., is the segment li

Li: (i) a sapling

(ii) digging stick

-veli) suffixes having the meaning 'leaves  
-ele) of' thus naveli : (Na+veli) sago leaves

aneli: flowers and young leaves

eli: variant form of edi 'man'

lisue: rainbow (li+sue 'fire')

tali: testicles, also 'growing shoot of coconut'

(for other li words see Chapter 5 Section v)

The evidence upon which this proposition must be based is somewhat indirect but is, I think, quite unmistakeable.

Li: digging stick is an overt phallic symbol, and figures

as such in garden ritual (which culminates in the plunging of a li into a special medicated orifice, or hole, in the centre of the new garden). Again, aneli (flowers or young leaves) were explicitly seen as phallic (once, when I asked an informant what the long, red, dangling stamens of hibiscus were, my interlocutor replied by grasping his penis and pointing it in my direction, as if my question were too naive to require verbal answer). Tali is likewise masculine in its implications (ta: hair), lisue requires explanation. Essentially, rain is thought by Umedas to be a manifestation of male sexuality. Rain is produced by the magic of angry or frustrated men and even while a downpour was in progress, people would start discussing who was responsible, the blame tending to be put on elderly widowers and other wifeless men, whose sexual frustration was believed to have inspired them to make rain magic (in myth, Toag-ted creates a woman, Ahoragwa, the evil toad-woman, by means of this rain-magic). This explicitly 'sexual' view of rain as a manifestation of male energy suffices to explain the compound form lisue, a combination of the 'phallic' segment li and sue: fire. Further examples are discussed in Chapter 5. What these remarks suffice to suggest is the thorough-going opposition between the 'masculine' parts of tree-structure, the aspect of vegetative proliferation, and the 'feminine' parts, particularly fruit.

#### x. Conclusion : Organic Structure

In this chapter I have tried to sketch in some of the outstanding features of the Umeda symbolic system. In particular I have dwelt on the symbolic relationship of

certain trees, particularly the palms, coconut, Areca, sago, naimo and as, which stand as botanical metaphors for sociological reality. And I have also tried to show how the structure of trees serves as a model for the conceptualisation of society and social relationships. Perhaps some of my interpretations may have struck the reader as verging on the arbitrary, but I hope that when, in the later stages of this thesis I come to consider the interpretation of Umeda ritual symbolism the reader may be reassured somewhat. For in the context of ritual, we will be able to see how ritual masks, themselves made of substances and materials of botanical origin, take up and use for definite expressive purposes the parts of trees whose underlying symbolic significance has been suggested here. And we will also see how the fundamental social opposition 'central vs. lateral' is basic to the interpretation of ritual symbolism. That must wait, however, until I have given a descriptive account of the ida ritual, which I provide in the next chapter.

Here I would only wish to conclude by stressing the 'organic' character of the Umeda symbolic system, by which I mean the way in which the Umeda symbolic system, eschewing abstractions, expresses fundamental relationships through metaphors drawn from the organism, i.e. the human body and the structure of trees and other botanical organisms. I would like to stress the unity and consistency of this world-picture, dominated by organic analogies, as opposed, I might say, to our own much more fragmented perception of reality; for, though we have many points of contact with



Umeda (e.g. idioms which compare girls to fruit, men to tress, and so forth) we are not committed, by language, to these metaphors, as it would seem the Umedas are. The extent to which the natural organisms with which they are familiar dominate Umeda thinking could not be overestimated; when, making a rather stale joke, I said that money (Australian dollars) grew on trees, I was believed, as I should have seen in advance I would be. Tins of food, cloth, and paper were also seen as tree-products<sup>1</sup>. I mention these instances not to impugn Umeda naivety, but to illustrate the unity of their conception of the world, the way in which all the separate domains of experience, the most diverse phenomena, were related back to a single over-riding model: the organism. The triple analogy I have been describing, which obtains between the structure of the body, the structure of trees, and the structure of society, is the fundamental instance of this.

And not only is the organism the model for structural relationships, but also of processes. The processes or phases of development through which the organism passes are likewise seen within a single basic framework. I will examine 'organic process' in detail below, since it is highly relevant to the discussion of ritual symbolism.

Finally, the reader is referred once more to the appendix, where the material presented in this chapter is examined from a different viewpoint, i.e. phonological symbolism.

1. Or again, my teapot. This was called tipos by Umedas, i.e. ti (tree) + pos (nose). The spout was a 'tree-nose'.

There, I argue that the structure of the articulatory tract itself is brought into play as a means of expressing structural relationships. Also in the appendix are certain comments on recent work on the relationship between sound and meaning (of kinship terms) by Edmund Leach, which are certainly germane to the discussion of kinship terminology included in this chapter.



## Chapter 4

THE IDA FERTILITY RITUAL1. Introduction

I do not propose, in this thesis, to give a full-dress account of Umeda ritual. I shall, instead, devote this section to the description of only one of several kinds of ritual which I observed, and was given information about, while I was in Umeda. Ida, the ritual designed to promote the fertility of sago is, meanwhile, the most dramatic and picturesque of the ceremonies which I saw, and is also the one which has the most far-reaching sociological implications, in that it involves the total society; every Umeda, man, woman and child, being implicated in the performance in one way or another. And, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in the chapter devoted to the analysis of ida, a study of the ritual symbolism of ida gives many insights into the way Umedas conceptualise their world, their relationships one with another, and with the natural kingdom, and the very meaning which life has for them. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if, in ida, a dramatic re-creation is set in motion of the entire cosmos as it is constituted in Umeda experience, and interpreted in Umeda cultural categories. In this, ida is, of course, in no way exceptional as far as ethnography is concerned; annual fertility rites which, like ida dramatise the cycle of natural and social regeneration, the rhythm of the seasons and the agricultural year, are far from rare, and even in

New Guinea and the surrounding islands there is ample documentation of 'harvest festival' and garden fertility ritual (e.g. Landtmann 1927).

Though it is not hard to find references to broadly similar ritual performances in New Guinea, it is not yet possible to find much detailed comparability in the material. No anthropologist had worked in the Amanab sub-district prior to my own visit, and as far as I know nothing has been published on ritual in the Lumi sub-district to the west, or Green river to the south. The situation is the same for the big group of Walsa villages, centred on the Waris patrol post in West Irian and the northern neighbours of the Waina-Sowanda villages, nothing having been published.

Apart from published sources, I have had discussions with Dr. Gilbert Lewis, who worked among the Gnau speakers in Lumi area (Rauit village) and also with M. Bernard Juillerat, who, partly at my instigation, worked in Yafar, a village in the Amanab area, to the south of Umeda. In the case of the Gnau speakers of Lumi area, the picture seems to be dominated by certain forms of ceremonial exchange -- as almost universally in Melanesia -- and an initiatory male cult, similar to others on the Sepik river itself (Bateson 1937, Allen 1967). As it happens, neither ceremonial exchange, nor male initiation is highly developed in Umeda, though elements of both institutions are to be found. There is a strong 'initiatory' undercurrent in *ida*, as will be seen, and full-scale initiation ritual is found in the western

villages in Waina-Sowanda (i.e. Waina, Wyalla and Sowanda), but not, to my knowledge, in Umeda and Punda. While the Gnau speakers themselves seem to differ radically in their ritual institutions from Umeda, and to fall into the broad 'Sepik' pattern, it is known that certain masked dances in which fish figure prominently are performed by Lumi speakers in the vicinity of Lumi Patrol Post itself. As yet no description of these rituals have appeared in print, though they have been recorded by a local missionary, Dr. Michell (G. Lewis, personal communication).

Turning to Yafar, and M. Juillerat's researches, one finds many more parallels with the Umeda situation, as might be expected since Yafar is in contact with Punda, and some intermarriage has taken place. The ida ritual itself is not performed, though Yafar men have seen performances in Punda. But many external features of ida, mask types, body paint, style of dancing, musical accompaniment and so on, re-appear in Yafar rituals, though put to different purposes. To outward appearance *and Umeda rituals are very similar, but when the* Yafar/symbolic meanings of the rituals and the ritual paraphernalia are taken into consideration, the ideological rather than the concrete aspects of the rituals, ~~that~~ very profound divergences immediately become apparent. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in Yafar ritual seems to be given a totally different cultural emphasis. M. Juillerat's researches have revealed a fascinating pre-occupation in Yafar, and among the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, with the fate of the soul, of which they have a very detailed conception, in its various

peregrinations, during life and after death. Broadly speaking, Yafar ritual reflects this concern with the soul and with the spirit world, being, as M. Juillerat puts it 'eschatological' in orientation. For instance, spirit possession is found, and a cult of ancestral spirits, and the major ritual festival witnessed by M. Juillerat (which to judge from photographs taken by him, is in its outward aspect remarkably like a performance of ida) is to prevent the 'loss of souls' on the part of members of the community. Now while ideas concerning the soul, ghosts and the spirit world are undeniably part of Umeda belief, they are of only the most peripheral importance in ida, though they assume more prominence in rituals concerned with curing the sick. 'Eschatological' concerns are latent rather than manifest in Umeda ritual, and such a concrete relation with the spirit world as implied by spirit possession, accompanied by trance, such as is found in Yafar, was utterly unknown in Umeda (Juillerat 1972). While it seems that Yafar lacks a counterpart to ida, and Umeda lacks the elaborations of Yafar 'eschatological' ritual, the standard curing ritual found in both communities seems to share many features. (B. Juillerat personal communication).

While, as will be seen, there is little available in the form of directly comparable material in the ethnographic sense, the analysis which follows does draw considerably on a number of recent and not-so-recent analyses of ritual performances and symbolic systems. These works will be discussed below in the theoretical section which prefaces



the analysis of ida. But before going on to the discussion I shall present, in as bald a manner as possible, an account of the rites themselves, and the period of preparation leading up to them, together with the most prominent statements of 'exegesis' made to me by informants.

\* \* \* \* \*

ii. Ida smav

In the Umeda language ida smav means 'to hold a ritual' -- ida can be used in a loose sense to mean rituals other than the sago-fertility ritual here called ida, though all these lesser rituals also have specific names of their own. Ida, unqualified, refers properly to this rite alone, while in a sense summing up all the others. The use of the verb smav is interesting here, since it is the verb by which Umeda refers to 'passions' (in the sense of Lienhardt 1961) rather than actions. Thus nesui smav means 'to be hungry, to feel hungry', yaus smav, 'to be angry', varv smav 'to be wounded', or as one might put it, 'to undergo a spear (varv)'. Thus ida smav implies not so much the active sense of 'hold a ritual' as the passive sense of 'undergo a ritual' 'suffer' or 'pass through' a ritual just as asehe smav means 'suffer an illness'. The idea is less of a collective decision to engage in ritual action, than of the society being made subject to ida, an external necessity which acts through them. While, in a deeper sense ida is indeed the symbolic acting out of natural process, natural necessity, one can also see how ida is a collective 'passion' at a more mundane level



since it is imposed on the society both by customary obligation, and by the very organisation of the annual cycle of production, as I shall shortly show. And if the shorter cycle of the agricultural calendar is organised around the season of festivities, so another, longer cycle, the life-cycle of the individual, is broken up into successive phases by a succession of performances of ida in which the individual has participated, taking more senior roles on each occasion. In both senses then, ida is integral with the on going processes of life itself, something which has to be gone through.

An annual performance of ida is the ideal, but in troubled times a year or more may pass without a performance. To perform ida, a consensus on the part of the whole village must be reached, for all must participate. Should an epidemic strike, or should important men become ill or even die, a performance may be abandoned or postponed. No performances of ida were held in Umeda while members of the community were in prison, as was the case from 1966-8. Times were out of joint, and many people retired permanently to bush houses to await the return of the absent men. In 1968 the prisoners returned home (not a few of them only to discover that their wives, or parents or children had died in the meanwhile). By 1969 the village had recovered from these blows, and had more-or-less adjusted to the Australian administration. My own presence at that time contributed to the feeling that they had got back into the white men's good books. Things seemed set fair for a performance of ida which had been long delayed. At this

moment a political factor intervened. During the period of troubles prior to 1968 there had been an element of conflict between the edtodna hamlets of Wehumda and Klalumda: the 'unruly' elements -- from the administrations' point of view, being concentrated in Wehumda and her allies, while opposition to anti-administration demonstrations came from the councillor, Pom of Klalumda, and his hamlet. Another source of possible conflict was the existence of marriage relationships between these two edtodna hamlets, which had, as I described in the chapter on social structure, a history of conflicts and quarrels stretching back to the period when they occupied adjacent sites on the main Umeda ridge. Klalumda had moved, as a result of these conflicts to a new site away from the ridge in Sinai territory (see map) and had become established there. In 1969 a new source of conflict arose between them, for Pom, the councillor, wanted the ida to be held at the new Klalumda site, rather than in the Wehumda hamlet, where it had traditionally been held. His proposal did not find any favour with the Wehumda men, and, angered by this, the councillor tried to use the power of his office to bring pressure to bear on them. He raised the matter at a meeting of the Walsa local government council, and it was said in the village that he had made a 'law' to prevent the performance of ida being held at all. But the councillor's authority was limited, and in the event he neither prevented the performance from taking place, nor in fact, did he refrain from taking part in it when it did. However, in 1969 ida was held only in curtailed form, not

in the edtodna hamlet of Wehumda, but only in Sinai, the agwatodna hamlet. By 1970, when I again witnessed ida, any opposition on the part of the councillor had vanished, and the ill-feeling between Wehumda and Klalumda had also died down, so that the ritual was held in the full version, in Wehumda as well as Sinai, as it always had been. The councillor himself played a leading role.

In normal times the onset of the ritual season is signalled, both to the assembled village, and to neighbouring villages, by a day and a night of trumpet-playing (huf smav). This will occur in October/November, shortly before the onset of the rainy season, which lasts until March or April. In November 1969 this took place in Wehumda hamlet, most of the population of Umeda being present for the occasion. There is no ceremonial on this occasion, apart from the playing of the trumpets, which is not, in itself a sacred activity. These instruments of music, the most elaborate used by Umedas, may be described at this point.

#### iii. Huf smav

Wooden trumpets, end-blown, are found both on the upper Sepik itself, and also in the Border and Bewani mountain ranges, and in the vicinity of Jaiapura (Ex-Hollandia). A detailed study of their distribution is contained in Jaap Kunst's book on New Guinea Music (Kunst 1967). They were to be found in all the Waina-Sowanda villages, and among all the neighbouring groups. However, among the Waris, and the groups round Amanah and further south, with the exception of Yafar (according to M. Juillaxat) trumpets are found in



pairs, a tone apart. In Waina-Sowanda and Yafar a more elaborate system of trumpet playing has been developed, involving five melodic instruments (each one playing a single note in a five tone 'scale') and up to three 'bass' instruments, about four or five feet in length, which produce a deep, fog-horn like note. In playing the huf (their name is onomatopoeic) a rhythm is first of all established by the two huvwi (playing notes 3 and 4 of the 5-tone scale). The pattern once established the other three trumpets fill in the harmony according to a set sequence of interdigitated tones, and the bass trumpets reinforce the basic pulse. The resulting sound, by no means devoid of euphony, even to western ears, carries over considerable distances, and is audible in villages a mile or more away. The five man 'band' marches round the arena formed by the ring of houses, pausing at intervals to direct their music outward over the surrounding bush, the better to be heard in neighbouring villages. Children, bystanders, and novice performers (such as myself), assist the performance on the bass trumpets, whose playing requires less skill than the melodic instruments. The ground perceptibly vibrates in concert with the deep-toned trumpets. An agreeable sensation of monotony, which is the hall-mark of the best rustic music making, descends, interrupted only by occasional disputes between men competing to take a turn on one of the instruments. As I say, no overt ceremonial other than the music takes place, yet the fact that this occasion is marked by music is, in itself,

significant. For music is, as a form of human communication, concerned in a very fundamental way with the organisation of time, the establishment of synchrony -- or so it has been argued by Schutz in a philosophical essay on music (Schutz: Coll; pap. Vol. II). Schutz sees music, both in its regular pulse, and in the regular sequence of melodic and harmonic patterns, as the communication of Bergsonian durée, (inner time) which, during the performance, is synchronised both between the performers, and between performers and audience: so that all are, so to speak, 'in phase'.

The activities of the village are, in this way, synchronised by the performance of music, which, in its own complex inner temporal organisation, is almost an abstract model of the patterned sequence of events in the months leading up to the performance of ida.

While the music is playing, various consultations are in progress among the spectators, to determine who shall play which of the more important ritual roles, particularly the cassowaries (one from each moiety), the aba dancers, and the ipele, the ritual bowmen; for the actors of these roles must observe taboos during the coming months, as I will describe. Coconuts are collected and eaten, and coconut fibre is taken for use in processing sago. This is the last opportunity, because after the performance of huf, marking the onset of the ritual season, there is a general taboo on all coconuts, the new season's crop being reserved for the ritual itself. None may be eaten in the intervening months.



The taboo on coconuts is to be explained as follows. Coconuts, as was described in the preceding chapter, are uniquely associated with the hamlet, and in a general way with culture, as is made clear in the myths and linguistic usages which have been adduced already. Moreover, they play an important part in the ida ritual, both as a food which is eaten on that occasion, and also as the source of wata (fibre) used in making fish-masks. So they must be preserved for ritual use. One can go further than this, however. For as a rough generalisation it is possible to say that during the months of preparation for ida, whose onset is marked by huf smav, the manner of life adopted is the antithesis of that which characterises the days of the performance itself. The gathering-together of the whole membership of the village, for the performance of huf smav is the last occasion for such a general meeting till the very day of the ritual itself. During the intervening months the villagers live dispersed, each to his own bush house or sago-working site, with only a few families, or none, to be found in the village at any one time. The village (and the coconuts) are shunned, and life is lived in the bush. In addition, just as ida is a time of noise and music-making, after the trumpeting for huf smav a general taboo on all forms of noise descends, only to be raised when ida is imminent. The trumpets may not be played, and the prohibition extends to drumming, singing of any sort, the playing of pan-pipes and jew's harps, flutes, ululating in the forest, whistling etc. An exception is made for the trumpet-playing (on two, not five trumpets) which takes

place in a hamlet following a successful pig-killing. This is necessary since it advertises the kill to the affines of the successful hamlet, who take their portion. Were it to be omitted, suspicions of secret consumption of meat, and cheating rightful claims, would arise. The taboo on music was imposed, according to my information, in order to ensure successful hunting (and one sees that, if the hunting was successful, it was temporarily relaxed). In the bush people moved about quietly, without ululating to one another as was done at other times; social intercourse was at a minimum, and music, its corollary, was banned.

Certain taboos of a general kind were imposed upon movement subsequent to huf smav. It was forbidden for the agwatodna hamlets of Efid and Kedewaina to enter the territory of Wehumda, the largest Edtodna hamlet. This (partial) separation of edtodna and agwatodna during the months of preparation for ida isolates the opposed halves of the village, prior to their coming together in ida itself. Once again one has the impression that the behaviour enjoined during the period of preparation is the antithesis of that enjoined during the performance itself.

#### iv. Economic activity : the annual cycle

In speaking of ida Umedas refer not only to the actual performance, the period of about two weeks during which the two phases of the ritual take place, but also to the whole period, which may be up to ten months, between huf smav and the performance. Thus the economic preparations for the ritual are seen as part of the ritual itself --

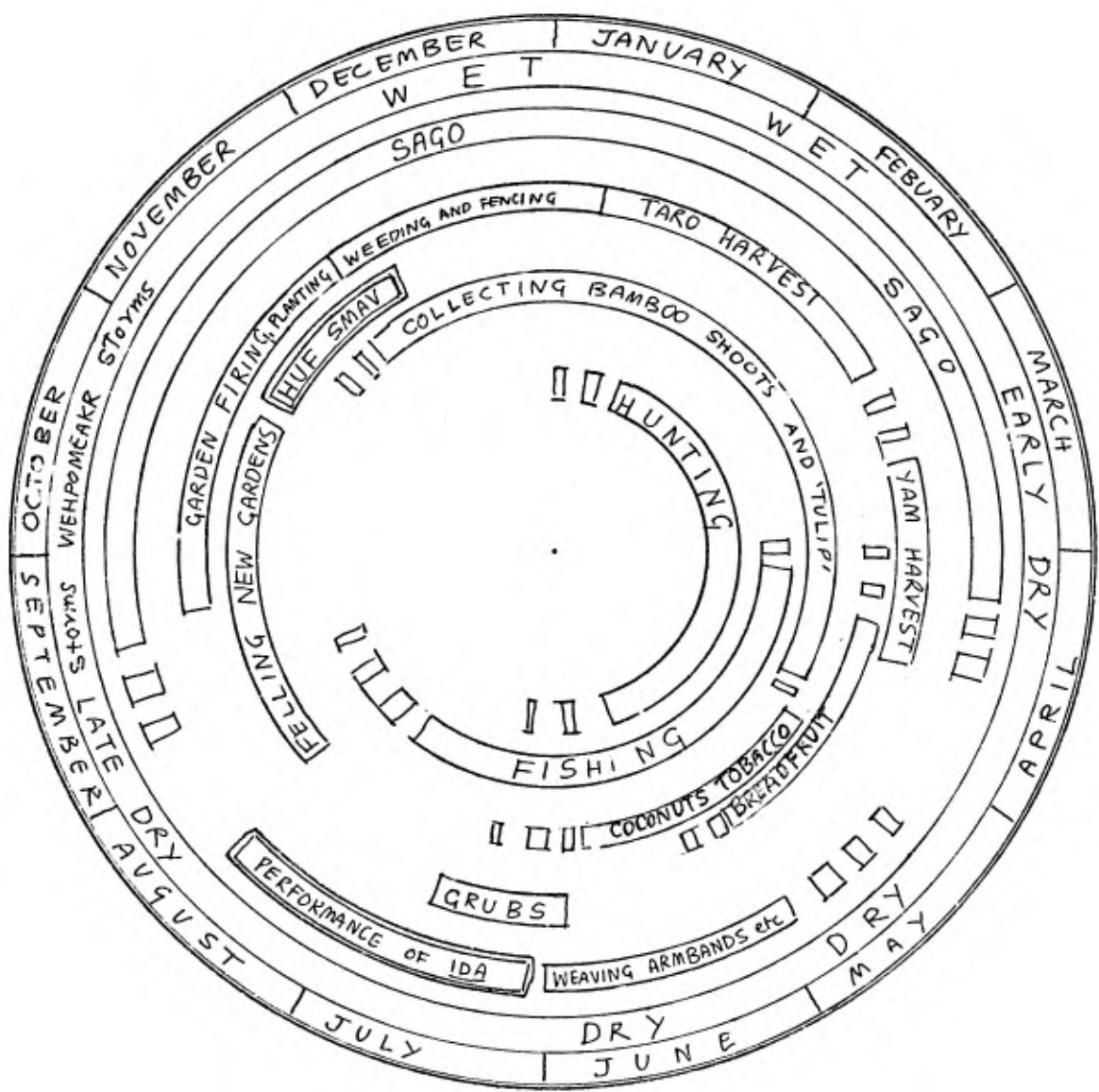


Fig 22 . THE ANNUAL CYCLE



the performance of ida imposed a pattern on, and gave a direction to, the economic life of the whole community. Fig. 22 shows approximately the way in which the agricultural season is organised. Umeda time-reckoning is not at all systematic. A year is spoken of as 'one garden'. The Umeda numeral system consists of just two terms mogwa: one, and sabbra: two. Higher numbers can be expressed by counting on the fingers and joints of the wrist, elbows and shoulders<sup>1</sup>. But even on this basis I found no consistency in the accounts given by my various informants as to the number of months in a year (the months or moons: wis not being given separate names), nor indeed, as to the number of months which should pass between huf smav and the performance of ida. The truth is, Umedas simply do not think numerically on the whole, so that the astronomical time indicators were of little relevance to them. Astronomical events were conditioned by events on the ground rather than vice versa. When a full moon was imminent Umedas said 'wis abam kaptetav' that is, 'the moon is wrapping up bundles of sago-flour now', or they would call the full moon ripe (abwi) as opposed to nene, new or unripe (the new moon). That is, the moon was interpreted as a social or biological phenomenon, but never as a controlling influence on them. I was struck by their failure to stress the rigid determinism of lunar events:

1. The restricted nature of the Umeda numeral system has occasioned some surprise and even incredulity. Can members of homo sapiens get by with just 'one' and 'two' when it is claimed, for example, that even thrushes can 'count' up to six.



they would point out a bright, full moon as if it were a relatively arbitrary or contingent event (like a fine day or a good catch of fish), not as an inevitable culmination of the lunar cycle. This attitude applied also to the daily

1. (continued) Umedas can easily tell, without using numerals at all, whether one of a number of objects is missing, which is all that the thrush can do. It is simply that Umedas do not use numeral as we do as markers of distinctiveness within sets of objects: instead, they tend to use an ad hoc criteria limited to that particular set. Thus an Umeda does not say 'I have six children' (child number one, number two, number three etc.). Instead, the set of children is defined by a criterion appropriate to that specific set, i.e. by their names (Harry, Jim, Susan, etc.). Similarly with months, which are not enumerated, but are specified by the relevant criterion -- 'what we are doing during that moon'. Thus Umeda lacks an overall numeral system (one-ness and two-ness excepted) but supply the deficiency by creating new series whenever a particular set must be specified. Hence, perhaps, the poor performance of the pupils in the catechists school when it came to maths (the catechist himself came from a culture with only two numerals, which may not have helped). Take a typical Umeda 'sum':

$$\begin{aligned} 1+1 &= 1 \\ 2+2 &= 2 \\ 3+3 &= 3 \text{ etc.} \end{aligned}$$

For the Umeda pupil, this series of 'sums' was a number -- what we recognise as numbers, were, for them, objects: they tried to count the numbers -- not the (notional) objects that the numbers represented. Quite unaware that numbers were not objects in their own right, but signs for sets of objects the catechist's pupils readily lost themselves in formulaic incantations which bore no resemblance to the elementary maths they were supposed to be learning.

As it happens, I was present during one delirious afternoon when the children finally did catch on to the basic principles of number -- the fact that with numbers you can count anything. Released from the schoolhouse, the excited children ran hither and thither in little groups, applying their new-found insight: they counted the posts of the houses, the dogs, the trees, fingers and toes, each other -- and the numbers worked! They were members of homo sapiens, and no mistake. The number-craze, as such, did not endure for long, though perhaps its function had been fulfilled and a numerate generation of Umedas will result in the fullness of time. But numbers are a little dull, and before long newer interests absorbed them. The performance of ida was in the air and the children, imitating the huf-playing of their elders, took to elaborating inconsequential tunes on flutes of green bamboo. That would be typical of homo sapiens, too.

motion of the sun, which, though consistent in general terms, like the moon, was in the same way malleable and contingent. Thus, when walking between villages with a youth, I remarked to him on the rather leisurely pace we were keeping, suggesting that we might not arrive before dark. He (knowing perfectly well that there was no danger of this, as it proved), assured me that if we were to walk fast, then the sun would go down correspondingly quickly, whereas if we stuck to our leisurely pace, then the sun would do likewise. In short, lunar or other astronomical indices of time were not considered to be more rigidly or accurately determinate than any other events, a yardstick against which they could be measured, but simply on a par with human activities, the seasonal cycle, biological processes, the weather etc., all of which hang together in an un-analysed way, but none of which was seen as the prime mover of all the rest.

Because of this prevailing feeling of indeterminacy within the general flux of events, the organisation imposed on the work of the community during the months leading up to ida was not by any means rigidly fixed. One way of calculating the time needed was by reference to the tobacco crop. Tobacco would be planted out from seed-beds about the time of huf-smav (i.e. the late dry season) and would have reached waist height about four months later, marking the season of intensive hunting at the end of the wet season (the time when gardens are at their most productive, and pigs, as a consequence, much in evidence (wild sows were in farrow at this time, too). During the dry season the

tobacco could be harvested and cured, and would be ready for smoking by June-July, during the season of festivities.

The seasons themselves are not very clearly marked. The most abrupt seasonal change is the onset of the wet season, generally in October, which can be accompanied by thunder and high winds. This time is known as wehpomeakr which roughly translates as 'rain and bamboo time' referring to the appearance of bamboo-shoots (weh) a wet season food very important in the Umeda area. At this time the migrant swallows return to the scene, and it is said that they bring the bamboo with them. With the onset of the wet season, an intensive period of sago working begins. At this time all the little creeks and streams in the bush become full of water, facilitating the processing of stands of sago in areas which, at other times, are too waterless to make this possible. At this time, young bachelors, otherwise exclusively preoccupied with hunting and gathering and making gardens (especially for tobacco!) take on the role which will be theirs when they have become mature married men, devoting themselves seriously, if only temporarily, to working sago. Donatus and Pogwa, two youths of Kedewaina, took, for the first time, responsibility for the felling and processing of a huge palm, planted about 20 years before by Donatus' father, Fai. Fai performed certain spells at the base of the tree (which were secret, and which the son did not yet know) pressing a magical earth, the white ogurubwe, to the base of the palm, again, something that Donatus himself was not yet senior enough to do. Apart from these magical preliminaries, the processing was left entirely to the young



men, though the female part of the process had to be carried out by the female kin of the young men (mothers and sisters), in default of wives -- Pogwa had a wife (see Chapter 2, section xii) but she was working with another party. I was told, also, that this period of working in the bush, working sago in the wet, was a period when sexual activity was enjoined on married people for whom it was not -- for some other reason -- forbidden. This was said to help the sago. It is notable that the total period between huf smav and ida (about 8-10 months) corresponds roughly to the gestation period in human beings. This was never pointed out to me explicitly by my informants. I did note (though one years 'crop' of infants is nothing at all to go on) a certain 'clustering' of births in the village in the mid and late dry season which might correspond to impregnation during this early wet season period. I would not wish to place any weight on this impression, however. More important perhaps, is the symbolic significance of this association between sexual behaviour and intensive production, which reflects more general ideas linking human and natural reproductivity. Later on, when I come to analyse ida itself, I will show that though overtly devoted to the fertility of the sago, the ritual is intimately bound up with human fertility. And, as I say, human births did seem to coincide broadly with the season of the year in which ida was performed.

Discussing the period of preparation for ida informants generally counted off three or four months on



their fingers as devoted especially to the working of sago. In fact, sago was being worked to some extent right up to the month in which ida was performed, but this is the time for accumulating a surplus. Sago will keep, if properly wrapped up, for many months, even for a year or more, I was told, if buried in a suitably made pit. The danger is not that the sago will rot, if kept too long, but that it will become dried out, in which case it will not form a jelly when cooked with boiling water in the usual Umeda manner (to be described below). Sago, rather resembles cheese, in that controlled decomposition adds to the quality of the product, since Umedas value the sour, pungent taste and smell of 'vintage' sago above the sweeter, but rather insipid and flavourless 'new' sago. Thus, during the period of intensive sago working in the wet season surplus stocks of sago accumulate which will mature and can be consumed later when they are at their peak, though I noticed that a certain amount simply went to waste, having dried out.

The wet season is also the period when garden work is at a maximum. Planting takes place in the late dry season (the gardens having first been burnt off). During the wet season they are weeded, and as the first crop comes to bearing (taro) they are fenced. Garden-fencing 'bees' are the main social events of the wet season, bringing many people together from different hamlets, to assist kinsmen, allies or affines in this work. The beneficiary provides a feast for the workers. Taro is the most important garden

crop in terms of bulk, and is consumed as soon as it becomes available, since it does not keep at all, unlike the yam crop. During the first quarter of the year garden produce makes quite an important contribution to the food supply, though never replacing the staple sago. Root crops are appreciated as a supplement to the normal diet, (i.e. sago and various relishes) but cannot replace it. The foods available in the wet season, that is, root crops, bamboo shoots, tulip (gnetum gnemon), apica (hibiscus manihot) various kinds of spinach, may be contrasted to the 'dry season' foods, which are eaten during the season of festivities. These high-value foods associated with the dry season are fruits such as bread-fruit (which comes on in the early dry season) pif (pometia pinnata), aw (terminalis impediens), mango (mangifera sp.) hota (ficus sp.) and most important of all, coconuts (which as we have seen, remain tabooed until the festival time at the height of the dry season). With the dry season, also, are associated animal foods, fish, meat, and grubs, naturally the most prized of all foods. Hunting for wild pig, cassowary, and lesser game was a perennial activity, not restricted to any season, yet, as the wet gave way to the dry season there was a noticeable upsurge in the number of kills made. Movement became easier, men were less pre-occupied with sago, and pigs came to maraud the gardens as they were being harvested. The typical pattern of dry season weather -- dry spells punctuated by brief but heavy storms -- made for good hunting conditions, particularly just after a storm had passed; the scent lay well on the

wet earth, and all the pigs came out to rout about in the soil while it remained soft. The sudden storms (pov t'huf) were, as has been mentioned previously, seen as the direct expression of male sexuality and aggression: a quarrel is referred to as a 'storm' while the actual storm is believed to be the result of magical intervention by angry or frustrated men. The deaths of pigs as a consequence of the good hunting conditions afforded by stormy weather fits into this pattern: seeing an anvil-headed storm cloud on the horizon Umedas would say 'a pig will die ...'.

The meat secured in hunting during the months leading up to ida was not all consumed immediately. The greater part was cut up into small strips and smoked. Meat was preserved for months on end in smoking baskets suspended over the hearth, any pieces which succumbed to infestations being removed and eaten. In this way, although Umedas did not keep livestock in the manner of highlands and other New Guinea groups, to provide meat for their festivals, supplies of meat were accumulated. As the dry season drew on two other sources of animal food assumed greater importance, namely, fish and sago grubs. The dry season was the best time for fishing. Two methods were used in the main. First poisoning (which could only be successfully done when the fish were concentrated in shallow rock pools with little or no current to take the poison away). The other method was the construction of dams (popau) up-stream and down-stream from such a rock-pool, which was then bailed out with special scoops. The fish were then



taken by hand in the puddles of water remaining and dashed to death on the rocks. Both these methods require conditions of relative drought, at which time the fish are concentrated in the larger streams, rather than dispersed in the innumerable little creeks, which dry up. Fish were gutted and smoked in the same way as game, but did not keep for so long. Fishing was concentrated into the last few weeks before the performance. The other source of animal food, sago-grubs could not be kept at all, and were collected at the last possible moment. Grubs proliferate naturally in the unusable portions of felled sago-palms: a palm that proved to be poor in starch content would be left entirely to grubs, or one which had been left too long before felling. Men to whom certain varieties of sago were tabooed might still fell them for the grubs, which they could eat. Felling sago especially for the purposes of collecting grubs was timed so that the grubs would be ready for the festival season. Caryota palms (naimo) which grow wild in the forest, in which the same kind of grub will multiply, are also felled for this purpose.

While, as I have mentioned, the root-crops which form the bulk of garden produce were wet-season foods, certain garden crops only became available in quantity in the dry season. The most important were sugar cane (akta) pitpit (pwi) and tobacco (sapof). The dry season foods have higher value than the wet season foods (i.e. 'vintage' sago, meat, fish, grubs, breadfruit, coconut etc. versus root crops, fresh sago, forest greens etc.), but are less plentiful in



supply and have to be husbanded and hoarded. They are 'luxuries' (this applies also to the garden products sugar and tobacco) as opposed to humdrum vegetable products. They also have certain associations with masculinity: coconuts, breadfruit, and above all fish figure in the ritual of ida as masculine symbols. The annual cycle may therefore be seen as an alternation between two opposed classes of foods and types of productive activity. The wet season is a period of dispersion, families living alone processing sago in the bush, tending their gardens and harvesting garden produce, particularly taro; subsisting on a relatively monotonous diet, while the dry season is a period during which the village comes together, particularly during the festival itself, which is marked by the consumption of high value foods, particularly meat and fish. Productive activity during both phases of the seasonal cycle: the wet-season period of dispersion immediately following huf snay and the dry-season period of intensive hunting leading up to the performance itself, were oriented towards ida; it is no empty truism to say that the prospect of the eventual performance of the ritual gave meaning and direction to the productive activity of the people, even if it is also true that for the most part the work went towards basic necessities of subsistence, and no very spectacular surpluses were accumulated. Ida placed day-to-day subsistence activity within the context of a larger purpose, and gave the productive units a role to play in a project which embraced the entire society. Ida

and the productive activity which preceded it were very much part of a unity, and are properly treated together.

v. The taboos on Performers

I have already mentioned the general taboos placed on all members of the society during the months of preparation for ida, of which the most important is the taboo on coconuts, and on noise. Certain members of the community had to observe additional taboos as a result of being prospective actors of important ritual roles. Informal decisions as to who will play which role in the eventual ritual are made at the time of huf smav, but changes in the 'cast' may be effected thereafter if circumstances require. The roles to be distributed are, in order of decreasing prestige: cassowary (eli), bowman (ipele) sago (aba), neophyte (molna tamwa) and preceptor (kwanugwi). The first three of these are the ones on whom special restrictions are laid. These are heaviest in the case of the cassowary-dancers, of whom there are two, one from each moiety. Players of all three roles, cassowary, bowman, and sago, must refrain from sex, must not leave the territory of the village, and must adopt a traditional style of life, eating no imported or western foods (such as tinned fish) and maintaining the penis gourd. The cassowary dancer must observe additional restrictions, in particular, he must not eat food cooked by a woman who is having sexual relations (needless to say he must have none himself). This means that if unmarried, the actor of the cassowary role must have his food cooked for him by a woman

who is observing a sex taboo. In 1969-70 the cassowary role fell to Auyai, a bachelor of Kedewaina. His cooking was undertaken by Wu and his wife Onomo who were observing the post-partum sex taboo for a daughter, recently born. When, however, it became necessary for Wu and his wife to depart for the deep bush to work sago, Auyai could not accompany them because an additional restriction debars an actor of the cassowary role from straying far from the village itself. In these circumstances it became necessary for Auyai to pound his own sago and have it washed for him by a small girl, and cooked it himself. Under no other circumstances would a bachelor stoop to cooking for himself. Auyai spent much of the time in the almost deserted village, with only Mada, an old man whose infirmities prevented him from taking up his abode in the bush, for company. The cassowary is prevented from entering the deep bush because it is said that all the game would follow him, making hunting impossible for everybody else. In fact, the cassowary dancer virtually is prevented from hunting by these restrictions, and it is tabooed for him to hunt or kill (or eat) cassowary, one of the prime game animals. He is also thought to be endangered by the regurgitated food remnants deposited by cassowaries. If he should inadvertently step on these excreta of the cassowary he would fall ill. Paradoxically, this careful segregation of the cassowary dancer from the bush and the game animals, is a reflection of the ritual identification which exists between them. This is brought out best in the idea that if



the cassowary dancer goes into the deep bush the game animal will flock to him, as if drawn by magical affinity; and is also shown in the taboo on killing or eating cassowary, since as I shall have occasion to remark later, the existence of a food taboo, in the Umeda context, can frequently be taken to reflect a measure of identification, between the observer of the taboo and the thing tabooed. However, another taboo laid on the cassowary dancer has to be explained differently; namely, the taboo which forbids him to eat breadfruit. It is thought that if he were to do so, his penis-sheath would not resound loudly against the hard namov seeds in his dance-belt during the night of dancing, a thing not to be contemplated. (Breadfruit are soft and squashy).

I have described the general pattern of productive activity during the months of preparation for ida, and the various special restrictions which apply during this time. It is now possible to take up the sequence of events during the weeks immediately prior to the performance of ida: in Umeda in 1970 these were the first three weeks of June, the performance itself being timed for the third quarter of the moon in that month.

vi. Preparation of the ritual enclosure and the construction of masks

The lunar month which culminates in the performance is called the 'month of making arm-bands (sogwe)'. Food production slackens off during this month, and people gather together in bush houses to weave rattan armbands, ribbons, puses etc. (this is done by women). Women take



sago-fibre and make themselves new skirts for dancing, men may make woven cane headpieces (bol), ceremonial arrows, penis sheaths, pig's-tusk ornaments and so on. But there is still no general movement back to the village, which is more deserted than ever at this time.

At the full moon, this period of suspended animation ceases and the people converge en masse on the village, bringing with them the supplies of sago, smoked meat, fish etc. which they have been accumulating with such patience for so many months. The women spend the next few days bringing water to the village and collecting supplies of firewood -- trees have been ring-barked in previous years for this purpose. Meanwhile parties of men, members of common 'bush associations' return to the deep bush, without the women, to collect red ochre and white clay, for use as paint. Other items collected now are magical ginger plants (sap), turmeric (yahwe), charcoal (sumbwi) -- all used in paint -- and the various parts of wild pandanus, limbum, lianas etc., used in making masks (to be described in detail later). The women are told that the men have gone to collect 'leaves' (an euphemism for the various magico-ritual materials about which the women must know nothing). The men on the collecting expeditions spend the night in the bush. At dawn the men leave the bush houses and approach the village ululating and giving the cry 'adubeee!' (adub is a shrub whose leaves give a painful sting). The cassowary dancer, who has accompanied this expedition to collect the materials for his mask, leads the file of men as they approach the

village, carrying the bark and cane of which his mask will be made, together with the stone axe with which they have been gathered (an imported steel axe cannot be used for this purpose). The ululation (the first for many months) is to warn the women to leave the village at once, for the men have come back, as the saying goes, to 'collect coconuts'. This again is an euphemism, for though the men will indeed take this opportunity to collect some of the coconuts which have accumulated during the operation of the taboo on coconuts, their major purpose is to collect coconut fibre for the construction of the 'fish' masks. The women must not see the men collecting the wata (coconut fibre) or the other materials. Having climbed the coconuts and obtained the wata the men of the village form columns by hamlets and converge from all directions on the site where the ritual enclosure is to be established, co-ordinating their movements by ululating.

In the case of the first phase of the rites, the so-called 'bush' rites, the dancing will take place in the hamlet of Sinai, accordingly the prob or ritual enclosure is established in the secondary bush just outside this hamlet.

The prob -- the word also means 'a spring' -- is essentially a cleared area in the undergrowth where men can make masks and paint their bodies in seclusion. Women and female children cannot enter, but quite small boys of about five years old can freely enter. A short ceremony precedes the clearing of the prob; during which the perfume

plants sawa and tanug are planted, together with the little red rootlets sent up at the base of the sago palm, which are called ayulhmud (avul-'penes') or napeda. This 'planting' ritual resembles not only the ritual for planting a new garden, but also a similar ritual which precedes the digging out of red ochre (ord) from deposits in the bush. The analogies between 'planting' and the sexual act are not lost on Umedas, though I do not wish to enter into that subject here; let it suffice to say that whenever consecrating some place to human use (as a garden, a house site in the hamlet or in the bush, or as here, as a ritual enclosure) this is always accompanied by planting various plants, particularly zingiber varieties, like sawa. Planting seems to express both the fact of the human presence (for only man plants things) and also suggests a symbolic 'fertilisation' of the site, or symbolic copulation (this emerges very clearly, for instance, in garden planting ritual).

Having cleared the prob, the men set about the task of painting designs on the sheets of coconut fibre from which the tamwa or fish masks will be made. Each of these designs is the property of a particular clan or sub-clan, and represent various spirits, mythological heroes and heroines etc. The function of these designs in the ritual is essentially heraldic, standing as emblems of the sub-clans who display them, and rendering possible the identification of masked dancers whose faces are hidden from the onlookers.



Edtodna and agwatodna are distinguished, throughout ida by the observance of a rule that agwatodna always precedes edtodna. Thus, the first phase of the rites take place in the agwatodna hamlet Sinai -- these are called the 'Bush' rites, and then only in the edtodna hamlet of Wehunda, when the rites are 'in the village' (kbeyam). Similarly, when the two cassowary dancers emerge, the agwatodna one precedes the edtodna one onto the dancing ground, and when they retire, leaves first, and the same goes for the other ritual figures. This, I was told, is because when men and women are walking along a path in the bush, the women always go in front, with their menfolk bringing up the rear. This makes for increased security, since if the party is attacked, the attackers must wait for the men to come up, allowing the women to escape, or, if they attack the women, the men, coming up behind, will have time to ready themselves for a counter-attack. So the 'women first/men behind' formation was indeed the normal one: on the other hand there may be other reasons for the ritual precedence of agwatodna. The idea of the 'logical priority' of the feminine is reflected, for instance in an Umeda myth -- which has many parallels elsewhere in New Guinea, of an original 'all female' society, in which women also had the ritual knowledge which is now the prerogative of men. The men only later got hold of this originally feminine knowledge by means of trickery. Partly this tendency to assign mythical priority to women is a consequence of the fact that the mythological imagination, if one could call it that, often proceeds by straightforward



inversion of the mundane truth, so that, if men have the priority (as they generally do) in the mundane sphere, women will be credited with it in the sphere of myth. Or, alternatively, one might see here a reflection of the fact that though we are assured (and may perhaps believe) that men are essential to the continuity of the species, we may be absolutely certain that women are, given their reproductive powers. So the regulation assigning priority to the agwatodna may not simply reflect the marching order, but rather this 'biological' (or mythological) priority of women, though I have no direct evidence on this point. It is interesting to note, though, that at least one member of the edtodna moiety resented this priority assigned to the agwatodna. This was councillor Pom, appropriately attempting the role of cultural innovator (though, it must be said, with scant success), whose attempt to change the locale of the 'village' rites from Wehumda to Kialunda I have already mentioned. Pom attempted to reverse the order of priority on the same grounds as the others justified it, namely, the order of marching; according to Pom's argument, now that the danger of ambush had ceased, it was proper that men should go first on the trail, and that women should follow them -- hence edtodna should precede agwatodna at ida. Certainly the need for men to cover the rear had ceased in recent years, though they still seemed to keep to the practice. Pom's argument found no favour among the people, however, and the old order was preserved.

To return to the proceedings in the prob, which I was describing earlier. When the sheets of wata have been painted, they are sewn up in pairs to form tubes and are left hanging in the iyv to dry. Next, the men construct a fence with a concealed opening to which screens the narrow path leading to the enclosure from the eye of the women. This fence separating the dancing arena and the enclosure, the public and private areas, is called the popaw or, 'dam' continuing the metaphor implicit in the use of the word prob 'spring', for the enclosure. Having done this the men return to their hamlets, whither the women have returned after their obligatory sojourn in the bush, and the rest of the day is devoted to cookery. Aba (sago flour) was sprinkled on the paths in the village to inaugurate the brief reign of plenty.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having slept that night in the village, the men proceed at dawn, for the last time, to the bush to cut down sub (linbum) and hub (a wild pandanus) to obtain the white immature fronds from the crown of these palms from which are made the fringes of the cassowary and fish masks. These fringes are made in secret in bush houses, most of the day being occupied in this way. When they have finished, the men carefully roll up the completed fringes and pack them in linbum spathes for transport back to the enclosure. They must wash their hands afterwards, and spit betel on them as a kind of magical 'disinfectant', since the nab, as the white material is called, is an intrinsically dangerous and

potent substance. The waste material left over from the construction of the fringes is carefully collected up and disposed of, since the women must not come across it by mistake.

Towards sunset the men collect their burdens and set off once more for the village, singing this song:

sismel havuhov      hole-in-a-sis-tree they come up  
aramel havuhov      hole-in-an-ara-tree they come up  
havuhov havuhov      they come up  
udai tamwa idapiav the udai fish children they come up  
kweise kweise -o      (with) rattan armour (kweise)  
amov terai hapiho      the termite children come  
urai tudai hapiho      the udai fish children come up  
wingra wingra!      Wingra! (a war cry)

This song refers to certain ritual figures, termites and fish, later to make their appearance during the rites, now seen as making their way to the village from their bush haunts. The various parties of men, singing this song, converge on the secret enclosure, taking care not to be seen. It is an eerie experience to remain in the village while this is going on and to listen to the snatches of the reiterated melodic refrain, interspersed with shouting and ululation, gradually gaining in intensity, now from this quarter, now from that, as the different parties of men close in, ending in wild shouts as they run into the secret enclosure itself. By the time the men have arrived it is dusk. For the next couple of hours some men return to their hamlets in order to decorate themselves with ceremonial headgear and other finery, while the cassowary

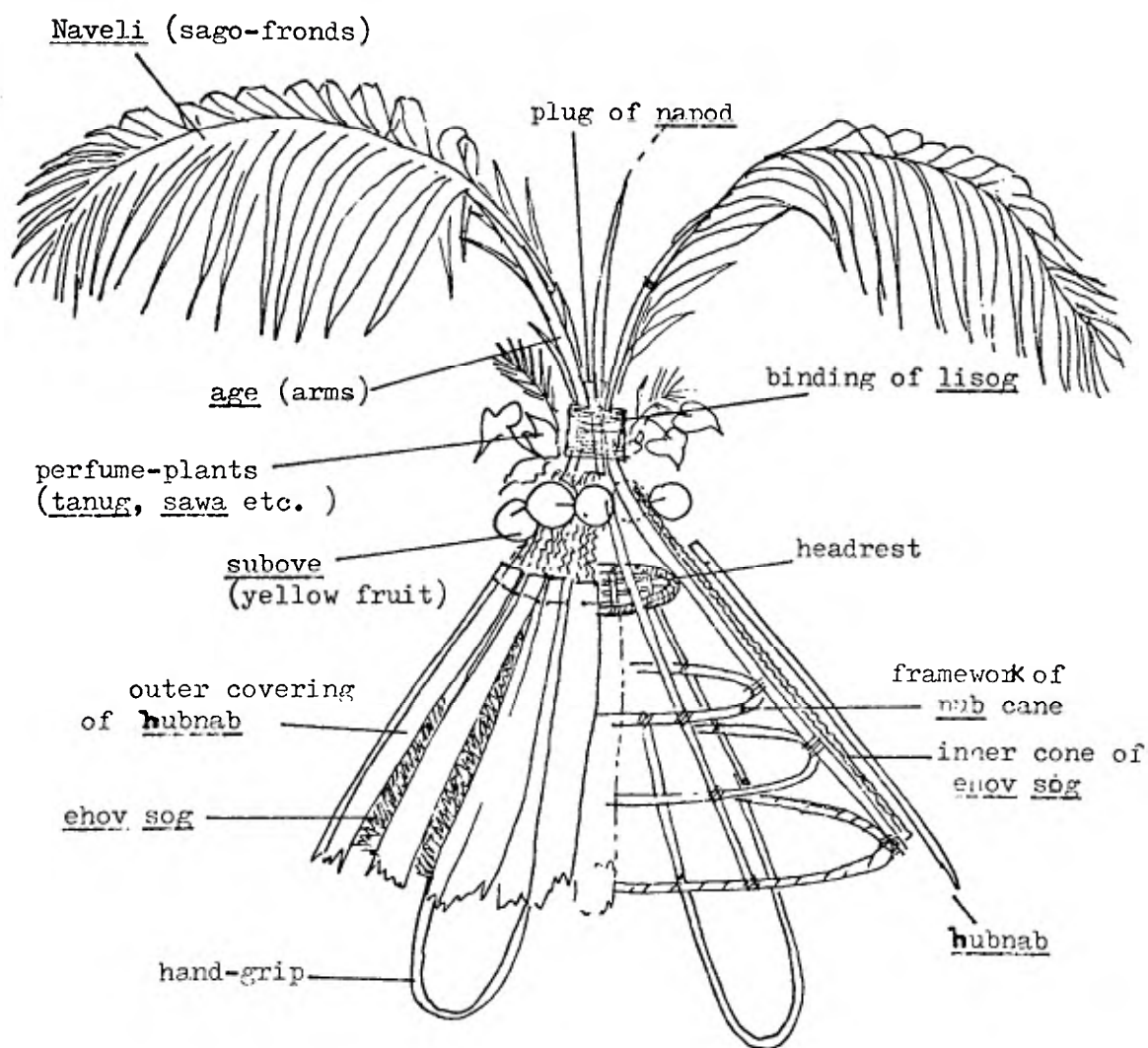


Fig. 23 . Constructional details of the ageli mask.



dancers and a number of assistants remain in the enclosure constructing the cassowary masks, which are called ageli. The ageli mask is shown in Figure 23. The inner frame of the mask is made of rattan cane, forming a conical base over which a layer of ehov sog (that is, the under-bark of gnatum gnemon) is wrapped, which is in turn covered by the fringe made of strips of hubnab. From the top of the mask emerge the four springy arms (age) of rattan cane, upon which are bound fronds taken from the sago-palm (naveli). Beneath the arms, which are designed to wave up and down as the dancer leaps from foot to foot, is tied a kind of necklace of brilliant orange subove fruit, threaded onto a string, interwoven with perfumed leaves of sawa and tanug. While the masks are being made the two cassowary dancers wait in the enclosure, occasionally trying on the half finished masks for size and comfort. The trumpets are fetched and are played in the enclosure. There is a general air of excitement and tension, which persists throughout the night of dancing. More than once I have been present when quarrels broke out both before and during the dancing, and though the very factor of my presence tended to moderate these, they were more serious than I witnessed on any other occasions, and I can believe the statements of informants who told me that sometimes such disputes would lead to shooting and bloodshed. For instance I was hastily fetched to intervene in a quarrel which broke out in the enclosure during a performance of ida at Punda, which had developed from an open accusation of sorcery, made by a man of Asila against a man of Pobonai, a very grave charge to make.

The disputants were threatening one another with drawn bows when I arrived, after which things cooled down as both parties attempted to justify themselves in my eyes. Another fight broke out between Waina and Wyalla spectators at the joint Waina/Wyalla performance of ida in 1969, which started when a Waina man was suddenly sick (no doubt, from chewing too much betel). Even worse was what happened at Sowanda, where one of the cassowary dancers was incapacitated by pain half way through the performance. The Sowandas thought that this had been brought about by the malice of the party of spectators who had come from Umeda (of whom I was one). This led to a very angry scene but (due in great measure, I suspect, to my own presence) the Sowandas attempted nothing more than a demonstration, before they were pacified by the cooler heads among them.

vii. The ritual of the first assumption of the peda

While the cassowaries are getting ready, and the trumpets are being played, another ceremony is taking place. This is the ritual whereby a neophyte youth first assumes the peda or gourd penis sheath. A gourd has been prepared for the neophyte youth who is aged about 15 or 16 at the time -- by a real or classificatory mother's brother, who plays the major part in the ceremony. The MoBr chosen for the role must be a member of the opposite moiety, since this is a ritual service which is exchanged between moieties. The rite is brief. The main officiant affixes the peda in a slow deliberate manner while the other officiants (classificatory mother's brothers of the youth) spit red betel

juice onto the neophyte's belly and thighs. One often sees betel spit used in this way to mark transitions, as for instance to de-sacrify the hands of persons who have handled hubnab mentioned above, or to conclude a spell, or as the finishing touch to a mask, making it active -- the ageli masks are bespat with betel juice just before the cassowaries emerge. Here the spitting of betel is to mediate the transition between a peda-less child, and a peda-wearing 'bachelor' (muh-tod), sexually active (though repressed) young adult. The officiant and his assistants rub the betel juice into the general area of the neophyte's genitals while reciting this spell:

nagoirove nagoirove May you see ...  
oktakwime nagoirove Pigs, Cassowaries,  
pomeyasa nagoirove Wallabies  
absubome nagoirove Wildfowl and Gouria Pidgeon  
mushaiova nagoirove Shoot them, see them ...

Besides reciting this spell the officiants make curious grunting noises as if they were accomplishing some heavy task (childbirth?). Then the neophyte is made to crawl through his mother's brother's parted legs, and he is slapped on the behind as he goes through.

When analysing the significance of certain attributes of the ritual dancers I shall have reason to return to the consideration of the meaning of this brief rite (which is also discussed in Gell : 1971), so I will say no more about it here.

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# viii. Ritual roles in Ida

Before going on to describe the dancing, let me say something by way of introduction about the roles played by the ritual dancers at ida, and how they are 'cast'. It is informally established who shall play the more important roles at huf smav, though changes may subsequently be made. There is considerable effort to equalise the roles among the component groups of the village, as can be seen from the following list of roles at the 1970 ida, shown together with the names of the men who played the roles, and their hamlets of origin.

Table 3

## Casting of Roles at ida (1970)

### 1. Sinai 'Bush' Ida

|           |                   |                            |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Agwatodna | Cassowary         | Awyai of Kedwaina          |
| Edtodna   | Cassowary         | Abah of Wehumda            |
| Agwatodna | <u>Molnatamwa</u> | Mwi of Sinai               |
| Edtodna   | <u>Molnatamwa</u> | Imwai of Wehumda           |
| Agwatodna | <u>Aba</u>        | Donatus of Kedewaina       |
| Edtodna   | <u>Aba</u>        | Councillor Pom of Klalumda |
| Agwatodna | <u>Ipele</u>      | Wu of Efid                 |
| Edtodna   | <u>Ipele</u>      | Faw of Umda                |

### 2. Wehumda 'Village' Ida

|           |                   |                    |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Agwatodna | Cassowary         | Magwi of Sinai     |
| Edtodna   | Cassowary         | Yip of Umda        |
| Agwatodna | <u>Molnatamwa</u> | Boiye of Kedewaina |
| Edtodna   | <u>Molnatamwa</u> | Hopei of Klalumda  |
| Agwatodna | <u>Aba</u>        | Feith of Sinai     |
| Edtodna   | <u>Aba</u>        | (not recorded)     |
| Agwatodna | <u>Ipele</u>      | Hurwo of Kedewaina |
| Edtodna   | <u>Ipele</u>      | Nug of Wehumda     |

In two cases the actor who eventually played the role was not the one originally chosen for it at the time of huf smav. It was not Awyai of Kede, who eventually played



the Agwatodna Cassowary, but his elder brother, Amasu, who was the original choice for the role. Amasu relinquished the role because he could not shake off the feelings of bereavement resulting from the death of his mother, Wause, which had occurred over a year before in March 1969. It is hard to see why this should have been less of an obstacle for his own full brother, Awyai, though it is recognised that the link between a mother and her eldest son (which Amasu was) is particularly close. Amasu's troubles ran deeper than the mere fact of his bereavement: he was in the tedious and ambiguous position of a 'married' bachelor, which was described in the chapter of social structure; that is, he was married, being himself about 25 or so, to a girl, barely fifteen and not yet at puberty. While he was waiting for his wife to grow up, being as yet in no position to found an economically separate household, he had all the affinal obligations of a married man. He might have envied his younger brother Awyai, who, also theoretically 'married' to a still more immature girl (aged about nine or ten) could still stoutly deny that he was married at all, and had nothing to do with his prospective affines. Awyai claimed that he had no intention of espousing a child, and that he was aiming to capture the liking of a young widow (the most prestigious and practically advantageous kind of conquest) or, failing that, he would abduct a stranger's wife and boldly face the consequences. As a young married man Amasu was under maximum pressure to hunt successfully, to show himself a worthy son-in-law, but, at just this time he had a run of

really bad luck; he hunted assiduously and shot a number of wild pigs -- but unfortunately the pigs escaped during the subsequent chase with dogs and were not brought home. Awyai, on the other hand (and this made it all the more frustrating for Amasu) had the good luck to kill a large pig, which reflected great credit on him. So Amasu, seeing as nothing seemed to be going his way, resigned the role to his younger brother, who, though rather too junior (in terms of age in years, though not generations, in which he was on a par with the senior men of Kedewaina) eventually gave an excellent performance, not unconscious of the fact that the eyes of many a potential widow was upon him, that night. (Awyai's hope was by no means fantastic -- another Kedewaina man, the muscular and recently widowed Waha, actually did capture a widow - young and pretty - as a result of his performance at ida in 1970, restoring his marital fortunes at a stroke when they seemed in ruins). Another instance of a man refusing to play the role originally offered to him is Wom, elder (classificatory) brother of Local Government Councillor Pom. He was having no luck with his hunting either, and besides, he seemed to be suffering from the early stages of a filariasis infection though not so serious as to incapacitate him had he wished to take the role (that of aba), which fell instead to the Councillor himself.

In general then, it may be said that an important ritual role will only be taken by a man if he feels physically fit, and personally self-confident. There are other

restrictions of a formal kind. One of each role, as has been stated before, must come from each moiety. Again some roles are more senior than others: the cassowary is a senior role, which was normally played by adult married men: however, because the numbers of the agwatodna were smaller in aggregate, than the edtodna members of this moiety could expect to play the senior ritual roles at a younger age than the edtodna men were likely to: the roles being played once only in a man's lifetime, and older men having priority over younger ones. One role (kwanugwi) was reserved for 'old' men (by Umeda standards i.e. middle aged) while the molnatamwa role, as I will describe, is taken by neophytes, one generation junior to the man playing the cassowary. One role (ipele) was in fact taken by senior men but was treated formally as if it were a junior role, like that of the molnatamwa, for reasons that will become apparent in due course. The role of aba is somewhere in between: similar to the role of cassowary in some ways, it confers less prestige. These facts are summarised in the table below, which also shows the theoretical order in which the roles are played over the course of an actor's career:

Table 4

Senior and Junior Roles at Ida

| Order in which<br>Roles are Played: | Molnat | Ipele | Aba | Cass. | Kwanugwe |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|-----|-------|----------|
| ➔                                   |        |       |     |       |          |
| Prestigious/Non Pr.                 | -      | +     | +   | +     | -        |
| Senior/Junior                       | -      | (+)   | (+) | +     | +        |
| +                                   |        |       |     |       |          |

\* \* \* \* \*



Fig. 24 Eli ( cassowary )



ix. The eli sabbra (cassowaries)

Wearing the masks which have been described, the two cassowaries, who, for the purposes of the ritual are called the eli sabbra, that is, 'the two men' begin their dancing about nine pm. They are painted black all over with charcoal, without additional decoration. Great care is taken when they are being painted to see that no skin is inadvertently left showing, and spells are recited to prevent the paint wearing off prematurely. As may be seen from figure 24 the dancer wears a special gourd, the weighted, elongated gourd called the pedasuh, rather than the smaller decorated gourd of everyday use (peda). Round the lower abdomen the dancer wears a dancing-belt or oktek, which means literally 'pig-bone'. This consists of a formalised representation of the sacral bone of the pig, actually made of sections of the leg and wing-bones of birds strung together, worn over the dancer's buttocks (i.e. in a position corresponding to that of the sacral bone of the pig). This 'bone' symbolises the strength of the pig -- which is thought to emanate from that region -- which it confers on the dancer who wears it. Round the front of the belt, which is made of hollow wing-bones threaded onto a string, are worn the hard, pierced seed of a certain variety of sago (namov). The manner of dancing adopted by the cassowary dancer is as follows: the dancer leaps from foot to foot in such a way that the weighted penis gourd, which is attached to the tip of the penis, flies up, striking the hard namov seeds worn on the dancer's abdomen. A sharp clocking sound is emitted. This dance can be performed (in

time to the steady pulse of the huf band, which is playing all the while) both while in rapid motion, leaping and gyrating about the arena, or while at a standstill, by suitable movements of the hips; either way it is certainly suggestive, and meant to be so. In the light of what was established in the last chapter, in the discussion of the lexical segment mo (above Chapter 3, section ix) the role of the namov seeds can be seen as symbolic as well as merely instrumental. There I argued for the existence of a 'fruit' (mov) equals daughter (mol) equation, on linguistic grounds, and here one can see the same idea being expressed in concrete form, for the penis (or the peda) strikes the seed in a way which is overtly intended to imitate copulation (NB also the fact that these are sago seeds, and that this rite is supposed to foster the increase of sago).

Thus equipped, the cassowary dancers enter the arena, where they dance until about five the next morning, only allowing themselves short pauses every few minutes, to regain their breath. The masks are quite heavy, and dancing the role of cassowary is not unjustly regarded as a feat requiring great strength and endurance, all of which increases the credit and prestige accruing to the dancer.

The cassowaries are not alone in their dancing. Appearing with the cassowaries on the first night of ida are two neophyte youths playing the roles of molna tamwa -- which means 'the fish of the daughters' (mol). The contrast is being drawn with the cassowaries or eli who are said to be avalna, that is, 'of the mothers' (aval). Now it is not

meant by this that the cassowaries or the fish actually represent mothers or daughters, as the case may be, but that they belong to them, rather as if they were tutelary spirits. Later on I will show how the cassowaries and the molna tamwa represent opposed sexual stereotypes, symbolising the sexual activity of the senior and junior generations (the generation of the mothers versus that of the daughters). The molna tamwa role, as I have already mentioned, is taken by youths, who may have only just received their penis gourds, indicating that they have ceased to be children, at the ceremony in the enclosure described above. They wear 'fish' masks -- which I will describe in detail shortly -- and their bodies are painted red all over, without additional decoration. Unlike the cassowaries, they are armed with bows and arrows, and also unlike the cassowaries, they do not wear the special dancing-gourd and oktek, but the smaller peda of everyday use. The molna tamwa are also contrasted with the cassowaries in their manner of dancing. They do not leap or cavort about, now holding hands and dancing as a pair, now charging off again to scatter unwary onlookers who have strayed too close to their path ... the dancing of the molna tamwa is very sedate. The two red-painted 'fish' proceed in single file round the edge of the arena, at a slow walking pace. They are followed by a gaggle of all the available male children, who, linking arms over each other's shoulders, make after them, singing a wordless refrain.

The entire population is present for this night of dancing. The men take turns in playing huf music, which must be practically incessant for the next 20 hours. Finery is worn, particularly by the younger married men and bachelors, older men being more negligent about this. Male decoration -- which must be distinguished from the body decoration and masks worn by specific ritual impersonations such as cassowaries, fish, etc. -- consists of certain standard items. The foundation of the head dress is a small flanged cylinder of woven cane called a bol, through which the hair can be drawn, though men rarely wear their hair long enough to do this nowadays, so that it has to be tied on instead. Round this base are wrapped lengths of woven ribbon (indigenous) and cloth (imported) to make a conical tower on the top of the head, which is finished off, top and bottom, with black cassowary plumes, and the plumes of cockatoo and birds of paradise. A cuscus skin, black, red, or parti-coloured is wrapped around the headdress, and white furry tails of another marsupial species are allowed to dangle from the ears. Besides the head-dress, the face is painted, and the body perfumed with turmeric. A dance 'bilum' is worn, similar to the one of daily use, but larger and more elaborately decorated. Coloured leaves are inserted into armbands, garters and hair. The nose is ornamented with pig-tusks inserted through the pierced septum, while another ornament made of cowries, green-beetle, beads and buttons is worn on the tip of the nose, attached to it by a thread passing through four smaller holes made in the cartilage of



the nostrils. Sulphur-yellow cockatoo plumes may also be inserted into these holes. Women's decoration is less elaborate. Dancing skirts are worn similar to the skirts of daily use, except that cockatoo-down is tied to the tail of the skirt dangling down behind. Coloured cloths, which have replaced the traditional bark-blanket, cover the back, and over this very large decorated net-bags, suspended from the forehead, are worn. These are stretched out on a frame, and decorated with leaves. Other 'bilums' are worn, filled with food and/or young infants, and women may also carry their children on their shoulders while dancing. Women also carry poles covered with feathers (napoda) but do not themselves wear feather decorations. The face and legs may be powdered with red ochre, while a standard pattern of stripes is painted on the nose and cheeks, which is said to represent the tail pads of a possum. Women often dance in pairs, holding hands.

Thus attired and decorated, the people dance until dawn comes. The moonlight and the fitful illumination given by bamboo flares make it difficult to distinguish the scene with accuracy; dancers appear and disappear out of the shadows, everything seems slightly more than life size. While some dance, others doze and eat beside the glowing fires. The younger men don the pedasuh and oktek and dance attendance behind the leaping cassowaries, others follow the molna takwa. Other men take turns playing the huf trumpets. The men and small boys dance in the centre of the arena while the women circulate on the periphery, performing their characteristic dance, a more restrained

version of the leaping step of the men, designed to make their skirt tails, adorned with feathers, away from side to side, revealing areas of thigh. Men and women do not interact during the dancing, but both are conscious of the presence of the other sex, and it is said that during this night, assignations are made, and affairs set in motion. At the very focus of the attention are the two cassowaries themselves, and I was told that while the darkness lasts their penes grow to enormous length, an illusion (if it is only that) which might well be fostered by the general obscurity in which the proceedings take place, and the prevailing sense of excitement. In short, here is a scene of collective 'effervescence' enough to gladden a Durkheimian's heart, particularly in an era when such scenes are more to be met with in the Southern Counties of England (where they take place under the patronage of Noble Earls or other Peers) than in the Tropics, so often associated with them. But I have attempted to describe the scene in detail because, not that I wish to compete with those writers, many of them talented, who have described the exotic for its own sake, but because the orgiastic tone of the first night of the dancing needs to be stressed in order to appreciate fully the transformations in mood that take place as the rites proceed, which are destined to end, so to speak, in a very different 'key'.

x. The aba dancers and the yis ceremony

As the early hours of the morning draw on, the spectators keep an ear open for the call of the small bird kib whose



Fig. 25      Aba

aba body-paint  
recorded at →  
Sowanda



singing is the first warning of the imminence of dawn. At length, it is heard, and shortly after a breath of wind, a hint of pallor in the east, and the sounds of the dawn chorus in the forest, bring the night of the Cassowary to an end. A cry goes up 'haibudiime!' ('it is finished!') -- and the cassowaries depart for a well earned rest. In the grey, misty atmosphere of the dawn they are replaced by the dancers playing the aba or 'sago' roles. These dancers have been waiting in the enclosure in readiness to take over from the departing cassowaries, who transfer their masks to them, according to their moieties. While they wear the same ageli masks as the cassowaries, their body paint is in sharp contrast. Instead of the all-black paint of the night dancers, the aba are painted in broad horizontal polychrome bands, in yellow, red, white and black, with black markings on their joints, as can be seen in the figure illustrating the aba (fig. 25). Like the cassowaries they wear pedasuh and oktek. Their dancing continues while the sun comes up. Meanwhile the women depart to their own hamlets since they should not see the yis (cooked sago) ceremony which is about to take place. While the aba dance senior men are preparing a fire by the popau (fence). Cooking stones are heated on this fire, over which, when it is going strongly, the aba dancers must take it in turns to leap. The stones are being heated to boil water to make sago jelly, which is done in the following manner. Two buckets made of limbum spathes are needed, one to hold the dry sago flour (aba) one

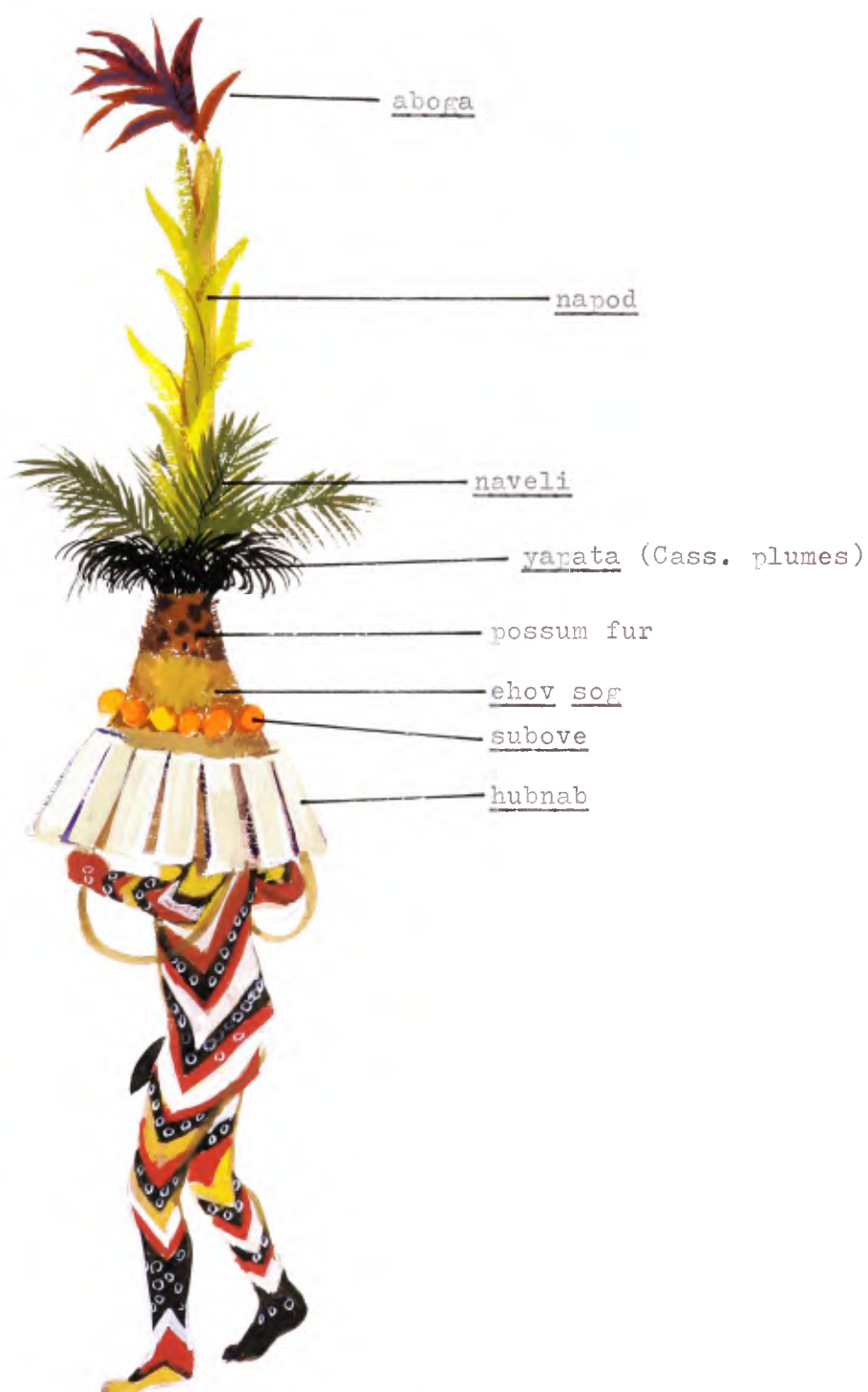


to hold the boiling water. All the men have contributed a handful of their own sago-flour to make the vis on this occasion. When the stones are red hot they are dropped into the limbum bucket which has been filled with water, which rapidly comes to the boil. The boiling water is then poured over the sago flour in the other bucket, which bubbles and hisses. The mixture is stirred vigorously. In a few moments the liquid mixture starts to solidify, or as the Umedas put it, it 'dies' (yahaitav). All the men crowd round the newly made sago, with the aba dancers at the centre. There is considerable commotion as the aba dancers are jostled by the throng of men, and their hands are seized and plunged into the near-boiling jelly in the bucket. Each dancer grasps a handful of the hot vis and casts it in the air over their heads. Then all the other men follow suit, crying 'ehm bah alehah!' meaning: 'it's head rises up' (referring to the sago palms). The air is filled with flying fragments of hot jelly, which fall to the ground and are subsequently trampled in. The remnant of the vis is discarded and the aba dancers, after their moment of glory, retire. I have made no personal trials of plunging my hand into hot vis but I can believe what I was told by my informants, who claimed that it was extremely painful. It is considered to be a supernatural feat.

#### xi. Ulateh

Following the aba dancers two additional dancers emerge, wearing new masks. Their name means 'rotten wood' or 'firewood' (teh). Their body paint consists of polychrome

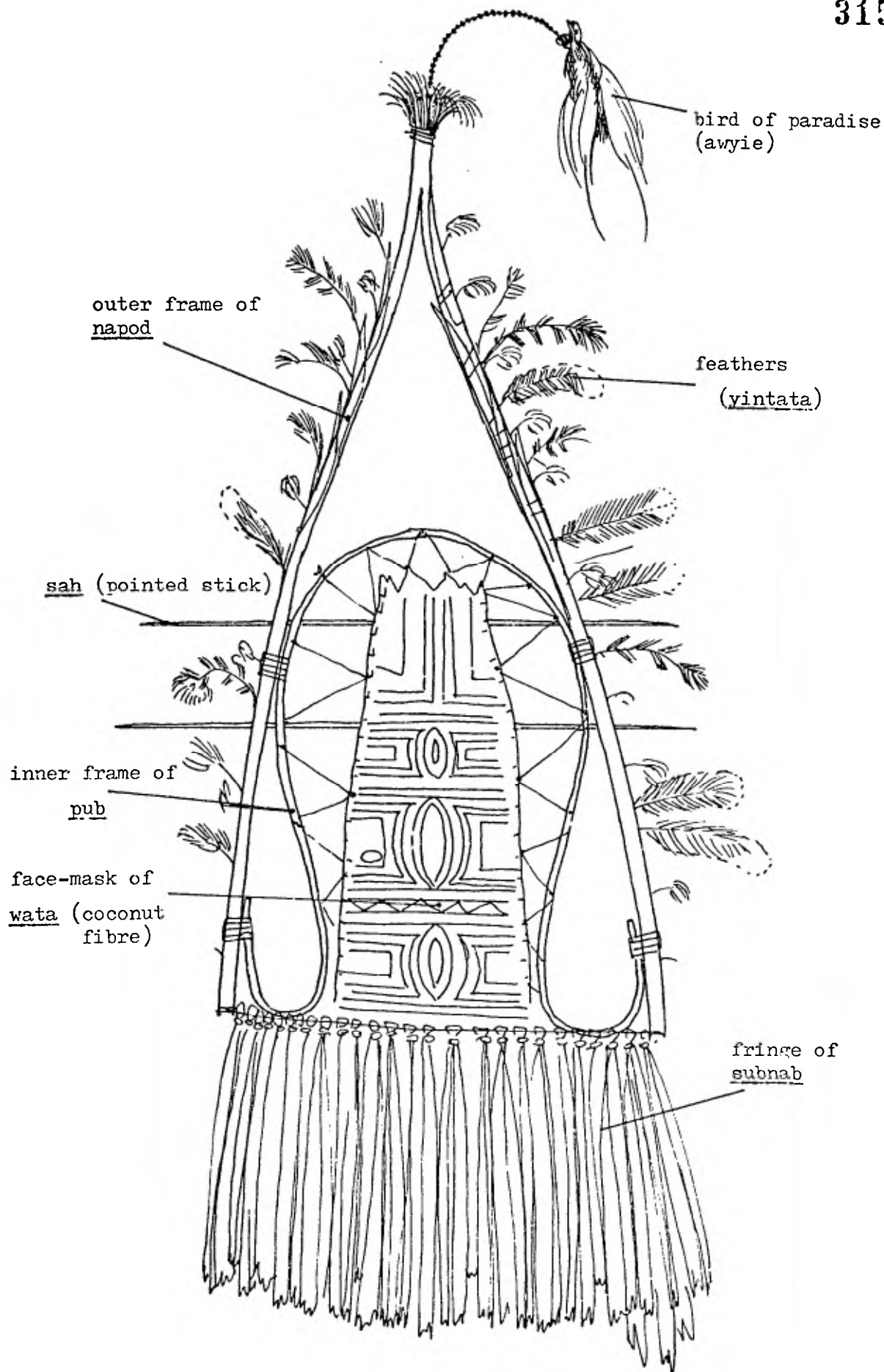
Figure 26.

Teh

horizontal or diagonal stripes (imitating the markings on the bark of trees, or in the latter case the twisting of vines round the trunk of a tree). Their masks are constructed on similar lines to those of the cassowaries and aba. But there is a reduction in the dimensions of the bottom part of the mask, though all the elements of the larger mask -- the covering of bark and hubnab, the subove fruits, the waving arms of naveli and so on -- are present. On the other hand the most striking feature of the mask is the addition of a tall central shaft made of napoda (the spine of the sago frond), covered with coloured leaves and decorated with feathers. The shaft of the teh mask is topped by a spray of leaves of the decorative Cordilyne fruticosa or Codiaum Variegatum, in Umeda called aboga. The whole mask is five or six feet tall and most decorative. The teh dancers are involved in no special ritual. Their function is to mark the conclusion of the first part of ida. They dance for about an hour, during which most people drift away to eat, wash and perhaps sleep a little. There follows a short lull in the proceedings (Figure 26).

#### xii. The Ahoragwana tamwa and Tetagwana Tamwa

By about nine o'clock the first of the fish dancers are ready. All the hamlet has prepared two or more tamwa or fish masks. Their construction is shown on figure 27. The main component of the mask is the painted wata coconut fibre which is sewn up into a tube which fits over the





dancer's head. An outer framework made of stripped napoda is attached to it by means of two special sharpened sticks (sah), and the mask is kept tautly stretched by a loop of springy pub cane. The outer framework is decorated with coloured leaves and feathers of goura pigeon, hornbill and other birds. Round the base of the mask is a fringe made of nab, that is white material taken from the inner part of the crown of the limbum palm. In the case of the fringes of the tanwa masks, this nab pale yellow-green rather than pure white. Each clan in the village makes one or more of these masks, decorated with the distinguishing design or insignia of that clan. There may be ten or more fish dancers at any one time, though there are generally fewer than this. The fish dance in a relatively orderly fashion, in single file, holding bows and ceremonial plumed arrows in their hands, which they flourish at one another and at spectators. They, like the previous dancers, wear the pedasuh and oktek.

The first fish dancers upon the scene are the so-called ahoragwana tanwa, the fish of Ahoragwa, an evil woman identified with the toad (ahora) who appears in Umeda mythology as the evil counterpart of the 'good' culture heroine, Tet-agwa. In the myth, Ahoragwa is summoned into being by the culture hero, Toag-tod, to compensate him for the jealousy he feels towards his younger brother, the Oedipal hero, Pul-tod, the discoverer of Tet-agwa and her first husband. In the myth, the jealous Toag-tod, angered by his failure to possess Tet-agwa, makes rain magic (just as nowadays rain is said to result from the

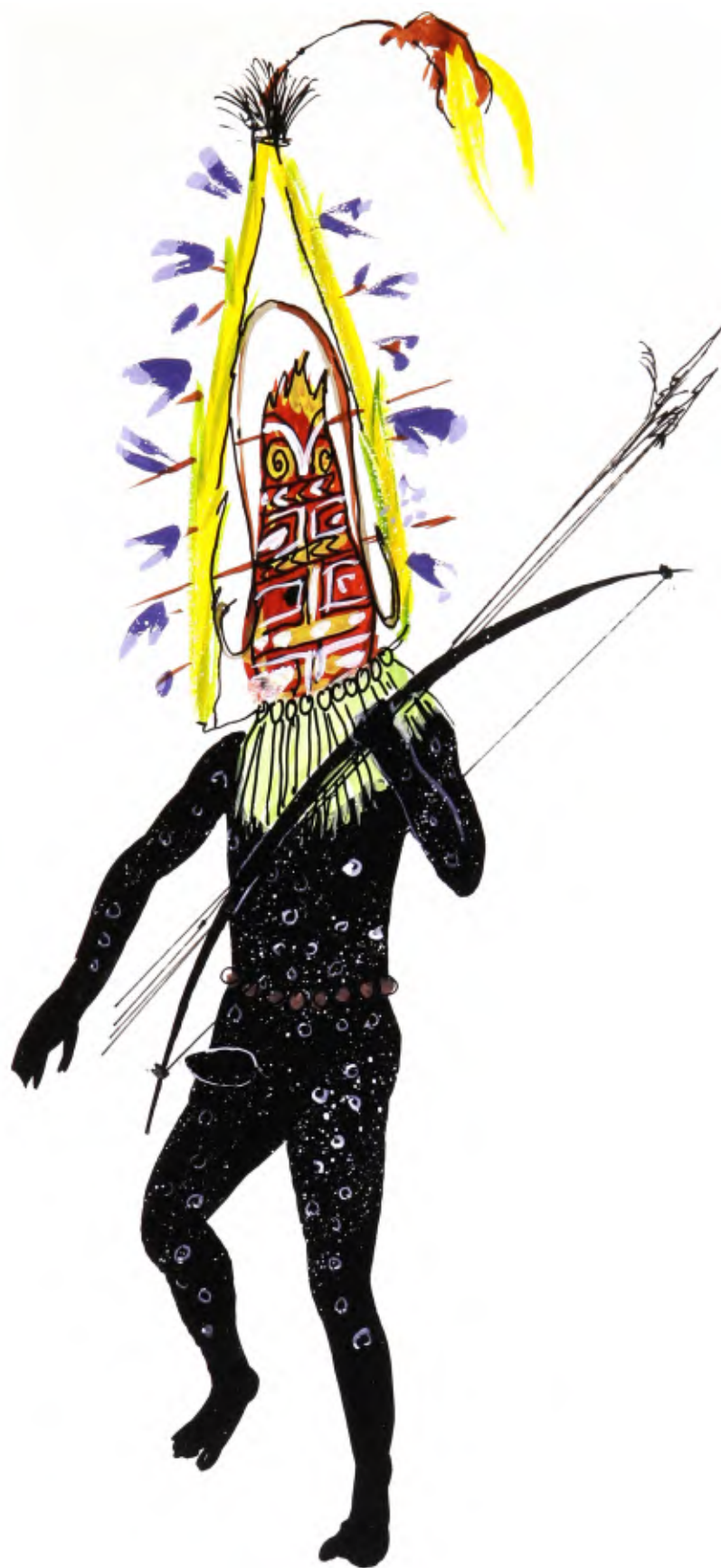


Fig. 28 Ahoragwana tamwa

magic of angry or frustrated men). The rain brings Ahoragwa, the toad-woman into being (as a matter of fact when it rains toads do emerge from their holes, croaking, which provides the basis for this mythical association).

Ahoragwa is very ugly, and is eventually destroyed by Tet-agwa. Because of this, the role of ahoragwana tamwa is negatively, rather than positively valued. It is the older men who take the role of ahoragwana tamwa, some of them men whom I certainly never expected to see dancing, such as the Councillor's aged Father, Fi, whose legs and testicles were badly swollen by elephantiasis. Though not all the dancers were as decrepit as Fi.

The body-paint of the ahoragwana tamwa (see fig. 28) is a reversion to the all-black paint which characterised the cassowaries. However, in the case of the ahoragwana tamwa the black paint is relieved by irregular splashes of red or yellow paint, and patterns of circular markings in white, printed on the skin with the cut-off end of a length of bamboo. These markings are called ogugwi. The points to note about this body paint are both its basic colour (black) and the irregular, or aleatory nature of the coloured additions (which may be applied simply by flicking paint onto the skin with the fingers, in the manner of some of Jackson Pollock's later paintings). In fact, the body paint style of the ahoragwana tamwa is the same as that used by Umedas for war-paint, a point to which I will return later. It is in strong contrast to the polychrome, and generally highly controlled, or regular, body paint style of the tetagwana tamwa (see below).

By this time the women have reappeared on the scene after their obligatory absence during the vis ceremony. At this time too visitors from foreign villages may appear, since they are not normally present during the night dance (perhaps for fear of unpleasant scenes such as that involving the Umeda visitors during the night dance at Sowanda, mentioned above, pp. 296-7). Arrangements have been made beforehand to prevent members of villages engaged in hostilities with one another encountering each other at a festival held in a neutral village; thus, Waina and Wyalla being at odds over a shooting incident in June 1970 it was arranged that they should visit Umeda on different days. A hostile village will not send any representatives at all. Because of bad feeling between Umeda and Punda it was said that no mutual visiting would take place when Ida was held in either village in 1970. In fact, a couple of Pundas did turn up, not being personally involved in any outstanding quarrels.

The visitors may arrive in a body, in which case they make a dramatic entry through the popau with a war-like demonstration, brandishing their bows and arrows above their heads, and shouting war-cries. They are given food by their hosts (who give gracefully, however much private grumbling they may give vent to subsequently) and they participate in the ritual to the extent of assisting in the playing of the huf trumpets, and (in the case of Punda and Umedas), they may, if actual sister's sons of a particular sub-clan, appear as fish wearing the mask of that sub-clan. However, as I have stated already in discussing



the question of 'coconut compatibilities' in the chapter on Social Structure, persons not related as agnates or allies to a given group (i.e. outsiders or affines) may not wear masks made of coconut fibre from the palms of that group, on pain of illness. This restricts the wearing of particular tamwa masks, not only between different villages, but also within the village. In the case of hostilities between villages during the season of ida a symbolic fence (pul) may be built, blocking the path between them. If this fence is destroyed, it is believed that rain will fall.

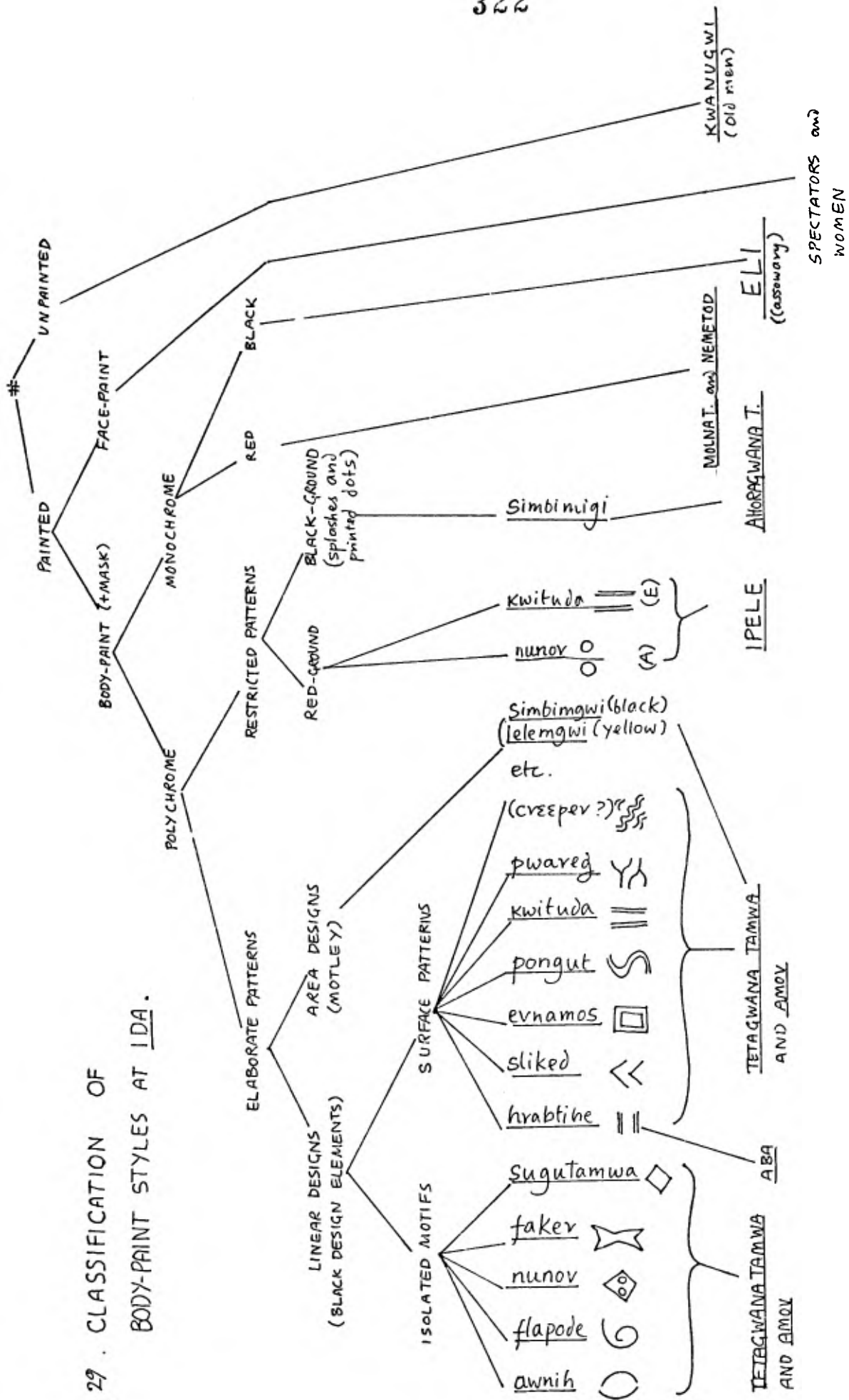
The sun mounts steadily in the sky, dispersing the morning mist, as the ahoragwana tamwa continue their dancing. As each dancer drops out after a spell lasting an hour or two, the black fish are replaced by fish decorated in a very different style. These are the tet-agwana tamwa, who belong to tet agwa, the good heroine of Umeda mythology mentioned above, the destroyer of Ahoragwa. It is not necessary to recount tet agwa's story to any extent, except to say that she came from a tet fruit (a vine of the family Concubitaceae distinguished by large, pendulous, bright red and very succulent fruit; tet also means breast, milk etc.).

At this point I may break off in order to say something in general about body paint in ida, since the interpretation of painting style provides important clues for the interpretation of the rite as a whole. The paints used are 1) charcoal mixed with water, and sometimes chewed turmeric and/or

latex from the breadfruit tree as additives to improve adhesion, 2) red ochre (ord) not mixed with water, but with spit produced through chewing turmeric, 3) yellow paint which is a mixture of white kaolin (tabor) and turmeric-spit, the turmeric being responsible for the yellow colour, and finally 4) white, a mixture of kaolin and water. In order to have plentiful spit to form the medium for the red and yellow paint, large quantities of sugar cane are chewed by the men preparing the paint in the enclosure. Paint, particularly red ochre, has magico-ritual uses outside the context of ida, as will be mentioned below when we come to interpret the symbolism of colours. Body paint is applied to ritual dancers, such as the tetaqwana tamwa so that the whole body is entirely covered with paint, no skin being visible. Only the head (concealed by the mask) is left.

In the case of the complex polychrome designs the method of painting is as follows: first the basic pattern is drawn out on the surface of the body in black, applied with the fingers; then the design is filled in with white, red and yellow. Finally the black lines forming the basis of the design may be picked out with ogugwi, that is, the pattern of small circles printed with the end of a cut bamboo, dipped in white paint. A number of men will collaborate in painting a single dancer, the process, in the case of the more complex designs, taking about half an hour.

The designs are named and standardised, but there is considerable flexibility in the execution, some designs I



recorded containing a large element of free 'improvisation' by the painters on the motif provided by a particular standard form. In the following diagram I have attempted a systematic classification of all the paint styles at ida in relation to particular ritual roles. (Fig. 29). In the case of the tamwa designs may be of three types. an all-over 'area design' e.g. the all-black ahoragwana, or the yellow 'lelemigi' design which may be used by tet-agwana tamwa in the afternoon. Secondly the design may be of what I have called the 'surface-pattern' type, consisting of a connected pattern, in black, covering the whole surface of the body, e.g. horizontal stripes (hrabtihe) zig-zags (sliked) and so forth, or finally the design may consist of isolated motifs, detached from their background, e.g. flapode, spirals representing the tail plumes of the bird of paradise (Fig. 30). It may be said here that the most significant aspect of these designs, from the interpretative standpoint, is not the named objects to which they are referred, but the particular combinations of colours used, and their proportions i.e. the proportion of black to red/yellow/white. On the other hand, some designs are significant, for instance, some tamwa designs are derived from the markings of actual fish species (e.g. the lozenge design sugu tamwa) and designs containing red are all likened to the markings of the panna tamwa fish, whose role in Umeda cosmology will be discussed below. Other designs imitate trees, either the patterns on their bark (hrabtihe is such a design) or the creepers with which





nunov



flapode



lelemigi

Fig. 30

Tetagwana tamwa designs

they are covered (an example is pwareg) -- these recall the general analogy, analysed in the preceding chapter, between men and trees. Where body paint actually imitates the bark of tree-species this analogy is given explicit recognition. Just as the fish dancers themselves represent men in the guise of natural species, the designs painted on the body reinforce this theme of 'L'homme naturalise' -- to use Levi-Strauss' phrase -- since they all refer to the natural kingdom. Two designs are of particular significance in this respect, the nunov and kwituda designs painted on the bodies of the ipele bowmen, but these I will describe in their proper place.

Tetagwana tamwa is pre-eminently the role of the younger men and bachelors. Over the two days of ida a young man may appear in this role as many five times, freshly decorated on each occasion. It is a point of honour that a dancer must not retire from the arena until his paint is beginning to wear off. Appearing as a fish is an experience with considerable emotional and social significance for the individual performer. A young man told me of a feeling of heightened perception or sensibility while during which he expressed in the pidgin English phrase 'hai bilong yu klia ologeta'. It is privilege of social maturity, and as such serves directly to reinforce the norms of acceptable 'adult' behaviour in an every-day context I heard a young man speak of his rejection of adolescent (homosexual) sexual deviations in precisely these terms; he had danced as a fish, he was an adult, he put such things

behind him (or so he claimed). We have here a reflection of the important opposition, of which I shall have much to say hereafter, between overt sexuality, and a kind of sublimated sexuality which is expressed in bachelor mores, and, indeed, in the dancing of the young men as tetagwana tamwa at ida. But one must not lose sight of the fact that while the younger men reject overt sexuality, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice in this respect, and that covert sexual relationships are by no means abhorred by them as I described in Chapter 2. Thus while appearing as the tetagwana tamwa they are so to speak playing an ideal public role and a covert personal role at one and the same time. Overtly, they are representing the ideal stereotype of young men, while covertly they are displaying themselves as individuals before an assembly of female and interested spectators. The dogma, which is continually stressed by informants, is that the women are 'tricked' (mankus) by the fish, whom they believe to be real fish, and not men at all (to foster the illusion the men of Wyalla muddied their feet before emerging onto the arena, as if they had just that moment come up from the river). This carefully maintained deception of the women is, to hear informants speak, the very essence of ida, which is called a game or a joke (modes). But, needless to say, the men are not themselves deceived as to the palpable failure of their scheme of deception, were it really intended as such. The men are well aware that the women know who they are, even when disguised by body paint and a mask. Distinguishing bodily characteristics, scars or

deformities of hands or feet, or merely a man's general build, betray the identity of a masked dancer immediately -- I myself rapidly learnt to identify the masked, but otherwise naked bodies of men whom I saw frequently in the village.

The mask and body paint, and the dogmatic belief that the women are truly deceived by them, provide a cover of supposed anonymity for indulging to the fullest extent in individual sexual self display. The dancer can display himself, because, officially, he is no longer himself. I will return to this theme later. Here, let it suffice to say that a young man dancing the role of tamwa is a ritual actor in a drama whose theme, as I will show hereafter, is a kind of cosmic sexuality, and also an individual acting out his own private sexual role. Against the idealized sexuality of the ida ritual, one must set the persistent undercurrents of purely mundane sexual manoeuvring which are taking place and the fact, which is never far from the thoughts of the young men who participate in it, that here is the opportunity par excellence to ensnare the heart of a nubile widow, or a discontented wife. I have mentioned the fact that in 1970, Waha of Kedewaina induced a widow of Klalunda to come and live with him, which she did as soon as the rites had been concluded. Another man of Waina clan, the ex-Luluai, Wiye, was said to have seduced the wife of Pone of Punda, who afterwards left her husband and married the Luluai, during a performance of ida. I heard other stories of adulterous



relationships being initiated as a result of ida, which did not end in marriage, as these did.

### xiii. Subsidiary figures

The dancing of the tamwa is the main business on both the first and second days of ida: the ahoragwana tamwa in the morning followed by the tet-agwana tamwa during the middle of the day and the afternoon. Their dancing is accompanied, and occasionally interrupted, by interventions from a variety of further ritual dancers, whom I will describe here together, though they do not appear all at once.

#### (1) Yaut (Fiend)

The body of the actor of the Yaut role is smeared with dark grey mud taken from the river (kaib). The head is wrapped in Gnetum gnemon underbark decorated with forest ferns (adapud). He wears a pedasuh gourd, but no oktek and carries a club to threaten the onlookers with, especially the women and children. The yaut does not emerge from the ritual enclosure, but comes into the arena via the ordinary path leading to the bush. There is a momentary panic among the spectators which is not, I think, entirely feigned. Women and children scatter and hide. The yaut races about, brandishing his club and giving a burlesque imitation of dancing. Eventually the courage of the spectators revives, and the children present on the scene gang up together to mob the yaut, who is eventually driven from the scene with shouts and a shower of sticks, rubbish or anything which comes to hand. There is much

laughter as the yaut takes to his heels. This is a role for older men. It may easily be imagined with what relish the children look forward to this opportunity of mobbing a member of the senior generation with impunity.

(2) Yautagwa (Sogwa naina) (Ogress)

The female counterpart of the Yaut, this role is nonetheless taken by a man, like all the others. It is the only transvestite role in the ritual. The actor of this role is smeared with mud and his head is disguised by being enveloped in an inverted net-bag (uda), an intrinsically feminine object. Specially stolen skirts indicate the femininity of the role, but in addition the actor carries a bow and arrow, to threaten people with, which of course is an entirely unfeminine trait. The mythical ogress thus represented is sogwa naina, a vagina dentata ogress associated with the sogwa palm (black palm) from which bows are made. The name sogwa naina means 'bow of the skirt' (i.e. female bow). This association of bows with femininity is a curious phenomenon. Partly the bow is the female counterpart of the (phallic) arrow, and partly the curved shape of the bow which recalls the curved outline of the womb (the shaft of the bow is called in Umeda igop : belly, an euphemism for the womb).

Kwod (Ogress)

Another ogress role in kwod, though kwod is not the name of any ogress found in the mythology, but, as I shall discuss, a kinship term. The kwod is played by a man with his penis bound up with a short section of subnab, in the same manner as the ipele bowman, to be described below.

Further concealment of the genitals is afforded by a small palm frond which he carries in his hand (this was not always done). The dancer's body is painted red all over and marked with stripes of black. The head is concealed by a wrapping of yellow-dyed gnetum gnemon underbark, recalling the mask of the amoy (see below) topped by a bobbing feather. A bow is carried. The kwod dance is very distinctive. A semi-crouching, doubled-up position is adopted (further tending to the concealment of the genitals). The kwod proceeds with a slow, bobbing step, to make a tour of the very edge of the arena, creeping furtively round and beneath the houses, menacing the spectators with tensed bow. The effect is sinister, and the fright induced in the spectators similar to that produced by the violent behaviour of the yaut. Eventually the children gang up against the kwod, as against the ogre, and he (she) is driven from the scene. The kwod is said to throw away the fruit of a plant which produces decorative but oddly-shaped bright yellow fruit (not used in personal or ritual decoration) called yaut subove, which may be seen growing by the wayside on the paths leading out of the arena. These are said to have been planted during previous performances of ida by the kwod.

The word kwod has two other meanings, besides being the name of this ritual figure. It is, first of all, a kind of bird whose cry, imitated as 'kwodaaa -- kwodaaa' was said to betoken evil. Secondly kwod is a kinship term meaning father's sister (or her spouse, by extension).

Where a conventional exchange marriage has taken place, however, this term will not be used, since then the father's sister=mother's brother's wife, and will be addressed as na, by extension from the mother's brother, or more probably, ava, which can be applied to any woman of the senior generation. I have no evidence of a ritualised attitude towards the father's sister, or a power to curse. On the other hand, it is notable that the father's sister, if she is married into a group with whom ego acknowledges no other connection (i.e. through his mother) is an 'anomaly' in the kinship structure. This arises from the fact that the father's sister can be classified neither as kin (in that her marriage associates her with non-kin) nor yet allies, (as would be the case where FaSi=MoBrWi). The ego/kwod relationship establishes no ties, kwod are awk -- outsiders as far as ego is concerned. Yet the connection is there. This 'anomalous' status of kwod may explain the rather negatively loaded associations of the name. For instance, the word to describe the facial mutilations brought about by leprosy or yaws is poskwod 'kwod-face'.

Alitod ('nettle-man' : demon)

The ali-tod demons ought to appear in pairs. Their bodies are painted all over, marked with irregular splashes of yellow or white paint. The alitod wear tubular masks of sewn-up coconut fibre, similar to those of the fish except that there is no outer framework. The mask is painted in the same way as the dancer's body, with coloured splashes



on a black ground. I saw the best performances by ali-tod dancers in Punda, though they also appeared at the Umeda ida. In Punda a body of four ali-tod appeared, in two pairs, simultaneously, causing great consternation among the spectators. They wear the pedasuh and oktek, like the fish, and are armed. Their dance is very violent; they leap about, threaten bystanders and one another with drawn bows, and also wrestle one with another. But eventually they are driven off, as with the other impersonations of similar kind.

The name of the ali-tod derives from ali, a noxious species of stinging nettle which grows in the bush and can cause painful weals. It is to be distinguished from the other species ako, which superficially resembles it, but whose effects are far milder. Ako is a medicinal plant of great importance to Umedas, who use it in curing ritual, and for everyday use as a means of restoring aching limbs, or for freshening themselves up in the mornings (like stinging after-shave lotions used for the same purpose in the west). The white markings on the leaves of ali nettle resemble the white splashes on the bodies of the ali-tod dancers.

Sebuha (Yaut) : Ogre

Another kind of Yaut : ogre is the Sebuha. The characteristic feature of this additional member of the well-stocked Umeda demonology is extreme age: the sebuha is said to have but one hair on his head and one tooth in his mouth. Nonetheless sebuha are much feared. I once

listened while Wapi of Kialumda told me, in all seriousness, of a terrifying experience of his involving an encounter with a sebuha in the bush. He was only saved, he told me, by the fortunate arrival of his elder brother, which frightened the sebuha off. (No more than a tall story perhaps? I would not wish to impugn Wapi's veracity altogether, though to be sure memory may have exaggerated his experience. I myself (if I may be permitted a personal note) used to see odd things when negotiating the gloomy forest paths, especially at half-light or if I was tired: once I could have sworn to having seen a little old lady in black knitting by the road-side, in the middle of the forest, at another time I caught a glimpse of a knight-errant, in full armour, leaning on his lance. These are images from my own personal mythology so Wapi's experience may well have been a genuine hallucination, based on his prior cultural expectations.

At ida, the sebuha is represented by a man daubed with grey mud from the river, his head bound with underbark, and carrying two walking-staves to indicate extreme age (and to threaten people with). The sebuha is driven off like the other yaut.

Before going on to describe the two remaining subsidiary figures, the amov, and the nemetod, who fall into a different category altogether, I may add a word about the status of these 'ogre' roles, and the actors who play them. When describing the tamwa dancers a moment ago, I drew attention to a measure of continuity which exists

between the playing of ritual roles and the roles played by the individual in a mundane context. A full discussion of this factor of continuity between ritual and daily life must be postponed till later, but it is certainly worth mentioning here in relation to these subsidiary 'ogre' roles, since it assumes a paradoxical form. The ogre roles are voluntary, and confer no prestige such as accrues to actors of more important roles, such as that of the cassowaries etc. Yet there is no shortage of men willing to play them, even if their reward is ultimately to be driven from the arena by a bunch of jeering children and women. And everybody well knows who the 'ogres' are in real life. Despite the possible ignominy, I believe these roles did afford the men who acted them a certain catharsis, an opportunity to act out aggressive feelings in public in an acceptable way; acceptable, that is not only to those against whom the aggression was directed, the terrorised spectators, but also to the performer himself, who might otherwise be far from willing to accept his own desire to threaten his fellow-villagers. I noticed that 'ogre' roles were often taken by widowers; men whose wifeless-ness prevented them from playing a full and satisfying role in the life of the community. Such a one was Waha of Wehunda, a tough, powerfully-built fortyish widower, an aggressive man and a highly convincing ogre. Another instance of an aggressive and frustrated individual selecting himself for such a role was Paulus of Umda, a sisterless bachelor and a member of the chronically womanless umda-unid subclan. He

appeared as ali-tod, and seemed (to me, at least) to be putting real animus into his efforts to strike terror into the hearts of the female spectators. Alas for Paulus, his penis-gourd fell off during his performance and he was pursued from the scene amid much unkind laughter. I would not press this too far; not all those who played such roles were obviously frustrated or aggressive individuals. One very successful kwod performance was given by Fai of Kedewaina, one of the most genial men I knew, a comedian who scored a great coup de theatre in the role, by threatening to smash up my tape-recorder, which I had left unattended. Fai played the role for comic effect: but here again, as with the other cases mentioned, this was an extension of his attitude in daily life. Finally I might mention Sowai, a widower of Kedewaina, who played the sebuha in July 1969, about five months after he had lost his wife. Sowai's choice of the role of an aged, aged, man, hobbling along with two sticks commented ironically on his sudden change of status. Like Fai, but unlike Paulus or Waha, Sowai seemed to be playing mainly for laughs.

In taking the ogre roles, men may, therefore, be taking the opportunity to act out their own personalities, perhaps in ways which would not be possible under other circumstances, and they can also, as it were, exorcise themselves, because they know beforehand that, however much terror they may produce for a short while, eventually they will have to make their ignominious exit from the arena. They leave their aggression behind them when they take to their heels. In the ogre roles individual aggression is both



acted out and also neutralised by mockery.

xiv. Awsego

Before going on to describe the remaining figures, the anov, nemetod, ipele and kwanugwi, I may briefly mention the proceedings of the night following the first day of dancing, though I am afraid to say that I here show myself in rather a poor light as an ethnographer.

This night is occupied, from about ten o'clock to a few hours before dawn (the masked dancers having all retired at dusk) with the singing of a type of song known as awsego.

The awsego songs are sung by men, undecorated or wearing ceremonial headgear. They are unaccompanied, either by the huf band, or drums (which are used to accompany singing in other contexts e.g. in curing ritual). The melody of all the awsego refrains is identical, so far as I am aware. They are sung only at ida, and may not be sung at other times, unlike other Umeda songs, though the melody may be whistled. Because they were forbidden to be sung at other times it was only possible to study awsego actually during the night when they were sung -- and I was at first discouraged from making tape recordings of them -- eventually permission was granted but by then, alas, my tape recorder was out of action. Consequently my knowledge of the awsego is very limited. There was another reason for this. Politeness required a visiting ethnographer such as myself to stay up for the night of the cassowary; I could hardly (nor would I wish to) spend the great night of the festival in sluggish sleep. There followed a day of exhausting

observation of the day dancing, so that by the time the second night came round I was longing for sleep, which invariably overcame me -- the songs themselves were, moreover, nothing if not soporific. Consequently, my notes are less full than they might be, and what I can decipher now I find completely unintelligible from an interpretative standpoint. I am, therefore, regretfully forced to mark here an unfortunate hiatus in my knowledge of ida. Suffice to say then, that groups of men, about seven or eight at a time, coming and going by turns (since, for the most part, the men were in the same case as their somnolent ethnographer, and were all fast asleep) parade up and down the moonlit arena chanting the awsego and wearing the night away. Every song has to be sung many many times over, and I heard singers being reproached for moving too quickly to a new song: it was said that like that dawn would never come. Here I transcribe two awsego songs which may stand, for want of anything better, as typical of the species. As it will be seen they do not betray their meaning on the surface, however much it may be lurking under the allusive diction. Informants offered no interpretation of them, either spontaneously, or when pressed, other than the standard remark that they came from the ancestors, always had been sung at ida, and always would be. Not much hope there.

This 'sog' awsego was the one I was always given in response to requests for information about awsego. It seems to be the classic.

|                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>mwaina sog</u> (ooo) | apica-of- <u>mwai</u> (yam)         |
| <u>sawana sog</u> (ooo) | apica-of-taro                       |
| <u>kakumona sog</u> ... | ?apica-of-kakumo (kokomo)           |
| <u>kiana sog</u> ...    | apica-of- <u>kia</u> (bird sp.)     |
| <u>warwene sog</u>      | apica-of-spear                      |
| <u>yabwene sog</u>      | apica-of- <u>yav</u> (water insect) |
| <u>huprana sog</u>      | apica-of-bushknife ( <u>hopra</u> ) |
| <u>abulna sog</u>       | apica-of- <u>avul</u> (sago)        |
| <u>hufana sog</u>       | apica-of-trumpet                    |
| etc., etc.              |                                     |

A bit more intelligible is the next one:

kwaitata silkrlof

cassowary (eats fruit of) the sil tree

oktatata nuglutkrloh

pig (eats fruit of the) nuglut tree(?)

seloura awmovm bobove

black cockatoo breaks the fruit of the aw (terminalis  
impediens)

ipkr tingluh weybiakr tingluh

ants-of-the-breadfruit-tree, ants-of-the-wild-breadfruit-tree ..

The meanings were given by an informant, but what these songs signify I am at a loss to say. No doubt if I had the complete corpus some pattern might be discernible, but I have the most fragmentary evidence only. Judging by informants' reactions they have very little conscious meaning in the minds of the singers themselves. What is still more puzzling is the lack of 'fit' between the awsago episode and the rite

as a whole. For the most part ida is non-verbal, encoding its meanings in reasonably accessible physical and choreographic terms; here language and naming assumes predominance. Even the physical movements of the singers fail to fit with normal practice: where the dancing is generally done in a circle (clockwise) while singing the men march up and down in a straight line. Is it the case perhaps that the awsego are an interpolated importation from elsewhere? I saw remarkably similar performances in the Amanab area (in Wamu, some way south of Amanab). Or is it perhaps a survival of a pattern of ritual activity prevalent throughout the area before the ida took hold? I simply cannot say. In short I must here confess my entire inability to handle this episode, either from an ethnographic standpoint or in my analysis of the meaning of ida as a whole. Let me say no more about it.

Finally I must mention one very minor ritual impersonation which makes a brief appearance during this night, otherwise entirely devoted to singing. This is the ab (wildfowl or bush turkey). Two (junior) actors of each moiety take this role, for which the cassowary masks (ageli) are used. The dancer is unpainted, but wears the oktek and pedasuh like the cassowary. The ab appear about midnight. For a few moments the singing stops and the huf trumpets play rapid staccato chords (they are not played, otherwise, during the second night). The ab dancers enter, running low, keeping close to the ground, like real wild-fowl. They make a couple of turns round the arena and then disappear once more. The singing is then resumed.



xv. The Second Day and the Conclusion (the amov)

Shortly after sunrise on the second day of ida the two cassowary dancers get decorated once more and perform briefly. For fifteen minutes or so, before retiring, not to reappear. This brief intervention of the cassowaries sets the second day's proceedings in motion, but there is no repeat of the aba dance or the vis ceremony. Instead the cassowaries are followed by ahoragwana tamwa. As on the previous day these are gradually replaced over the course of the morning, by polychrome tetagwana tamwa danced by the younger men. During the afternoon there appear a type of dancer not yet described, the amov or termites (fig. 31). Termites may appear on either day (always in the afternoon or evening) but are more characteristic of the second day, and are always present during the concluding hours of ida). The decoration and paraphernalia of the amov represent a curious amalgam of elements I have already had occasion to describe separately. Their body paint is like that of the tetagwana tamwa, polychrome patterned designs, often particularly elegant. The headdress of the amov dancer is a modification of the ordinary ceremonial gear worn by male spectators and described above. The core of the headdress is provided by the bol headpiece round which are wrapped many layers of ribbon and coloured cloth and possum fur. In front is worn a pig's tooth crest decorated with sulphur plumes. Waving black cassowaryplumes and bird of paradise emerge from the top. Thus far the amov mask resembles a more

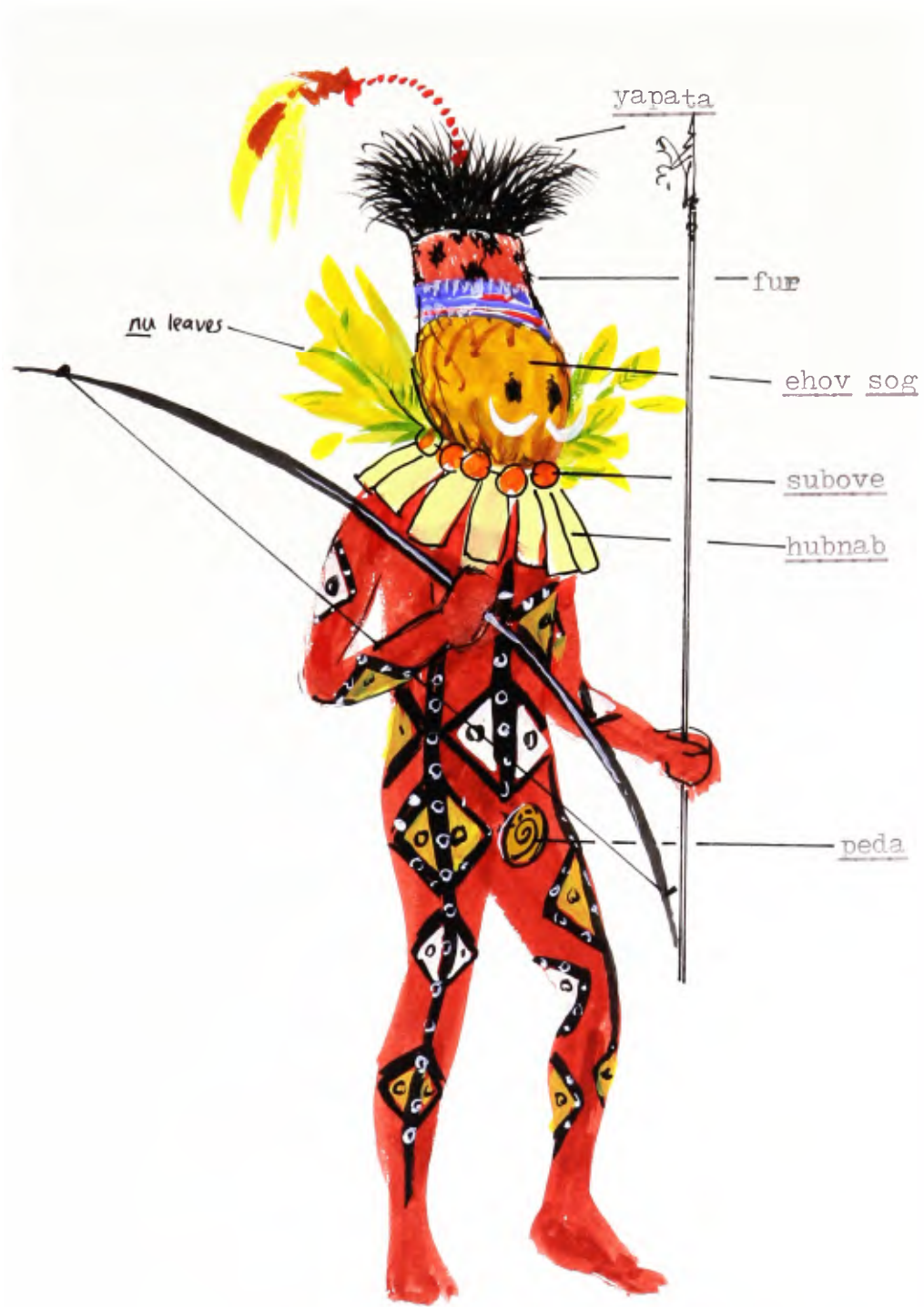


Fig. 31 Amov

spectacular version of conventional ceremonial headgear; however, it differs from the latter in that the dancers face is hidden with yellow-dyed ehov sog (underbark). This imitates the yellow head of the real termite, and is to that extent directly representational. Round the collar of the mask is a fringe of hubnah, similar to, but much smaller than, the fringe of the cassowary mask. The dancer also wears a necklace of subove fruit. Finally round the dancer's shoulders are tied many decorative sprays of cordilyne (aboga) and codiaum variegatum (nunov). The dancer carries a bow and arrow, but does not wear the pedasuh or oktek, wearing instead the ordinary penis gourd (like the molna tamwa). The dance of the amov (of whom there may be up to five present at any one moment) is calculated to show their rather resplendent decoration to best advantage. In place of the 'phallic' dancing of the other characters, the amov adopt a more gently undulating motion, pawing at the earth with their feet. This motion is imparted by the abundant plumes and leaves with which they are attired, which wave up and down rhythmically. The dance of the amov, who proceed round the arena in a body, is accompanied by the small boys who, just as they did with the molnatamwa on the first night, link arms and follow them, singing. The role of amov is taken generally by married men, that is, a rather older age-group than the tetagwana tamwa.

The nemetod (neophytes) otherwise called ipele

Youths who have just previously received the peda in the ceremony described above are not permitted to play any

extensive part in the subsequent proceedings, except the molna tamwa roles. They are permitted to make one brief foray onto the arena, but only under very strict conditions, and under supervision. Such a neophyte or neme tod ('new man') wearing the oktek and pedasuh may make a single circuit of the arena, accompanied by a 'mother's brother' of the opposite moiety, the latter being quite undecorated, wearing an ordinary gourd, not a pedasuh. The neophyte wears a tamwa mask of his natal hamlet and all-red body paint without additional markings (identical to the molna-tamwa, the other neophyte role). The rule restricting neophyte fish to a single circuit of the arena is justified by the assertion that less restricted participation on the role of tamwa would endanger the hunting success of the youth. (This is a reflection of the hunting-versus-sexuality opposition, which has already been mentioned, and of which I shall have more to say hereafter. Dancing is here treated as a form of sexual activity -- which it is, and hence antipathetic to hunting success. A single circuit is not harmful however, indeed it is held to inspire the efforts of the youth in this socially-approved pursuit; in the sound of the huf trumpets, it is said, the youth hears the hunting cry 'okta menaa-o, okta menaa-o!' (equivalent to 'tally-ho!').

Such a neophyte may be referred to as an ipele (bowman). Actually, however, there are many differences between this role and that of the main characters referred to by this name, whom I will describe in the next section (below).



Conversely the 'real' ipele may be referred to as nemetod 'new men' a name in some ways more appropriate to these neophytes, than to the senior men to whom the ipele role actually falls. However, this linguistic association, combined with certain other details, is of the highest importance from the interpretative standpoint, as I will show later.

xvi. The ipele (red-painted bowmen)

The ipele (fig. 32) role is second only in prestige and seniority to that of the cassowary, yet, as I have just mentioned, an ipele dancer is described as a 'new man' (neme tod). In terms of the ritual at least, he is, since the actor of this role is held in reserve till the very last, can play no other role (e.g. fish, amov etc.), and ought to remain secluded in the enclosure. (Actually in Umeda, though not in the other villages, this rule of seclusion was not observed at all strictly). As noted above, the ipele actor has to observe taboos in the pre-ritual season.

The masks worn by the ipele dancers (of whom there are two, one of each moiety) are a 'miniaturised' version of the tamwa mask type. Made of wata and painted with designs like the tamwa mask, it is only about half as tall, and altogether more neatly constructed. Instead of the dark feather of gouria pidgeon (subo) and hornbill (mesa) used to decorate the tamwa masks, those of the ipele are distinguished by tufts of ebata, that is the soft white down of the cockatoo (otherwise used by women to tie to the tails



Fig. 32. ipele  
(Kwitua design)

of their skirts) and sulphur-yellow cockatoo plumes. These masks are worn only by the ipele dancers for whom they are made specially. The fringe of the mask is made of material from the crown of the limbum palm (subnab) as are the fringes of the fish masks, but in the case of the ipele the material used is not the relatively abundant yellow-green immature leaves, but strips of pure-white 'coeur de palmier' from the very heart, which is in fact edible though stringently tabooed as food to all Umedas. Very delicate white fringes are carefully fashioned from this material, each individual ipele dancer making his own fringe. The ipele dancers are painted red all over. In addition they bear standardised designs in black; in the case of the edtodna ipele this is the kwituda (young cassowary) design, two black vertical stripes running from the shoulders to the toes in front, and down the back as well, in the case of the agwatodna ipele a design consisting of twin circles painted on the dancer's back and abdomen -- this design being called nu nov 'eyes of the nu-frog'. The dancers wear neither the peda, nor the pedasuh; instead their penes are bound round with a short strip of the white hubnab material, the same as that used to make their fringes. Like the tarwa dancers, the ipele are armed with bows. In the case of the ipele these bows, though not actually new, are disguised by being painted with red paint, and the carved parts of the foreshaft are concealed by bindings to give no clue as to the identity of the owner. A crucial 'property' of the ipele role is the ipele arrow,

from which is derived the role-name. 'Ipele' in common parlance, outside the context of ritual, refers to the multi-pronged arrows used by the people for shooting birds, small game and fish. The ritual ipele arrow is a variant of this common type, made specially for ritual use.

The arrow consists of three very small, sharp spines of black palm wood bound to a bamboo shaft and painted red. The head of the arrow is painted red. Most curious of all is the way in which the three spines are themselves bound with white subnab in a manner exactly resembling the treatment of the dancer's penis.

When making their appearances the ipele are accompanied by two further dancers, the kwanugwi 'old men' -- their preceptors. The performers in this role are not indeed usually very old, being generally in their forties or fifties. I mentioned before the fact that members of the numerically smaller of the moieties (the agwatodna) tended to play ritual roles younger than members of the larger moiety, for obvious reasons, and this is true also of the 'old man' role which in 1969 was taken by Hupwo of Kedawaine, a man barely 35, if that, as opposed to Pom of Umda, taking the same role for the edtodna moiety, who was genuinely old by Umda standards (perhaps in his early sixties, even). The kwanugwi should be senior both in years, and in terms of generations, to the ipele dancers. The edtodna kwanugwi acts as preceptor to the agwatodna ipele and vice versa. The similarity of this role and the role of the Mother's Brother who accompanies the neme tod



'neophyte fish' will be immediately apparent. Their function is to instruct the ipele in their role as bowmen, for the latter, being 'new men' must be treated as if they had not yet acquired the art. They are undecorated; their bodies not being painted at all, nor are they disguised by masks, though they may wear a few feathers and ribbons for ornament. They are either naked, or they wear penis sheaths of the ordinary (small) type. They are armed with bows, but their arrows are mere dummies -- simple bamboo shafts weighted with mud but without arrow-heads, similar to the toy arrows used by children in play.

The ipele and their preceptors make a total of three appearances during a performance of ida. The first is a brief intervention during the late afternoon of the first day, and the second a similar brief appearance about the same time on the second day. Their final appearance, at sundown on the second day, is the most important of the three, for it concludes the performance.

On their first two appearances the ipele do no more than circle the arena a couple of times, led by their preceptors in single file, and then retire once more to the enclosure. The manner of dancing adopted by the ipele is highly characteristic. In place of the leaping dance more suitable to the other figures appearing at ida (with exceptions which have been mentioned) the dance of the ipele is intensely controlled: the dancer leans forward placing his weight with each pace deliberately on his leading foot. The effect is of a slow, measured, loping step, reminiscent

of a slow-bowler or a javelin thrower beginning his run-up; power held on a tight leash. Until the last moments of the dance the bow is held low, with the arrow pointed at the ground. Menacingly, the bow is tensed and relaxed in time with the dance. The dance of the preceptors is similar.

Whenever the ipele make an appearance the whole tempo of the dance suddenly freezes, and the fish, amov etc., who may happen to be in the arena at the time, fall momentarily into a state of suspended animation. The music of the huf band is interrupted mid-career, and the trumpet players instead take up a pattern of rapidly-blown unison chords (huf-huf-huf ...) only to take up their normal strains again when the ipele have disappeared.

The last appearance of the ipele, which, as I said, takes place at sundown on the second day and concludes the rites, is signalled in advance by a few long chords on the huf. This signal of the imminent appearance of the ipele warns the women to depart or at least conceal themselves, since they should not see the final moments of the ritual. The dancers already on the scene -- at this time perhaps eight or so tapwa and about four amov, each with their train of small boys, retire to the periphery of the arena, where they keep up a subdued clicking while the proceedings last. The ipele and their preceptors enter, and dance for a few minutes. The atmosphere abruptly changes from boisterous excitement to hushed solemnity, punctuated by sombre long-drawn-out huf chords. The reddening evening

light makes the red body-paint of the ipele seem to glow with an almost unnatural intensity.

At length the agwatodna ipele and preceptor cease their dancing and stand facing about due west, into the sun. The preceptor raises his bow and looses off his dummy arrow over the tops of the coconut palms which fringe the ritual arena, to be closely followed by the red painted bowman himself, whose ipele arrow, glinting in the sun, clears the tops of the trees, dips, and falls into the secondary bush some way off. The firing of the arrows is then repeated by the edtodna pair. Having performed their function, the ipele dancers, dropping their red bows (which are retrieved by spectators) race back to the enclosure as if their lives depended on it. They are followed by the other dancers.

A subdued conversation breaks out. Ida is finished. In the rapidly greying half-light the knots of women gather up their bundles, their children, their feathered poles and make a slow procession back to the deserted hamlets. Men strip the masks of their feathers and hang them up in the enclosure, there to rot. Finery is packed away. The dancers wash off their paint in the stream and sit, tired and shivering, beside the fires. Eventually they too pick themselves up and make their way home to eat and sleep. That night, it is very still in the village.

It is perhaps rather innacurate to say that 'ida is finished' though that indeed is what informants would say, even though the full cycle, involving two entire performances of the entire ritual was only half-way through, with the

completion of the rites at Sinai hamlet -- the so-called 'bush' rites. After the lapse of about five days the 'village' rites are performed at Wehumda. Naturally there is no need for me to describe these rites separately, since in all details except the actual locale, the 'village' ida is identical to the 'bush' ida.

When the 'village' ida is concluded, the men return once more to sleep for a few nights in the bush, while the women remain in the village. The object of the men's expedition is to shoot game -- no hunting having been done while the rites are in progress -- to obtain blood. When game has been killed -- preferably pig, of course, but smaller game, bandicoot, possum, snakes etc., will do, the blood is preserved in small bamboo tubes. Blood having been obtained in this way the men proceed in a body to bush streams where they wash. They then anoint themselves with blood. This washing and anointing is said to be to remove the dirt (nsak) of the ritual and allows them to take up normal life again.

When all the men have returned from this expedition there follows a whole day of huf playing marking the resumption of normal activities by the village, after the festival season. This huf-playing is therefore symmetrical with the huf-playing which marked the opening of the ritual cycle, nine months or so earlier.



## Chapter 5

ANALYSIS OF THE IDA RITUAL1. The Interpretation of Ritual

In this introductory section I do not propose to enter deeply into the theoretical issues surrounding the interpretation of ritual. I have no particular theoretical scheme to propound: in the analysis of ida which follows, I have, on the whole confined myself to techniques of analysis which are by no means novel in an anthropological context. I confine myself also to the ethnographic context of Umeda without entering into comparisons with other societies; and such generalisations as I make are intended to apply specifically to Umeda, though perhaps they might be found useful in other areas as well. If I have an overriding aim in mind, that aim is to achieve the maximum coherence possible within a limited body of data: to amplify the mutually 'resonant' quality of social and cultural facts to achieve, as far as lies in my power, a unified approach, dominated by a restricted number of interpretative ideas whose inter-relationships must be clearly shown. Certainly, I have a 'method of approach' - but I do not feel it necessary to justify it in any other way than by using it on my own material; its virtues and/or defects will show much more clearly in the context of the analysis itself than they would

ever be likely to do in the course of a tortuous preliminary discussion of methodology.

Hence the absence of a more detailed discussion of methodology: an omission which might be less pardonable in a work of comparative or systematic pretensions, but no disadvantage, I think, in a thesis such as this, whose main interest lies in the specific ethnographic material presented therein.

Nonetheless, it is essential that some mention be made of a number of recent and not-so-recent anthropological writings on ritual, both in order to give credit where it is due, and provide a background for the subsequent discussion. My approach - it almost goes without saying - derives ultimately from Durkheim's 'Elementary Forms of the Religious Life' (1915, book III), though at so many degrees remove that the original Durkheimian framework is lost among the subsequent accretions to his doctrine. To see ritual behaviour in the light of the life of the total society is undoubtedly a Durkheimian project; but it is no more than a starting-point, after which Durkheimian pre-occupations - sacred and profane, the society as an abstract, quasi-causal agent and so forth - become progressively less relevant. One is concerned, not with the larger abstractions but the significant detail, not with global social theory but with the interpretation of a particular society.

This involves, not only a different, less schematic view of ritual than that which is found in Durkheim, but also a different conception<sup>of society</sup> (deriving from Malinowski) based less

on the idea of groups - within which the individual becomes merged with his fellows - than on the idea of a structure of interlocking, balanced, role-complementarities.

G. Bateson's monograph 'Naven' (1936) represents a landmark in anthropology in that, for the first time, this particular view of society (as composed of interlocking roles) is found in conjunction with an effort to explain the particular details of Iatmul rituals. (Chapter on 'The Sociology of Naven'). Bateson juxtaposes his (at that time very original) analysis of the MoBr/SiSo (wau/lus) relationship with the 'naven' or homage ceremonial performed by the mother's brother to celebrate an achievement by the sister's child. In the course of this analysis, two aspects of social life which would otherwise be regarded as distinct, namely social structure and ritual behaviour, become fused together; ritual action is seen as part of the fabric of social life, rather than as a separate domain in isolation from mundane activity. And ritual and social structure alike are treated as realisations of certain fundamental ideological traits, characteristic of Iatmul society as a whole, which Bateson calls the 'eidos' of Iatmul society (including certain kinds of dualism, proliferating classificatory schemes etc.). Although I have not employed Bateson's special analytical distinctions, I have certainly profited from Bateson's work to the extent of wishing to perform a very similar analysis of the Umeda material.

Though I think that 'Naven' is a model of 'sociological analysis of ritual' - one could add many other titles of

course, such as Richard's 'Chisungu' (1956), Lienhardt's 'Divinity and Experience' (1961) - it does lack one major preoccupation of more modern work on ritual, i.e. a concern with the interpretation of (often cryptic) ritual symbols. I shall be very much concerned with the interpretation of symbolism in the analysis of ida. Here, naturally, I am very much under the guiding influence of V. Turner's works on Ndembu ritual symbolism (Turner 1967).

I mention Turner's name with certain feelings of trepidation, since to do so is to evoke the possibility of a comparison which would not flatter my work. Nothing will suffice to make me an ethnographer of Turnerian calibre; nonetheless, I cannot deny the influence that such essays as 'Colour Symbolism' (in: Banton 1964) or 'Symbolism in Ndembu ritual' (1964) have exercised over my researches. Too much similarity is not to be looked for; as I shall explain below, there seem to me to be basic dissimilarities, as between Umeda and Ndembu, where the interpretation of ritual symbols is concerned. But it is from Turner, essentially, that I have received my general idea of the 'possibilities' of ritual symbolism, the basic 'kinds' of meanings that ritual symbols are likely to have. In particular, it is from Turner that I have taken over the idea of ritual symbolism as combining a 'sensory' meaning, derived from the physical sensory qualities of the ritual object itself, which has the power of fanning out into a range of 'ideological' meanings, which, though founded in the sensory qualities of the object, must be stated in terms of social norms and values, the values which govern the on-



going social process. While I believe that echoes of the idea that ritual symbols must be analysed in terms of the 'sensory' and 'ideological' poles of meaning (1967 : 28) will be found throughout the subsequent chapter of analysis, the general emphasis is very different, and will probably not strike the reader as very Turnerian. This arises, basically from the virtual absence of 'native exegesis' from my account of ida, which has led me by and large to blur the distinction (which Turner always tries to keep as sharp as possible) between 'native exegesis' and 'observer's construct'. Turner's general approach seems to be that, while the 'sensory' pole of meaning is accessible mainly through observation - that is through an observer's construct - this ideological pole of meaning is accessible by direct questioning of symbolically aware informants. Ndembu can be, in their way, fully explicit about the meanings of their symbols, but among my Umeda informants I found none willing to discuss the meanings of their symbols - to discuss their symbols as symbols 'standing for' some other thing or idea, rather than as concrete things-in-themselves. In fact, I found it impossible to even pose the question of meaning in Umeda, since I could not discover any corresponding Umeda word for English 'mean', 'stand for' etc. Questions about symbols were taken by Umedas as questions about the identity rather than the meaning of a symbol: 'what is it?' not 'what does it mean?'

I would not deny that the older Umeda men possessed esoteric ritual knowledge, much of which they would not communicate to me on the (justifiable) grounds that I was too young; on the other hand, I very much doubt that this

secret esoteric knowledge was 'exegetical' in character; it was, by and large, knowledge of magical techniques which the old men guarded so carefully. This esoteric knowledge related, not to the broader picture of ritual activity at ida, but to the little magical 'sideshows' which accompanied the ritual; for example, the *bespelling* of the ochre deposits, the secret enclosure, the masks, the dancers preparatory to their entrances etc. These (verbal) magical 'frills' do not constitute a body of 'native interpretation' of ritual symbolism; since they take the essential symbolism of ida for granted. Umeda ritual, it must be stressed, is primarily non-verbal, and also primarily non-esoteric, at least where the men are concerned. Ida is a public non-verbal spectacle, whose meaning is also public and non-verbal, and is not given separate existence in the exegetical homilies of 'ritual specialists' or 'doctors' - of whom there were none in Umeda. Informants were neither willing nor able, in my experience, to translate a non-verbal performance (e.g. the cassowary dancer) into a slab of verbal exegesis, beyond the provision of a bare name, details of the status of the role (senior, junior, comic, terrible etc.) and of its 'properties' (mask, bodypaint, dance-style etc.).

This general lack of indigenous exegesis does not rule out the possibility of an analysis however; Turner himself stresses all along that native exegesis is not the 'whole truth' about the meaning of symbols. In this account of ida I myself will be concentrating on what Turner calls the 'positional' meaning of ritual symbols; that is, on the role of a particular symbol within the context of the rite as a

whole, seen, as it were, from 'outside' via an 'observer's construct' (Turner 1967). Furthermore, I will be looking at the rite in the context of Umeda social structure and cosmology - some features of which have already been introduced in previous chapters. Now strictly speaking none of this can be checked directly against the actual statements of Umeda informants; important problems of 'validation' must be overcome if the analysis is to carry any weight. There are a number of points to be made in this connection.

(i) There are two distinct methods of validation applicable to sociological generalisations. They may be validated 'internally' by showing that the actors in the situation either acquiesce in, or spontaneously produce, statements identical or similar to the statements made about them by the sociologist. Or they may be validated 'externally'; in which case the sociologist must show that the body of observations covered by the statement he wishes to make behave as a system, i.e. he shows a degree of consistency in the material he is dealing with such that there is a quasi-predictive relation between the parts of the system; given certain fundamental principles of the system, subsequent observations can be 'fitted in' naturally, and can be seen as a logical consequence of those basic principles. This is not 'prediction' in the full sense, but it is as close as it is possible to get to it, given the limitations which govern most anthropological work.

(ii) There is reason to think that 'internal' (i.e. exegetical) evidence relating to the meanings of ritual symbols may be systematically misleading. Turner, himself richly supplied with exegetical material furnished by the Ndembu themselves, is still prepared to recognise the need for an 'observer's construct' - which goes further than any native exegesis - in analysing the full meaning of a ritual symbol. As he points (1967 : 33) indigenous interpretation stresses the 'harmonious' aspect of ritual symbolism, rejecting possible alternative explanations which involve elements of ambiguity and conflict. Hence he feels it is necessary to appeal to unconscious motivations, suppressed in exegetical statements, to explain fully the details of ritual behaviour.

(iii) Finally, it may be asked whether the very 'efficacy' of a ritual symbol is not to a certain extent a function of its 'untranslatability' into an alternative mode of expression. There are two related issues here. It is, first of all, a simple ethnographic fact that systems of 'non-verbal communication' play an important part in communication information about social, religious and cosmological structures etc., in certain non-literate societies. (Cf. Forge 1965). In his Curl Lecture, Anthony Forge has described aspects of one such non-verbal communication system as it is found among the Iatmul and Abelam tribes on the Sepik. He goes so far as to argue that the statements made in Abelam ceremonial house architecture, carving and yam decoration could not be made in any other way, at least by the Abelam (*ibid* : 27-8, 30). The Umeda



share, I think, the Abelan propensity to make socially relevant statements in concrete terms (visual or choreographic); statements which are 'unconscious' - or at any rate never made explicit verbally - so far as the actors themselves are concerned.

This cultural 'choice' as between verbal or visual communication (with varying degrees of 'translatability' as between the two modes) is only one aspect of the matter: it is also necessary to consider whether important ritual or religious symbols are not intrinsically untranslatable into alternative modes of expression by virtue of the fact that they are symbols of a 'transcendent' reality which cannot be grasped except through the symbol itself. This possibility is raised by A. Schutz in his essay 'Symbol Reality and Society' (Collected papers, 1967, pp. 331-2 (quotation from Jaspers) and 345-7, cf. also K. Jaspers: Philosophy; Vol. 3 (Jaspers 1971)).

If certain groups appear to be unwilling to discuss the 'meaning' of their symbolism, it may result from the fact that that meaning is ungraspable except through a specific symbolic experience. According to this view (with which I have considerable sympathy) the symbol stands, as it were, on the boundary between mundane actuality and those 'sub-universes of meaning' (Schutz) which can only be constituted through symbolism. Only a thoroughgoing relativization of the symbol would make it possible to explore the meaning of such a 'boundary' symbol; and it would be unreasonable to expect actors for whom the symbol represents transcendent reality, ultimate value, to perform this act of

'relativization'. Native exegesis would either remain as cryptic as the symbol itself (merely replacing one symbol of the Transcendent with another) or would amount to no more than secondary rationalization, remaining always on the hither side of the mundane/transcendent boundary in attempting to convey the Transcendent in mundane terms. Only an outside observer, uncommitted to the cultural premises within which the symbol has meaning is in a position to relativize it in such a way that it becomes possible to elucidate its meaning - which he does by placing it in a context of explanatory devices, specially devised by him.

To be sure this 'meaning' is not 'actor's meaning' but 'observer's meaning' relative to explanatory scheme  $x$  - but the observer's construct does not simply ignore such exegesis as actors may be able to provide: it must seek to explain actor's exegesis at the same time as seeking to elucidate the meaning of the symbol itself. In other words, in order to explain a ritual symbol, it is necessary to construct a 'model system' within which symbols (which, from the actor's point of view, represent a transcendent 'unsayable' reality), are made relative to explanatory concepts. These explanatory concepts of necessity have no counterparts within the actor's own consciousness. Sociological explanation does not mirror events at the level of actuality, but a constructed reality represented by a model. Such a model (to return to point (i) above) must be externally validated: that is, its validity corresponds to its power to structure, or make coherent, the factual observations upon which it is based.

In the account of ida which follows, I have attempted to make such an 'observer's construct' whose validity is external rather than internal. This should be borne in mind because it is difficult to keep rigidly to the role of model-constructor without seeming to drop into a straightforwardly descriptive tone; thus I may at times write 'Umedas think this' or 'Umedas see the world in such-and-such a way' without making it clear at the same time that these remarks are based on inferences from the model rather than spontaneous statements from informants which give direct insight into their inner feelings, beliefs etc. Turner has attempted to separate out 'observer's construct' from 'native exegesis'. I myself, more dependent on my model than Turner perhaps ever permits himself to become, would rather say that only the observer's model can be fully explanatory, and that all the information, including native exegesis, must be incorporated into it. The separation of voices (the analyst's and the informant's) cannot be rigidly maintained, particularly where there is no tradition of native exegesis. (The foregoing discussion, it is almost unnecessary to add, relates directly to a similar discussion of Lévi-Strauss' concerning observer's and indigenous models of social structure cf. Lévi-Strauss 1953).

#### 11. The Model

The basis of my explanatory model of ida is the large tabular diagram (Table 5) which sets out the sequence of actors making an appearance at ida (the horizontal or 'syntagmatic' sequence). Each ritual actor is represented

| → TIME →                          | N   | I  | G  | H                                    | T  | → DAWN →                                 | → EARLY MORNING →                     | → MID-DAY AND AFTERNOON →          | → SUNSET →                                |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| NAME OF ROLE                      | ELI (Cassowary)   | (fish?)<br>MOLNATAMWA                                | ABA (Sago)                               | TEH (firewood)                       | AHORAGWANA<br>TAMWA (fish)               | TETAGWANA<br>TAMWA (fish)                | AMOV (termite)                        | NEMETOD<br>(neophyte)              | KWANUGWI<br>(preceptor)                   | IPELE<br>(bowman)                              |
| BODY-PAINT<br>STYLE               | ALL - BLACK   | ALL - RED  | POLYCHROME<br>HORIZONTAL<br>BANDS        | POLYCHROME<br>DECORATIVE<br>PATTERNS | BLACK WITH<br>RANDOM<br>MARKINGS         | POLYCHROME<br>DECORATIVE<br>PATTERNS     | POLYCHROME<br>DECORATIVE<br>PATTERNS  | ALL-RED                            | none                                      | RED +<br>BLACK<br>DESIGNS                      |
| MASK-<br>TYPE                     | AGELI   | TAMWA  | AGELI                                    | TEH                                  | TAMWA                                    | TAMWA                                    | AMOV                                  | TAMWA                              | none                                      | IPELE<br>(MINATURE<br>TAMWA)                   |
| MASK -<br>FRINGE                  | HUBNAB<br>(PANDANUS)  | SUBNAB<br>(LIMBUM)                                   | HUBNAB                                   | HUBNAB                               | SUBNAB                                   | SUBNAB                                   | HUBNAB<br>(small)                     | SUBNAB                             | none                                      | SUBNAB<br>(dead-white<br>immature<br>material) |
| FEATHERS,<br>LEAVES               | NAVELI<br>(SAGO-FRONDS)                                       | GOURIA, HORN-<br>BILL, PARROT<br>etc.                | NAVELI                                   | NAVELI +<br>CASSOWARY<br>PLUMES      | GOURIA<br>HORNBILL etc                   | GOURIA<br>HORNBILL etc                   | NU-LEAVES                             | GOURIA<br>HORNBILL<br>etc.         | none                                      | EBATA<br>(COCKATOD -<br>DOWN)                  |
| TREATMENT<br>OF DANCER'S<br>PENIS | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK  | PEDA   | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK                       | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK                   | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK                       | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK                       | PEDA                                  | PEDASUH +<br>OKTEK                 | PEDA                                      | PENIS BOUND<br>WITH NAB<br>(KYNODESME)         |
| Bow<br>and<br>ARROW               | none  | PRESENT  | none                                     | none                                 | PRESENT                                  | PRESENT                                  | PRESENT                               | PRESENT                            | Bow +<br>DUMMY<br>ARROW                   | RED BOW<br>+<br>IPELE<br>ARROW                 |
| DANCE -<br>STYLE                  | ENERGETIC<br>UN-STRUCTURED<br>(OCCASIONALLY<br>HOLDING HANDS) | RESTRAINED<br>SINGLE-FILE<br>FOLLOWED BY<br>CHILDREN | ENERGETIC<br>LEAPING<br>OVER THE<br>FIRE | ENERGETIC                            | ENERGETIC<br>SINGLE-FILE<br>(AGGRESSIVE) | ENERGETIC<br>SINGLE-FILE<br>(AGGRESSIVE) | RESTRAINED<br>FOLLOWED BY<br>CHILDREN | ENERGETIC<br>(ONE CIRCUIT<br>ONLY) | SLOW, VERY<br>RESTRAINED<br>(FIRES ARROW) | SLOW, VERY<br>RESTRAINED<br>(FIRES<br>ARROW)   |
| SOCIAL<br>STATUS of<br>ACTOR      | SENIOR<br>MAN   | NEOPHYTE   | SENIOR<br>MAN                            | INTER-<br>MEDIATE                    | SENIOR<br>(OLD MEN)                      | INTERMEDIATE<br>(YOUNG MEN)              | SENIOR<br>MAN                         | NEOPHYTE                           | OLD MAN                                   | INTERMEDIATE                                   |

TABULAR DIAGRAM OF IDA

TABLE 5



by a vertical column which lists the characteristics of each ritual role under a number of headings; name of role, time of appearance, body-paint style, mask-type, mask fringe, treatment of penis, bow, arrow, feathers, dance-style, seniority/juniority). The sum of these attributes is the 'paradigm' of a particular ritual role. This tabular arrangement of data along 'paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes' bears a direct relation to the Lévi-Straussian technique applied to myth (Levi-Strauss 1962, p.227) wherever the myth is laid out in the manner of a musical score, the vertical arrangement being the 'harmony' the horizontal sequence the 'melody' - though there are important differences due to the different subject-matter involved; myth in the case of Lévi-Strauss, ritual in the present case.

In setting out the material in this way I have also been strongly under the influence of R. Barthes whose short 'Elements of Semiology' (1967 tr. Annette Lavers) I had with me in the field. His Chapter 3 'Syntagm and System' (pp. 58-88) sets out in detail the method of analysing semiological systems (of which ida is undoubtedly an excellent example) by opposing 'syntagm' to 'system' ('system' = our 'paradigm') by analysing the relations set up in a tabular arrangement of the following type:

|         |    |    |    |
|---------|----|----|----|
| syntagm | a  | b  | c  |
|         | a' | b' | c' |
|         | a" | b" | c" |

system

(Barthes op.cit. p.67)

Barthes' exposition of semiological systems in turn derives from structural linguistics, as does Lévi-Strauss' technique of myth-analysis; thus a, a', a" etc. could be thought of as allophones of a phoneme /a/ and the sequence /a/+/b/+/c/ a syntagmatic chain of phonemes (a morpheme).

Viewed in this light, my tabular diagram of ida could be thought of as an analysis of the constituent units of a syntagmatic chain of ritual actions, representations etc. analysed in a way analogous to the analysis of a speech-chain in linguistics. I would not wish to overstress this similarity however. Language is a unitary system which can be studied (generally speaking) in isolation from other cultural systems. Whereas, as Barthes rightly points out, ritual (or other non-linguistic semiological systems) are 'mixed' systems: for instance a ritual mask is significant in its own right (as a material object made in a certain way of certain significant materials) and also as the bearer of certain conceptual (or verbal) meanings (i.e. cassowary, fish etc.) which cannot be deduced from the object itself but only from the linguistic context. A symbol cannot, in short, be treated as an (unproblematic) 'sign' because, as Turner has pointed out, its fan of reference includes both 'sensory' and 'conceptual' (or 'ideological') meanings. Secondly language exists to make possible (through a re-combination of the elements constituting 'langue') the expression of 'new' ideas, propositions etc. ('parole') whereas ritual is rigidly stereotyped, i.e. is not 'creative' in Chomsky's sense (except perhaps on the long term).

The intrinsic differences between ordinary linguistic communication and ritual communication (which may amount to a fundamental divergence in aims and techniques) cannot be left out of account in the interest of obtaining spurious orderliness in the analysis of the latter. Ritual must be analysed as a domain by itself; less closely related to language proper, than to certain para-linguistic communication channels, e.g. gesture, bodily behaviour, systems of dress and adornment, exchange systems and so forth. Leach has rightly asserted that there is an element of 'ritual' in virtually all behaviour (Leach 1964, p.13) if ritual is understood in this sense i.e. as the communicative aspect of behaviour.

The tabular diagram is, by itself, highly incomplete as a summary of the information needed to interpret ida. Each of the 'rows' and 'columns' of the table has associative relations, not only within the context of ida itself, but also outside it: i.e. references to the general social and cultural context. Thus, although ida is predominantly a non-verbal ritual, everything in ida has a name, and these names are also the names of objects in the outside world. Moreover, these names can be grouped in classes and analysed in the manner shown in Chapter 3 (on 'Language and Symbolism'). Similarly, the actors who play ritual roles in ida are also individuals who have other, non-ritual, roles in mundane social life. Finally the time-dimension of ida is related not only to the overall temporal continuum, but also to specific temporal relationships and processes internal to the society: i.e. to the life-cycle of the individual, inter-

generational relationships, as well as to the life-cycle as it is seen in nature (the annual cycle and the life-cycle of trees etc.).

### iii. Ida and Fertility

Though this might be an appropriate point to proceed directly to the analysis of the individual ritual figures, I should first say something about the significance of ida as a whole. In the previous chapter I mentioned that Umeda rituals fall into two main classes, namely, curing rituals and fertility rituals of which ida is one.

Curing rituals I have left completely out of this account; the symbolism of Umeda curing ritual bears little relation to the symbolism of ida. Umeda fertility ritual consists of (a) garden ritual (for garden firing, planting and harvesting), (b) minor sago ritual (magic to ensure a plentiful starch content in a palm about to be felled) and (c) major sago ritual, including ida and the rituals associated with it (i.e. the hunting ritual during the period of preparation of food supplies for ida, rites to obtain ochre etc.). Now though the only overt motive I ever received for performing the ritual was that ida 'made the sago come up quickly' the connection between ida and sago fertility was at best rather vague. Other informants were equally prepared to say that ida 'came from the ancestors' or that it was just 'play' (modes). It rather depended upon the context of the enquiry which of several answers would be received. The most explicit statement of the relation between ida and sago-fertility I received from my informant Auyai when we were both alone, actually at a sago-working site. Typically



Auyai imputed the efficacy of ida as a ritual to increase sago, not to the dancing, public ritual and so forth, but to the subsidiary magical operations of the old men, magic of which both he and I were largely ignorant. On the other hand informants regarded two specific symbolic acts forming part of ida - the 'hand-plunging ceremony' and the firing of the ipele arrows - as being directly concerned with fertility; the first with sago-fertility and the second with the fertility of the bush in general; but they never elaborated on this aspect of ida. On the other hand the symbolism of ida is pervaded by references to fertility and natural processes in general; not only plant fertility but also very specifically to human fertility. BUT nobody ever said that ida directly induced human fertility, and when this was suggested to them by me they merely looked embarrassed and denied it. Human reproduction (as opposed to sexuality) was a taboo subject among the young men with whom I mainly associated, and older informants tended to be secretive or facetious. I hardly expected any other response. Agreement on the part of my uneasy informants would merely have indicated deference to the superior white man, meaning nothing.

I will return to the question of Umeda ideas concerning fertility and reproduction later; here I wish only to reiterate a point made above, namely that Umeda informants were in certain ways culturally conditioned against being explicit on certain issues, including those issues which are fundamental to the symbolism of ida. But this does not mean that ida must be dismissed as 'meaningless' behaviour; behaviour

so highly structured could hardly be meaningless. I would argue that for the actors the 'meaning' of ida was expressed and interpreted in and through the categories of ritual behaviour itself which formed a self-contained system. The taboo on explicitness where certain fundamental symbols were concerned preserved the integrity of this self-contained system.

In many parts of New Guinea, not to mention other parts of the world, one finds among men a certain deep-seated intellectual and emotional reserve, or ambivalence, where the reproductive capacities and functions of women are concerned. I have already mentioned this phenomenon as it is manifested in Umeda male attitudes. I do not wish to enter into the reasons for this attitude, they are numerous and complex; here I merely wish to stress the fact that in the case of an admitted 'fertility' ritual, such as ida, the existence of this attitude contributes markedly to the unwillingness of informants to venture any explicit statements as to the meaning of ritual symbols in ida. (It is a notable fact that Umeda exegesis of curing ritual was much richer than the exegesis of ida, though the rites themselves are less complex - precisely because, perhaps, curing ritual did not raise the issue of reproductivity).

Because of the fact that, by the very nature of its 'subject matter', Umedas did not consciously formulate its meaning, or would not willingly express such a formulation, it is necessary to appeal to external evidence - i.e. the observer's model - not only to interpret the details of the ritual but even to decide the general themes around which it

is built. As I have mentioned, the ritual is connected in a general way (and in the case of certain details fairly specifically) with sago-fertility. But I do not think that it is adequate to say that ida as a whole is oriented solely to this particular preoccupation.

First of all, there is no observable shortage of sago palms ready for processing under present conditions. Though I cannot substantiate this, I was assured on all sides that the quantities of sago available were ample. Thus there seems no reason to suppose that ida directly expresses a feeling of 'anxiety' about future sago supplies. It is true that this lack of anxiety may be a new phenomenon; previously the danger of attack may have greatly restricted the area in which sago stands could be safely exploited, with consequent anxiety over the availability of 'safe' supplies. Informants were aware of this factor, but were more inclined to stress decreasing population as the cause of the present abundance of sago.

Umedas see their sago stands (justly) as their heritage from preceding generations; they inherit sago planted by their fathers, and father's fathers etc., stands once established continuously regenerating themselves. Accordingly, with a certain logic, they describe their ancestors as being chronically short of sago. I was told by an informant that the ancestors used to pound only a tiny quantity of pith each day (four or five inches instead of two or three feet of sago-log) in order to conserve supplies. They were always hungry.

Despite its prima facie plausibility I am inclined to



regard this account as mythical, though I have no demographic evidence either way. There is no evidence to suggest recent population decline (such as abandoned hamlets etc.). In the absence of any remembered catastrophes, it would be reasonable to suppose that overall population has remained stable (at a rather low level) for many generations; since almost all the population are regarded as autochthonous, not recent immigrants from elsewhere. (At the same time, due to the small size of the basic social units, an impression of extreme demographic vulnerability results from the fact that demographic accident can virtually obliterate a clan or even a hamlet in a couple of generations - the doubling in size of such a unit; which is equiprobable, if not so dramatic). A demographic study might reverse this verdict, but I am inclined to think that the reiterated Umeda complaint that the population was in decline; that the ancestors were numerous (as the stars in the sky) while the present inhabitants are but few, is simply an aspect of the general principle which governs Umeda beliefs about the ancestors and the past in general: namely that whatever is the case now - the opposite was the case then.<sup>1</sup> (For instance I was told that the ancestors

1. A special kind of funny story elaborates upon the 'inverted' behaviour of the ancestors. I was told in Sowanda that, in the Ancestral period, the birds walked about on the ground and in order to kill them the ancestors climbed the coconut palms and knocked the birds out by dropping nuts on them!

|      |              |             |                          |
|------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| NOW  | terrestrial  | arboreal    | cultural weapon (arrow)  |
| man  | kills bird   | with        |                          |
| THEN | arboreal     | terrestrial | natural weapon (coconut) |
| NOW  | (from below) |             |                          |
| THEN | (from above) |             |                          |



planted sago in the village and coconuts in the bush: they had a look and said 'that's not right!' and switched them round the way they are now: coconuts in the village and sago in the bush).

The belief that the ancestors were short of sago (and abundantly provided with meat) is to be explained in this way: because sago is now plentiful and meat scarce therefore in ancestral times sago was scarce and meat plentiful. Similarly, with the belief that previously the population was greater than it is now: Umedas have probably been too few for their liking at all times, not just at the present time.

The point of this digression has been to make the simple point that it is probably not the case that ida developed directly in response to a widespread anxiety about sago-supplies. Ida cannot be 'functionally' explained as a response to anxiety (it is not 'magic' in the sense of Malinowski's 'Magic Science and Religion' 1954). The fact that sago is plentiful does not of course rule out 'anxiety' altogether - after all the rites are performed. If ida is performed, and ida promotes sago, and sago is plentiful - that just shows how effective ida is. That was the attitude taken by Auyai when I was discussing this topic with him at the sago-site. But the relation between anxiety and ritual cannot be considered as one of simple cause and effect; and we have the familiar counter-argument of Radcliffe-Brown's ('Magic the Cause of Anxiety') to consider as well. (Radcliffe-Brown 1962, p.146).

Umedas were not, I said, obviously anxious about future sago supplies; they were, on the other hand, quite openly anxious concerning the paucity of the population, their demographic vulnerability. Human fertility, not plant fertility, is the basic anxiety if there is one; but, as I said earlier, human fertility is a taboo topic among males and is not overtly the theme of any public ritual. Moreover, as I described in Chapter 3 human beings and trees are intimately connected in symbolic terms. Plant fertility and human fertility are not separate domains (the mechanisms of one are the mechanisms of the other as we shall see) but while plant fertility can be given overt ritual expression, concern with human fertility must remain implicit. Does a ritual preoccupation with sago-fertility mask a more vital concern with human fertility? I am inclined to think so.

Arguably it is the very fact that sago is plentiful that makes it a symbol of fertility in a more general sense.

One further reason for doubting that ida directly reflects any anxiety about sago is the fact that ida can only be performed when sago is plentiful, and that the amassing of supplies of sago-flour in the period prior to the performance involves extra-heavy use of available sago supplies. Thus it is the fact that sago is already in plentiful supply that makes a performance of ida possible, which argues against the supposition that anxiety about sago is expressed or assuaged by the ritual. If sago production was hampered by social disruption (as happened when men were imprisoned in 1967-68) ida could not be performed. Ida

celebrates productivity, which is in turn underpinned by the natural abundance of sago.

These arguments taken together make me think that ida is a 'fertility ritual' only in a very qualified sense; it is about fertility, but is not I think linked to a specific anxiety about sago in particular, or even about human fertility in an overt way. Ida cannot be considered a magical act with a precise goal in view, even though certain details of the ritual can be interpreted in this way. It reflects a generalised concern with natural and human fertility (perhaps it would be better to say 'regeneration') which contains elements of anxiety, repression of overt representation and so forth, but is not, in the last resort, dominated by them. It is also a celebration of the normal, the processes of natural and social regeneration which are part and parcel of ongoing social existence, however much certain aspects of these processes may be repressed. A performance of ida sets the seal of 'normality' on the year; in 'normal times' ida is performed and a great part of productive work and food-getting (i.e. 'normal economic activity') is oriented to the eventual performance, the festival season. As a fertility ritual ida does not promote fertility so much as 'normalise' it, that is to say ida is an acting out of the processes of natural and social regeneration in such a way as to place those processes in a framework of symbolic categories. It is an act of participation in these processes; a dramatic performance which runs in parallel to the performances mounted by nature herself.



Finally it may be noted that just as 'rites of passage' often have elements of 'fertility ritual' in them (e.g. the Bemba 'Chisungu' female initiation rite described by Richards 1956 : esp. pp.106-7): so this fertility ritual very manifestly has elements of a 'rite of passage' in it - the ritual roles are analogous to grades in an initiatory hierarchy as will be explained further below. It is not only human fertility which is at issue in ida, but the entire regeneration of society through replacement of senior by junior generations. Ida is a 'rite of passage' an annual ceremony marking social transitions. This is not part of the overt meaning attached to ida, just as human fertility is not, but I hope that I will be able to demonstrate that it is essential to an understanding of ida nonetheless. Let me turn at once to the demonstration.

#### iv. The Cassowaries (eli sabbra)

The reader will recall certain features that were stressed in the description in the previous chapter of 'the night of the cassowaries': the orgiastic tone of the proceedings, the prevailing sense of excitement and of mystery, the effect of the darkness, the flickering torches, the wild leaping and gyrating of the two black-painted masked dancers and the presence of the two red-painted <sup>molin</sup>~~induatamwa~~ fish played by neophytes. At no other point in ida does the level of pure excitement or 'effervescence' reach the level that it attains at this time, though there are moments of more solemn intensity. This feeling of excitement is very relevant to the interpretation of the role of eli, the cassowary.



I said just now that ida contains in it elements of a 'rite de passage': rites which are marked frequently by the withdrawal of one section of the community into the bush. Here we have what is really the reverse process: rather than withdraw into the bush the villagers stay where they are and the bush comes to the village. This is accompanied by a degree of suspension of the rules that normally govern social intercourse, and a sense of 'communitas' (to use Turner's word: Turner 1969): heightened sociability accompanied by a reduction in social differentiation (e.g. in normal times visitors in a 'foreign' hamlet will sit together in a group usually under the house of a maternal kinsman: but spectators at the night dance sit down higgledy-piggledy exchanging tobacco, areca and food-stuffs). Paradoxically this can result in people behaving more aggressively than they would otherwise be prone to do, since the probability of serious offence being taken is less. Part of the excitement generated on this occasion is the feeling of potential violence in the air, which, as I described earlier, could result in unpleasant incidents. The occasion is, in short, a species of saturnalia, with the two cassowaries cast in the role of Lords of Misrule.

I hardly need to say that the cassowary is a large flightless bird, and is seen as a 'bird' by the inhabitants themselves.<sup>1</sup> The local species is the large lowland variety with black plumes. The male cassowary is yapa: and the eli

1. Cf. the situation among the Keram, for whom the cassowary is 'not a bird' (Bulmer 1967).

dancers are said to be yapa: another word kwi also means cassowary (of either sex) but is not applied to the dancers. Yapa also means 'preying mantis' (seen as male) and yapud is the class term for poisonous centipedes and scorpions (?) which can inflict very serious bites. Yapaksa means 'male possum' (vs. mie = female possum).

Thus yapa (male cassowary) appears to fall into a larger class of masculine/aggressive animals. This would be consonant with the actual characteristics of male cassowaries, for these are extremely aggressive birds. They fight among themselves over females, and both sexes defend themselves very effectively with their spurs when cornered. They are also the largest animals in the Umeda environment, with the exception of pigs, and certainly the tallest. They are, moreover, excessively feral, which distinguishes them sharply from pigs (even wild pigs). Cassowaries are found only in the deep bush, away from all habitation sites and gardens, while pigs haunt the village itself and are very much in evidence in garden areas where they are mainly hunted. Young pigs may be captured and semi-domesticated, but this is never done with young cassowaries (despite the fact that it would be quite feasible and is often done in other parts of New Guinea). In the deep bush the signs of the recent presence of cassowaries (in the form of tracks in soft ground and regurgitated food remains) are omnipresent, yet the bird itself is rarely seen, and still more rarely taken by even the most experienced hunters. Its heavy bone structure makes it difficult to kill outright with an arrow, and it will usually outrun its

hunter before dying of its wounds. It is perhaps this quality which explains a dream-augury associated with the cassowary: 'to dream of a cassowary means that your bow will break and you will not be able to hunt'. The cassowary is the negation of hunting - this theme will re-appear later in the analysis.

The cassowary, above all, is a game animal, a creature of the wild, of the deep bush. There is a myth of the cassowary which is of extreme importance in interpreting the role of the cassowary in ida. This myth is the Umeda myth of the origin of Punda, the affinal village. According to this myth, the Umeda ancestors hunted and slew a cassowary in the forest; the cassowary died on the present site of pwida hamlet. Its bones turned into men and its blood and flesh turned into women, the ancestors of the people of Punda. (These are the people who are now 'eaten' by the Umedas). This myth, though short, is informative since it associates the cassowary definitively with marriageables/fightables, that is, with awk. This idea links up with the designation avalna ('of the mothers') which as I said before is applied to the cassowary dancers. (This designation, it should be noted, does not imply that the cassowary actually is a mother - it is emphatically male - but that it belongs to the mothers more or less as an emblem). The point is that the mothers are originally awk: their origin lies 'in the bush' as was explained earlier. Women come into the system from outside, and their daughters (mol) move out of the system into the outside world. I will return to the avalna/molna opposition as it applies to the ritual



figures participating in the first night of ida, below, here I merely wish to establish the essential characteristics of the cassowary.

The cassowary yapa is masculine and aggressive in an anti-social way. A myth of the origins of cassowaries stresses this anti-social character. Cassowaries were originally gouria pigeons (subof). The largest of the local flighted birds. Once a baby gouria pigeon fought with its siblings in the nest. The aggressive chick was ejected: falling to the ground it walked about and became the first cassowary. The extreme wildness and shyness of cassowaries fits in with this picture: an anti-social bird which shuns bird society and man too. The cassowary is a game species, the most highly prized of all in the respect for meat and plumes, and the most difficult to kill. Being a game species fits with the mythological identification of cassowary with awk-agwayie outsiders and affines (Pundas). Finally it should be remarked that the cassowary is black and hairy (ta = hair/feathers, yapata : black cassowary plumes). These last two qualities will be discussed elsewhere.

#### Age and Social Autonomy

In Umeda, the older a man became the more 'autonomous' he became (in the sense in which this word is used by K. E. Read (1959)). By this I mean that as men became older, they were under decreasing pressure to conform to certain standards of behaviour (which are rigidly applied where younger men are concerned). With increasing age comes social and economic independence, neither of which



the bachelors, as a class, possessed; though the bachelors were free of the responsibilities that this increasing autonomy imposed on older men. I have described the married man/bachelor opposition at some length in an earlier chapter: here it is only necessary to recapitulate certain outstanding features of the situation. First bachelors are theoretically chaste (sexual restraint) while married men are uxorious and, in terms of the standard stereotype, adulterous as well (sexual autonomy). Secondly bachelors are ascetic hunters, providing the meat that others will eat and themselves only feeding on what they can get from their elders. Married men are economically self-sufficient, having their own gardens (tended by women), and women to process their sago and cook it. Their productivity is tied to the family production/consumption routine, rather than 'prestige' economic activity (i.e. hunting). Thus they are economically autonomous. Finally they are socially autonomous: whereas the bachelors are subject to their authority, and subject to their harangues if they contravene the norms of bachelor behaviour, the senior men are subject to no authority - they can please themselves. This autonomy of older men means that they can virtually secede from society, since the family productive unit is self-sustaining. This independence is manifested in their dress and manners, which contrast with those of the bachelors. The older married men were often naked and unkempt; the younger men and bachelors adhered punctiliously to the wearing of a penis-gourd (peda), kept their hair and beard well-trimmed (the latter no more than the discreetest patch of stubble below

the jaw), and ornamented themselves with woven chestbands, pigs' teeth, feathers, ferns, beads and so forth. They washed frequently and wore perfumed leaves. When in the company of their elders, the bachelors tended to behave in a restrained manner, while older men often got up to incredible antics when in company to keep people amused. The most notable jesters and practical jokers (modestod 'joke-men') were all fairly old. (Among the young men there were some evidently destined for this role later in life, but they only engaged in such performances when older men were not present).

In short the norms and observances of social life bore much more heavily on the younger men than they did on the older men. The younger men were in a competitive situation; they had to prove themselves to the society at large, and to their prospective wife-givers, as hunters (and previously as warriors), and they had also to achieve their own self-respect through adequacy in the competitive bachelor role. Needless to say, too, they had to compete among themselves, both for wives and for the favours of married women; their attention to personal beauty and adornment was both an abstract exercise in self-perfection, and a lure to feminine attention. What made the older men autonomous, was, fundamentally, that they no longer had to compete in the social arena; they could escape from the society altogether living with their wives and families in the bush for long periods at a time, a law unto themselves.<sup>1</sup>

1. Dr. J. B. Loudon once pointed out to me in conversation that this is equally true of anthropologists who have been members of the profession for a certain number of years as contrasted with pushing young bachelor-anthropologists like myself.

We are now in a position to bring together these two aspects of the role of cassowary at ida; for it will be seen that the cassowary represents certain aspects of human existence, a certain 'style' of life appropriate to, and associated with, the senior married men; the very category of men from among whom, in theory, the dancer of the cassowary role is drawn.

The cassowary is a man: this is the open secret which lies at the heart of ida. This is to be seen most clearly in the 'secret' name of the ritual cassowaries, the name which is hidden from women and small children - eli sabbra 'the two eli'. Eli is an archaic form of the common word edi meaning 'man'; i.e. the 'secret' name of the two cassowaries is 'the two men'. Thus the dancer who plays the cassowary role is not engaging in simple mimicry of a bird species; the aspect of mimicry and the disguising of normal human characteristics is openly spoken of by men as a 'trick' (modes) played on women and children who are 'theologically' regarded as not being in the know. The trappings of the bird disguise the humanity of the man, but only in so far as this disguise permits the expression of certain facets of human existence, which, other than in this disguised form, cannot be openly expressed.

By adopting the ritual disguises of cassowaries, a means is provided for men to express certain personal values - a certain relationship to the total society - which contradicts the overt norms which apply at other times. The cassowary is spoken of as sahanam 'bad, terrible' in terms of evident admiration; a local idiom which is also found in



the Pidgin usage of 'negut' to mean 'no good and/or very good indeed'. Sahanam as applied to the cassowaries has an implication both of genuine 'badness' and an appreciation of the personal satisfaction and social prestige which the acting out of this 'badness' brings to the performer. Here we return to the theme of 'autonomy' as it is found in K. Read's article (1959 : 427). For Read the 'autonomous' Gahaku-Gama 'big man' is the individual who places himself, to some extent, apart from the overriding values of the society, the better to manipulate them: certain 'big men' actually described themselves to Read as 'bad' men (ibid : 434), very much, I suggest, in the sense that the cassowary-role is said to be 'bad'. In the present case, we are not dealing with the political role of the New Guinea 'big man' (I have said in Chapter 1 that this kind of authority is little developed in Umeda) but I feel nonetheless that the same underlying situation - the 'de-centering'<sup>1</sup> of the individual from the axis of social structure is involved in both cases. In the Gahnku-Gama case this is only achieved by 'big men', while in the relatively much more flexible society of Umeda it is always implicit in the position of the socially autonomous senior men. The autonomy of senior men, though implicit in Umeda social structure is nonetheless in contradiction with it, a denial of the restrictive influence of those principles of social behaviour which bear more heavily on the bachelors: sexual restriction, economic and social dependency, competition for individual

1. The term is Piaget's: see Piaget 1971. He uses it in a different context, and perhaps also a different sense.



prestige. Now this derestriction of the mature individual, is also, I argue, a 'de-centering' of the individual from the axis of society - this can be seen in physical terms as a removal from the neighbourhood of the village itself - indeed one stereotype of the 'autonomous' man is the 'bush' man who lives independently in his bush house with his family apart from the society at large. This sociological de-centering can be stated only as a tendency - in reality mature adults do not reject society outright or behave in a totally independent way, remaining always residually attached to the values identified with bachelorhood, and to the village society. Only in the ritual performance of the cassowary role is this de-centering given full expression, and only then by the paradoxical means of (a) disguising the human identity of the actor, and (b) not by leaving the social arena and becoming a 'wild' creature, but by adopting the person of a 'wild' creature (the cassowary) and performing in the privileged arena of ida (Fig. 32).

I must be very careful what I say at this point: it should not be thought that any overt identification exists between the class of married men and the class of wild creatures, such as cassowaries: men are, and remain, identified with the 'central' (ed) axis of the society: the identification that is expressed in the cassowary role is only implicit, not explicit. The cassowary role represents a limiting case, humanity in its 'wild' form in need of 'domestication'. As such it offers to the individual who undertakes it an opportunity to give symbolic expression to a degree of autonomy, which in real life is found only as an

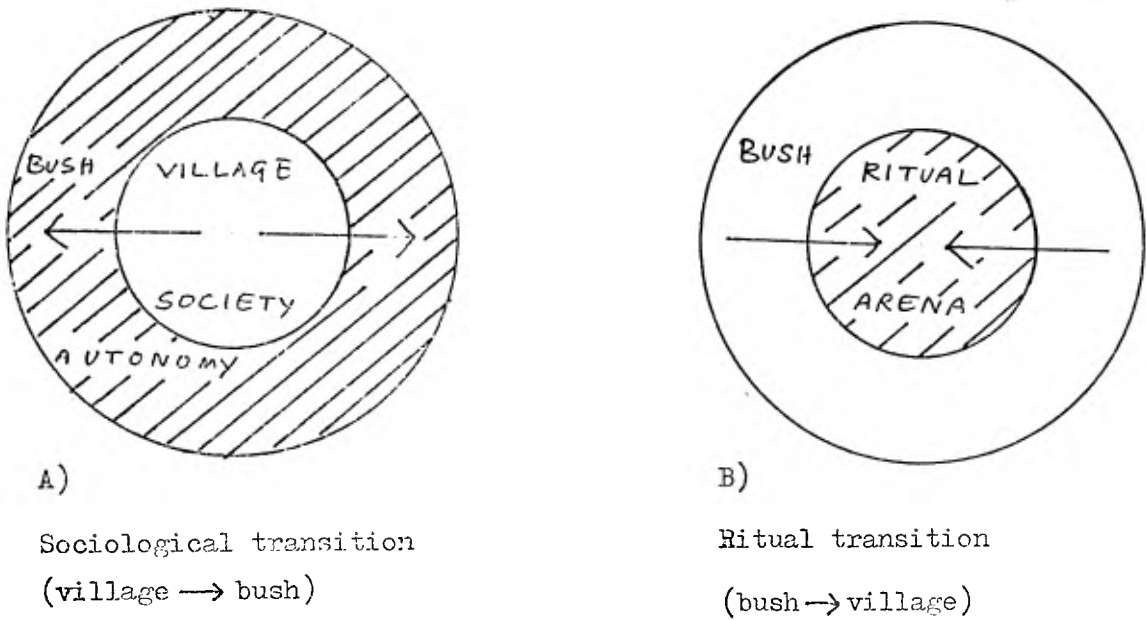


fig 32 RITUAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL MOVEMENT BETWEEN VILLAGE AND BUSH

empty possibility, unrealisable, and indeed quite undesirable in practice.

v. The attributes of the eli

(a) Introduction

In the foregoing section I have attempted to sketch in what I consider to be the background information necessary for the interpretation of the cassowary role. Now I wish to focus attention on the specific attributes of the cassowary role that I have summarised on the first column of the tabular diagram (Table 5). How do these attributes fit in with the picture given so far? This is best done

through a comparison of the eli and the molnatamwa who accompany their dancing on the first night of ida. Comparing the columns showing the attributes of these figures (eli/molnatamwa) it is apparent that they are contrasted along every dimension shown except that of 'time of appearance'. Here are the most important contrasts (Table 6).

|       | <u>eli</u> (cassowary) | <u>Molnatamwa</u>                   |
|-------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mask  | <u>ageli</u>           | <u>tarwa</u>                        |
| Paint | black                  | red                                 |
| Penis | <u>nedasuh-oktek</u>   | <u>veda</u>                         |
| Bow   | ---                    | present                             |
| Dance | wild, independant      | restrained, single-file (+children) |
| Actor | mature man             | neophyte                            |

Table 6. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE ELI

The molnatamwa 'the fish of the daughters' are a distinctly subsidiary role, despite their usefulness for the purposes of analysis. (They only appeared at Umeda; in performances of ida at Punda, Sowanda and Waina, there were no molnatamwa). Their role is essentially complimentary to that of the eli themselves, and, as the eli prestigious, so the molnatamwa are insignificant. However, by looking at the eli/molnatamwa complementarity, one can see how highly structured the attributes of the eli are; they are by no means arbitrary, nor indeed are they imitative of the cassowary as it is in nature; rather the attributes of the eli can be seen individually as each one 'pole' of a sequence of binary oppositions (black/red, pedasuh/peda, no bow/bow, etc.) each of which conveys a distinct signification. Each of these attributes must be taken in turn, though consideration of some of them must be delayed until further material has been introduced. Then, from the composite picture built up from these individual significative dimensions an overall understanding of the meaning of ida may be deduced.

(b) Penis

Let us consider first of all the oppositions eli vs. molnatamwa/pedasuh vs. peda/mature man vs. neophyte. I have published an article on this elsewhere (Gell 1971) some of whose conclusions may be briefly recapitulated here.

The ceremony whereby the neophyte first assumes the peda was described in the previous chapter. Before this time the neophyte has gone naked (perhaps wearing shorts or a loincloth - while after the ceremony the youth will



persevere assiduously in wearing a peda as part of the bachelor 'style', only relinquishing it gradually and intermittently as he grows older, marries, and acquires a family. In old age he will go naked once more.

The peda figures therefore as an emblem of the sexual status of bachelors: when more mature men don the peda they often do when in public i.e. spectating at a festival or participating in village affairs - they are reverting to the habits and standards of their bachelor days. When engaged in the life of an independent paterfamilias, living in the bush and leading and supervising the family productive unit, they are most commonly naked. Bachelors preserve the peda even when in the bush, being under strong pressure to do so, removing it only when essential. Now when the neophyte goes through the ceremony of donning the peda he is assuming, not only the penis-gourd, but also the whole gamut of duties and observances incumbent upon bachelorhood. Although the ritual marks a social recognition that the youth is past puberty and sexually mature, it will be noted that the spell recited by the officiants refers in no way to the sexual activity of the neophyte, but exclusively to his hunting capability. This is a direct reflection of the hunting/copulation antithesis which has already appeared in various guises. The conjunction of 'assuming the peda' and 'assuming the hunting way of life' is significant, especially if it is realised that successful hunting is the antithesis of sexuality; or rather that hunting is repressed or sublimated sexuality. Then it can be seen that the ceremony of placing the peda is both the social recognition

that the youth is now sexually mature, and also the physical 'blocking off' - by means of the imposition of an artefact - of the disapproved route by which that sexuality might manifest itself.

But there are certain ambiguities here: the peda though emblematic of 'repressed' sexuality is, nonetheless an explicit indicator of sexual capability in the non-sublimated sense: peda is used, metonymically, to mean 'penis' as well as penis-sheath, and to refer to 'sexual' parts of plants (flowers, stamens, aerial roots in particular). Peda is a nickname used in joking-relationships (between ZS and MB); it is, in short, a word used in all kinds of sexual, jocular and obscene contexts. Moreover, the peda is not exclusively the prerogative of the ideally 'repressed' bachelors, but is also worn by mature men on public occasions, i.e. is a property of sexually active men too, at least at times when their active sexuality is being played down as it is on public occasions (which are usually marked by a separation of the sexes and the temporary dissolution of husband-wife teams). Hence the peda has connotations which evoke both 'repressed' and 'active' sexuality. As an artefact the peda is intrinsically ambiguous since it hides the penis and blocks it off, but also conspicuously advertises the fact that the wearer is sexually mature. Only a contextual 'contrastive' analysis elucidates these ambiguities.

This is apparent in the comparison between the penis-sheaths worn by the cassowaries and molnatamwa respectively: the molnatamwa wearing the relatively 'repressed' gourd of

normal everyday wear, the cassowaries being distinguished by their extra-large pedasuh dance-gourds. The size, heaviness, colour (black) and relative elongation of the pedasuh gourd (as contrasted with the peda) mark it out as a 'phallic' exaggeration of the ordinary gourd, appropriate to the highly sexual eli role. (Later, in discussing the ipele, I shall explain the analogous but inverse coding of the 'ultra-repression' in terms of the treatment of the penis through the device of 'kynodesme'.

(c) Dance

The contrast in dance style as between cassowary and molnatamwa, mature man and neophyte, is no less informative. The cassowaries' dance is bold, violent and structureless, that of the molnatamwa restrained, measured and clearly defined. These latter preserve a single file formation throughout (as do all the 'fish' dancers) while the cassowaries dance independently of each other (autonomously one would say) occasionally linking hands. This is a significant detail - handholding is otherwise confined to female dancers. I would not label this 'trans-sexual' behaviour in the full sense. It does not imply any femininity in the cassowaries, but it does indicate, I think, a 'lateral' element in their behaviour, in the sense defined in Chapter 3. Women generally dance in pairs, holding hands. This reflects the basic identification of women and the 'lateral' dimension (they dance, it will be noted, on the sides of the arena) and their ideal quality of coming in pairs. Womens' dancing stresses the lateral dimension in another way too: namely, by the way in which the long tails (evede) of the



women's skirts, to which white cockatoo-down (ebata) is tied, are made to sway from side to side, revealing the thighs, which is, so to speak complementary to the 'vertical' up-down movement of the male 'phallic' dancing with the weighted pedasuh gourd. Both dances, male and female, are sexually provocative but in a symbolically contrasted fashion. The hand-holding of the cassowaries shares with the womens' dance the element of 'laterality' implicit in line abreast (as opposed to Indian file) dancing and hand-holding and identifies the cassowaries with the women in another way as well, in that handholding is confined to those characters who do not carry bows and arrows, a grouping into which the women, small children, and cassowaries all fall, and which excludes the 'fish' dancers. This opposition is significant.

In terms of dance style then, the cassowaries and molnatamwa are contrasted in a number of ways, all leading back to the essentially social oppositions between the actors who, at opposite poles of the ritual life-cycle, undertake these roles. The rigid discipline and restraint of the molnatamwa contrasts with the undisciplined exuberance of the cassowaries, the implicit sexual discipline of the peda gives way to the overt phallicism of the pedasuh dance (it will be recalled that the cassowary dancer's penis is supposed to grow to an enormous length during the night dance) while the autonomy of the cassowaries' wayward progress contrasts with the undeviating procession of the molnatamwa and the little boys in their retinue.



(d) Mask

Each of the attributes so far mentioned has served to underline the basic generational dichotomy which is implicit in the designations avalna 'of the mothers' (applied to the cassowaries) versus molna 'of the daughters' (which is applied to the neophytes). That the molnatamwa are identified with the junior generation is also shown by the fact that they parade at the head of the small boys of the village (the category they have just left but are still identified with). They are, so to speak, ritual representatives of the small boys and are, likewise, not yet ready to participate fully in ida (see below on the nemetod). The eli/molnatamwa opposition is, then, essentially an opposition between generations, and between the attributes associated with the senior and junior generations respectively. But I have not yet dealt with two of the most outstanding dimensions of contrast between these two figures: viz. the contrast of masks and of body paint style. Here the kinds of contrast involved broaden out, and hint at a whole cosmological system.

The cassowary mask, it will be recalled, is known as ageli (see previous chapter for description and explanatory diagram). Linguistically, the word breaks down into ag and eli; no combination could be more significant (or more in accord with the thesis advanced in Chapter 3). The segment ag has been discussed extensively; it occurs, consistently, as a marker of the 'feminine/lateral realm (e.g. agwa = woman, age = side, agea : arm, branch of tree etc. cf. Chapter 3 and Appendix I).

Consider the following group:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <u>li</u>                               | digging stick (large) ( <u>li</u> : any sizeable sapling or young tree cf. <u>ti</u> : tree).          |
| <u>eli</u>                              | cassowary dancer (cf. <u>edi</u> ). In Sonkanda dialect. <u>eli</u> : man (one also finds <u>eri</u> ) |
| <u>ali</u>                              | egg (the contents of which are seen as semen)  |
| <u>ali</u>                              | violent stinging nettle (vs. <u>Kaw</u> : mild variety).   |
| <u>ali-tod</u>                          | ritual figure, aggressive ogre   |
| <u>li-sue</u>                           | rainbow ( <u>li</u> + <u>sue</u> : fire)   |
| <u>eliehe</u>                           | blindworm inhabiting rotten interior of palms ( <u>eli</u> + <u>ehe</u> = rotten)                      |
| <u>-vli</u> , <u>-vle</u> , <u>-ele</u> | termination indicating 'leaves of' (tree species) e.g.   |
| <u>naveli</u>                           | Sago fronds ( <u>na</u> + <u>veli</u> )  |
| <u>ipele</u>                            | leaves of breadfruit ( <u>ip</u> + <u>ele</u> )  |
| <u>ipele</u>                            | ritual bowman (see below)  |
| <u>eneli</u>                            | flowers and young leaves of plants and trees   |
| <u>mosli</u>                            | small sapling ( <u>mos</u> + <u>li</u> )   |
| <u>tali</u>                             | testicles ( <u>ta</u> + <u>li</u> . <u>ta</u> : hair) also growing shoot (of coconut)                  |
| <u>ageli</u>                            | cassowary dancer's mask ( <u>ag</u> + <u>eli</u> ).  |

Certain consistent themes dominate this group, i.e. masculinity, phallicism. The digging-stick, li, is used in an overtly phallic manner in garden-planting ritual. A small aperture, with raised lips of compressed earth, is made in the centre of the garden. Magical substances, not necessary to enumerate here, are inserted into the hole and various spells are recited over it. Finally two strong

men equipped with heavy digging sticks about 6 feet long and weighing about 20 pounds or so, plunge these, li, again and again into the hole. Then magical plants are inserted to make the focus of the eventual garden. (Gardens are associated with women, their produce with agwibagwa the subterranean yam-woman). If this ritual use of li cannot be interpreted, then no ritual symbolism can be - it is only too obvious what is implied. Hence I think it is justified to think of li, the central member of the class of li-words listed above, as strongly marked with phallic implications. Now in this list of li- words there are a number which are of direct relevance to the discussion of ida. Eli is, as I noted above, the 'secret' name of the cassowary, ageli is the name of the cassowary mask. The most notable feature of this mask are four arms, or branches (age) bearing bushy sago-fronds - naveli - another li-word.

The question to be considered now is: exactly what is implied by the conjunction of aq + eli in the ageli mask? One striking feature of the ageli mask is the decided lack of direct resemblance to the cassowary as it is in nature - there is hardly any correspondence at this level at all, unless it be a vaguely bushy appearance, dark on top and paler underneath, like the cassowary's plumage. The Umedas could make a very realistic cassowary since there are ample supplies of real cassowary plumes in the possession of the villagers, yet these are not used to make the mask, dark sago fronds and white crown-material of pandanus (hubnab) being substituted. This markedly 'unrealistic' style of the mask suggests that



the 'reference to the world' made by the mask must be understood in a more general frame of reference than simple imitation of the plumage of the bird-species.

Actually the mask deserves to be called highly 'realistic' by the standards of most ceremonial mask styles - but only if one rids one's mind entirely of the notion that it is a cassowary that is represented thereby. I was myself blinded by this idea (as I suspect the Umedas are also) and it was not until I had attended quite a number of performances of ida - by which time I was already half-way to an interpretation - that I suddenly became aware that I was looking, not at an 'unrealistic' cassowary, but at a perfectly explicit (though somewhat formalised) representation of a tree, complete in every detail. I looked again, rubbing my eyes - and could no longer be in any doubt as to what I was seeing.

#### vi. Man Into Tree

At this point it is necessary to refer back to the discussion, in the chapter on language, of the segment di or ti vs. ag as indicative of masculinity/centrality vs. femininity/laterality. It was demonstrated there that a consistent set of oppositions (ti, ag, no) marks a parallelism between tree-structure (tree: ti, branch, agea and mov: fruit) the structure of the body (edite: heart, agea: arm, mol: vulva) and the structure of society (tia: husband, agwai: wife, mol: daughter). These themes are faithfully reflected in the structure of the ageli mask, a model of a tree which almost aspires to being a model of the total society, borne, suitably enough, on the experienced shoulders



of a senior man. Let us examine this mask in detail.

The core of the mask is the body of the eli dancer himself (Eli <sup>Edi</sup>li ti).

Thus the central (male, phallic) axis of the total assemblage is the male actor corresponding to the trunk (ti, li) of the hypothetical tree. Round this core is wrapped a cone of ehov sog (underbark of gnetum gnemon) a peripheral layer: moreover a layer with 'feminine' connotations, since ehov sog is otherwise used for making women's blankets, worn by women to cover their backs, but never by men. To sog (underbark) I may add certain other words which can serve to underline this point:

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <u>sog</u>    | bark, underbark (used by women to make bark cloth and string for net bags etc.)                                    |
| <u>sogwa</u>  | bow (made of bark of black palm) ( <u>sog</u> + <u>wa</u> )  |
| <u>sogwa</u>  | black palm (small palm sp. with tough woody bark)  |
| <u>suog</u>   | female sexual secretions   |
| <u>suogwa</u> | ( <u>suog</u> + <u>agwa</u> ) <u>vagina dentata</u> ogress inhabiting the black palm. Keeps a snake in her vagina. |

If the ti axis was masculine, one might expect that sog, the peripheral covering or sheath of the tree might be feminine in connotation - let us not go into too much detail about possible physiological analogies. This proves to be the case: the processing of underbark (for bark-cloth and net-bags) is entirely a female occupation. It is worth remembering too, that bark produces latex (called nene = milk) and resins (called tov = blood) both of which

have feminine implications - 'milk' is obviously feminine, while blood also has feminine connotations in mythical contexts; tov (blood) is a female personal name, for instance. By contrast to (female) nene : latex/milk and tov : resin/blood, sap, which exudes from the heart of the wood, not from its peripheral layer, is called hsas (semen)<sup>1</sup>. Finally, a further secretion which can be added to the list is suog, whose similarity to sog is no accident, in my opinion.

A curious additional confirmation of the idea being advanced here (the femininity of bark as opposed to wood) can be gained from a consideration of the seemingly anomalous word sogwa meaning 'black palm' or 'bow' - these being made from the tough springy bark of this palm species. Sogwa breaks down into sog plus wa. Wa is a segment found consistently in contexts of 'force' or 'power' (see below e.g. tamwa, wata). Also associated with the black palm is an ogress suogacwa (sog/suog).

I mention all this partly to introduce a personal experience I had while working with the Umedas, which I found curiously illuminating, because it epitomises the way in which sensory and symbolic reality interact, and occasionally interfuse with one another. One day I went with Boyer, an informant, to fell black palm (sogwa) to make a bow. We cut a number of palms without finding one

1. One kind of sap, the sugary exudations that sago shoots produce when cut has a special name yise. This is directly related to vis, sago jelly. It is compared with semen and is used in love magic as an attractant.

of suitable quality, till eventually we felled one which looked very promising. The palm, an old one, had rotted away internally, leaving a tubular cavity inside which was inhabited by ants. This cavity was exposed when the palm fell. My companions set about further dismembering the palm when suddenly they dropped their axes and knives and stood back.

From the depth of the cavity there uncoiled a long, purplish-pink, snake-like creature groping blindly into the light. It was, I think, a species of eyeless 'blind-worm' which lived on the ants - a distant relative of the English 'glass snake'. The behaviour of my informants was most uncharacteristic; ordinary snakes, including the most lethal, are boldly attacked and killed, yet there they stood, not so much afraid as disgusted by what they were looking at. None moved. It was at this point, as the pink worm slithered away into the undergrowth, that I recalled what I had been told about the ogress, suogawa, who lives in the branches of a sogwa palm and keeps a snake in her vagina. A moment of double vision supervened as I imposed the schema of mythical upon mundane reality: the evident embarrassment of my companions, confronted with that revolting self-propelled phallus was at once explained. What was the creature called I asked at once. 'Eliehe' replied my informant with an uneasy look. This cast a flood of light on the significance of the li segment, with which, at that time, I happened to be particularly concerned. Eliehe is eli plus ehe, which, in isolation, means 'rotten' or 'sick' (thus one gets ehe smav to feel sick or nauseated). Eliehe is thus the 'rotten' or 'putrid' exponent of eli,

the segment that is also applied to the 'phallic' cassowaries. The assemblage eliehe-plus-sogwa can be compared directly to the assemblage eli (cassowary dancer) plus sog (the underbark component of the cassowary mask) (fig. 33).

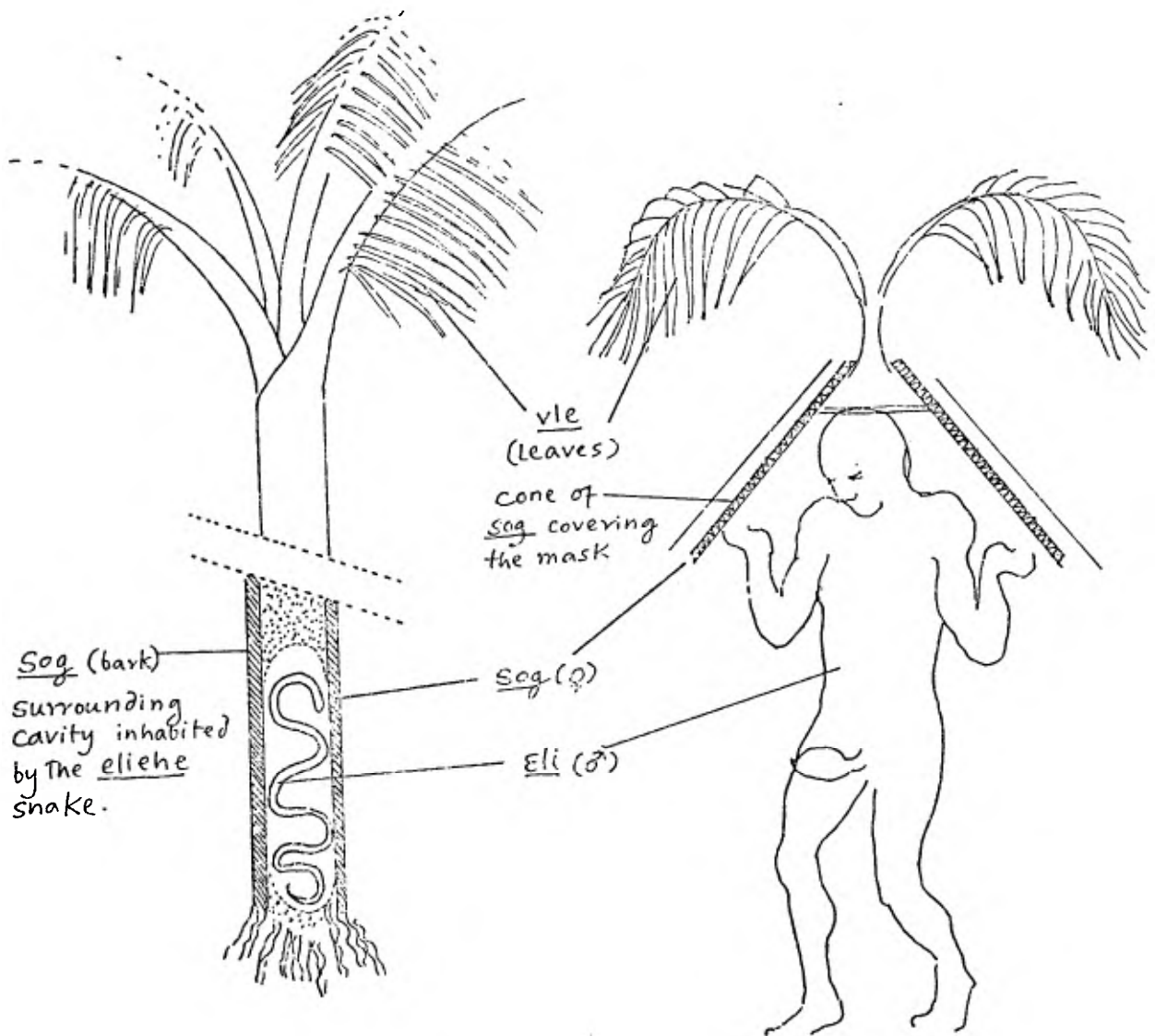


Fig 33

Eliehe



Considered in this light, using the clue afforded by the eliehe snake in the palm cavity, it is apparent that the relationship of eli (the dancer) to the cone of sog which forms the apron of the ageli mask is not an arbitrary constructional detail, but is informed with a covert meaning. The relation of container/thing contained between mask and dancer must be understood in terms of its sexual symbolism: the phallicism of the cassowary dance is not confined to the treatment of the dancer's penis, and the overtly sexual movements which pervade the dance itself, but is extended also to the relation of the dancer (the axis of the mask) and the enclosing form (which is the mask itself). This may explain a curious evaluation of one aspect of the cassowary role which I received from the lips of men who had performed it. Dancing the cassowary role is considered painful work, as indeed it must be, but I, at first, naturally assumed that the most tiresome aspect must have been the punishment suffered by the dancers' penis and testicles as a result of prolonged dancing with the heavy pedasuh gourd. Not so, in fact; the dancers assured me that the pain in the genital area was nothing to the pain and exhaustion felt in the neck and shoulders as a result of the 'heavy' (kini - the word also means 'pregnant') mask. Now the mask cannot be really heavy, though perhaps one should take these heroic performers at their word. At any rate it is interesting to note that it is in this region that the dancer suffers most in the pursuit of ritual prestige, which is also sexual prestige.

Over the sog forming the outer covering of the top of the cone, is a fringe of hubnab (greenish-white material from the wild pandanus). This corresponds to the 'crown' region of (palm) trees, from which indeed the material (nab) is derived. Thus it confirms the tree-mask homology. I will deal with mask fringes in another connection later, so I will say no more about this part of the mask here.

Round the narrow top of this cone are strung a necklace of subove, decorative yellow fruits. Their position corresponds exactly to the position of fruit stems on the common palms (i.e. coconuts, areca, limbum etc.). They thus confirm, once more, the tree-mask homology. Furthermore they relate directly to the schema mentioned above and discussed in the chapter on language whereby fruit = daughters. The father dances, laden with his symbolic offspring (though it is the undervalued women who dance with real children riding on their shoulders). The subove fruit add an element of bright colour to the otherwise rather monochrome mask. Subove is, in fact, not only the name of these fruits, but also a colour term of central importance for interpreting the colour-symbolism of ida. I shall return to this point later on.

Completing the mask are the four springy arms (agea) to which are tied bushy fronds of sago (naveli). These 'arms' naturally correspond to the branches of the 'tree' and, according to our 'sociological' interpretation of tree-symbolism, to the lateral element: i.e. to wives. One notes that they are arranged in symmetrical pairs round the centre male axis provided by the dancer himself. These

springy arms, which wave up and down, are the most conspicuous feature of the mask. They give the ageli mask, as compared with the other ritual masks, a distinct emphasis: lateral as opposed to vertical (compare the cassowary mask with the 'fish' masks). This is no accident. (Cf. below section  $\times \times$  ). Finally a similar interpretation can be given to the bushy fronds of sago naveli which complete the mask. The reader will have noticed that, in the class of li words there appears a number of suffixes (-vli, -ele) which indicate 'leaves of' a particular species. It would seem therefore that, like the other components of tree-structure that have made an appearance in this account, leaves can be fitted into a 'sociological' model of tree-structure. Leaves (and flowers: eneli) stand in opposition to fruit (movwi) as masculine to feminine. There is logic in this: leaves are phallic (in terms of the cassowary-mask leaves = feathers = hair), moreover, the mask is specially designed to make the fronds bob up and down, analogously to the penis of the dancer himself - whereas fruit (movwi) are reproductive, which leaves are not, and edible. We may oppose leaves and fruit to the trunk and branches of the tree as the filial generation of sons and daughters respectively, to the parent stock. Flowers, young shoots, leaves and saplings, etc., were explicitly seen by informants as the plant equivalents of the penis, and also as being like hair - which is also symbolic of masculinity. Another interesting linguistic association underlines the same point:

|                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| <u>ta</u>       | hair, feathers      |
| <u>tai</u>      | whisker/small shoot |
| <u>tali</u>     | shoot               |
| <u>tali/tai</u> | testicles           |

In the word tali the ta ('hair') class (cf. below ) and the aforementioned li class intersect, so to speak, to produce tali, whose meanings (shoot, testicles) correspond to this 'phallic' conception of hair transposed into the structure of plants.

The naveli on the ageli mask, therefore, refer to the generative capacity of the adult male who dances the role, as do the subove fruits. In fact, (completing the tree analogy) the dancer becomes a tree laden with bushy leaves, emblematic of innumerable sons.

Having looked at the ageli mask detail by detail, it is time now to look at the mask as a whole, so as to define its overall meaning. The mask, as I hope I have been able to demonstrate, gives expression to the analogies between the structure of trees and the structure of human society. It is this system of analogies which provides the categories for defining structural relationships, both where physical objects are concerned (plants and the human body) and equally for purely notional objects (i.e. the structure of society, and which motivates the constructional details of the mask. Thus the mask is not simply an imitation of the outward form of a cassowary, or even of a palm tree, but is rather a concrete representation of an abstract system of relationships, a generalised structural model of the society itself.

But to say this is to speak only at the most abstract level: when one considers the mask more concretely, it is



apparent that a specific emphasis is given to this generalised model of the society in the form of a tree, which leads back to the particular role the cassowary dancer in the overall sequence of events during ida.

There are two points to be made in this connection: firstly the general shape and dimensions of this mask form one pole of a continuum of which the opposite pole is the 'miniature' ipele mask, to be discussed in due course.

The ageli mask is wide, squat and bushy: in this it corresponds to the 'lateral' emphasis in the cassowary role that I noted above in connection with the dance-style of the cassowaries and their propensity to hold hands. This aspect is made still clearer when one comes to consider the materials of which the mask is made. These, without exception, come from the 'bush' realm (unlike the materials for the tamwa masks). Thus, not only is the ageli mask metaphorically associated with the bush (via the cassowary, the most feral of creatures, the origin of affines) but also metonymically, via the use of 'bush' materials, particularly sago fronds, in its construction.

#### vii. The Cassowaries and their Metamorphosis

Let me summarise a few of the outstanding points made in the foregoing sections, before I indicate the direction that I shall take in the subsequent analysis of ida.

The night of the cassowaries is an occasion of 'communitas' in Turner's sense; a temporary relaxation of normal social restraint: and to the dancers themselves it offers a unique opportunity for the expression of personal 'autonomy'; an abandonment, or rather a negation, of the

restrictive norms which control the public behaviour of bachelors and to a decreasing extent married men as well. The cassowaries give full, if symbolic, expression to a 'style of life', and of sexuality, which, in mundane terms, is visible only as a tendency, an autonomous mode of existence towards which senior men progressively incline without capitulating to it altogether. The symbolic expression of autonomous existence, autonomous (rather than sublimated) sexuality, is achieved through the identification of the dancer with the feral cassowary, a game animal of prime importance. But the identification of the dancer with the cassowary is only a disguise for the profounder identification of the cassowary with the man; the secret of the cassowary is that he is eli - a man.

The cassowary dancer is a man in his 'bush' modification; through the cassowary, he is identified with 'outsiders' (affines, matrikin). Similarly through the designation avalna 'of the mothers', he is categorised with outsiders, and also with the senior generation (vs. molna 'of the daughters'). The cassowary is identified with the bush realm, from which (so the women are told) he has come to dance in the village. That this identification is not entirely a joke is shown by the taboo which prevents the prospective cassowary dancer actually going into the bush during the months prior to the performance. Such is the identification of the dancer with the creatures of the wild, that it is said that if he went into the forest all the animal inhabitants would follow him wherever he went like the children following the pied piper of Hamelin.

In short, the eli dancer is identified with game, in opposition to the bachelors who are identified with hunting. The anti-hunting spirit of the prospective cassowary must not interfere with the hunting of younger men, as is believed would happen were he to enter the deep bush.

Through the analysis of the ageli mask we have also seen that the cassowary-dancer represents 'nature' in a generalised way: the eli is a man naturalised as a tree. The tree (which is metaphorically the total society) is characterised by a quality which, for want of a better word, I call 'florescence' i.e. it is fully developed, mature, reproductive: that is, at the apogee of its developmental cycle; just as 'autonomy' is the apogee of the developmental cycle in human terms. The qualities I have mentioned, 'florescence' and 'autonomy' stand in direct opposition to those which characterise the junior generation, the bachelors i.e. 'immaturity' and 'repression'. In terms of the events taking place on the first night of ida those characteristics are represented by the subsidiary molnatamwa figures danced by neophytes i.e. by individuals who have just attained the threshold of adult existence.

In the orgiastic atmosphere of the first night of ida the molnatamwa can play only a subsidiary role. The opposition between them (and the values which they represent) and the dominant primordial presence of the cassowaries is simply posited, without however, being mediated. The necessary mediation between the eli and the molnatamwa, between opposed generations, between autonomy and repression,



between sexuality and hunting, is only to be achieved over the course of the whole ritual; the 'style' exemplified by the moinatamwa only finding its apotheosis at the very end of the rites, in the figure of the ipele bowmen. In fact it will be possible to show how successive ritual figures appearing in ida represent a progressive departure from the stereotype of the cassowary, and a progressive approximation towards the stereotype of the ipele. This gradual process of modification or transformation of the attributes of the ali so as to produce the ipele is simultaneously the mediation of inter-generational relations, and a representation of the processes of bio-social regeneration. The cassowary, for all its pre-eminent ritual prestige, represents the terminal phase of bio-social processes; the florescent climax of the life-cycle, beyond which there is only gradual decline (this is given expression, partly, in the figures of the kwanugui; the 'old men' (see below). Moreover the 'style' of the cassowary points, by itself, not the renewal of the society, but to its total dissolution, to a victory for 'entropy' in the sense that this word has been used in sociological writing (e.g. Palandier 1971). The metamorphosis of the cassowary and the renewal of the society are therefore necessary; in ensuing sections I will attempt to show the direction this metamorphosis will take.

#### viii. The Ritual of Transitions

It is suitable that the appearance of the aba (sago) dancers, and the performance of the hand-plunging ceremony, should take place at dawn, the time of transition from



night to day. For this phase of ida is concerned, above all, with transitions, boundary-crossing: marking, as it does, the first stages in the metamorphosis of the cassowary.

There is a considerable degree of continuity between the role of the cassowaries and their successors, the aba: the mask is the same in both cases, and men who were to dance the latter role spoke of themselves as 'cassowaries', emphasising the continuity. However the aba role is less senior than that of the cassowaries themselves, and confers less prestige. The most obvious contrast between the aba and the cassowaries is in terms of body-paint: with the appearances of the colours of daylight, after the previous nocturnal darkness, there comes also an advent of colour into the body-paint style of the dancers.

Body-paint styles will be discussed in detail later on: here I may anticipate the analysis slightly by remarking on two aspects of the polychrome design of horizontal stripes which is standard for the aba dancers (see Fig. 25) both of which express the 'transitional' character of this ritual figure. First, the design, though polychrome, has a relatively high proportion of black design elements, and a relatively low proportion of red and yellow elements. Thus, in colour terms, it is 'transitional' between the black of the cassowary and the all-red ritual figures (e.g. molnatanwa, nemetod, ipele). Secondly the design emphasises the joints with dark bands. Given the 'transitional' meaning of the aba this emphasis on 'points of articulation' in the body is perhaps no accident (it is seen particularly clearly in the aba design recorded at Sowanda, see Fig. 25).

Actually, anointing the joints of the body with blood or paint is found in other ritual contexts in Umeda as a means of marking a transition. For instance, the very last act of all in ida is a brief ceremony whereby the men, having washed the 'dirt' from their bodies, anoint themselves on the shoulders, breasts, elbows and hips with the blood of freshly killed game. This restores them to normal existence. The same idea is found in curing ritual.<sup>1</sup>

I will revert to the theme of body-painting later: in this section I propose to concentrate on the yis (cooked sago) or 'hand-plunging' ceremony, i.e. the ritual of 'cookery' - a theme which has become much debated since the publication of Lévi-Strauss' 'Le cru et le cuit' (1964). It will be recalled that, as the two aba dance (in a manner similar to the cassowaries themselves) a fire is lit in the arena<sup>2</sup>, on which cooking stones are heated. The dancers take it in turns to leap over this fire.

There is a significant Umeda myth concerning the 'stealing of fire' which bears a recognisable, if distant, kinship with the Ge myths of fire analysed in Chapter II Part 1 (Variations Ge: 74-86) of Lévi-Strauss' book. The myth runs as follows:

1. 'Joint-marks' - circles, faces, or eye-like shapes marking the joints of the body, are a feature of sculpted and painted representations of the human form throughout a vast area of East Asia, the Pacific and the Americas (see Carl Schuster). I do not think, on the whole, that Umeda painted joint-marks fit into Schuster's scheme (though I have no wish to impugn his general findings).
2. Actually the fire is lit on the edge of the arena just opposite the opening of the ritual fence (popan): the subsequent dancers all pass through the ashes of the

INISWE (inis = a dark-leaved ginger variety now used as 'fight-magic') went hunting in the forest. He followed the tracks of a pig. However the tracks led to what proved to be a young woman collecting sago-fibre for making a skirt. She was Anwa (now the name of the largest local river, which runs through the territory of Sinai hamlet). Anwa was an ihwe, a were-pig (otherwise ihbol). The name of the were-pigs roughly translates as 'buttock-anus-people' (iub = buttock). Anwa took Iniswe home and hid him in the back of the house. She told her mother about him and the mother told her to bring him to her. Iniswe copulated with the mother of Anwa, but not in the ordinary way (I am not quite certain what my informant meant, but coitus interruptus is a possibility). If he had copulated properly he would have died.

A real pig came by and the were-pig people shot it. They made a fire to cook it. 'What's that?' enquired Iniswe amazed. They told him: 'Fire! It's good!'

They gave him tobacco to smoke. He put the lighted end of the cigar in his mouth. They showed him the right way. He smoked. The smoke made him faint away. They revived him with stinging nettles.

They started to chew areca nut with betel. 'Where's the lime?' they asked. Iniswe started to take off his penis gourd meaning to put some of the semen which he had collected there with his areca nut. They showed him how to

- 
- (2) (continued) fire when emerging from the ritual enclosure. In Sowanda, the ipele stressed their 'origin in the fire' by jumping in the ashes while making their entries.

put lime with areca. He chewed, the areca nut made him faint once more. They revived him again. He took Anwa away as his wife. He made a fire. A Kebenai man (whose name 'po' means rain) saw the fire. He thought it was the sun, but no, it was real fire. The Kebenai man wanted to kill Anwa but Iniswe stopped him (the incidents involving cookery, smoking and betel are repeated).

Waha, another man of Sinai eventually killed Anwa. The cries of Iniswe were heard by the father of Anwa, who came and killed the Sinai people. Two monitor lizards made holes in the earth, a great flood welled up and everybody was drowned except for Iniswe. (Anwa is a river, San, the name of her father, is also a river name).

A strictly mythological analysis of this myth cannot be attempted here. But the very briefest comparison with the corresponding Ge myths, which tell how a man, adopted by a jaguar and spurned by the jaguar's wife, eventually kills the wife and steals the fire for humanity (Lévi-Strauss: 1964 74) shows that fundamentally the same ideas are involved. In both cases fire - latterly the unique and defining feature of culture - is regarded as originally the property of a wild, non-cultural, species (jaguars or pigs). To obtain fire a man must enter into some kind of relationship with the natural species concerned (adoption in the Ge myths, marriage in the case of the Umeda myth). It would be fascinating, though perhaps methodologically dubious, to compare the related South American and New Guinea myths in more detail to find the basis of the wholesale transformation of the myth in each case but that



unfortunately is not the objective of this thesis.

What I would wish to stress, in relation to the Iniswe myth is, first of all, the way in which fire is associated with the amenities of cultural life, cookery, smoking, betel-chewing; and secondly the theme of 'fainting' - Iniswe 'faints' (yahsitav) as a result of smoking and chewing betel, and perhaps also as a result of eating cooked meat, though in the version of the myth I recorded it is not specified. Both of these aspects are relevant to the interpretation of the aba dancers.

Fire is quintessentially the means of converting natural substances to human use. Cookery is only the most obvious example, but it is equally true where gardens are concerned: Umedas, in common with many other New Guinea people, refer to the burning off of swidden gardens as 'cooking' a garden. Fire (sue) mediates the transition between bush (nature) and garden (bush put to cultural use). Gardens in turn, are the site of another most important, but ambivalently-regarded 'transition' - since it is in gardens (asa or swut) that birth (mesue) takes place. The sue/mesue relation is not accidental: mesue breaks down into me (orifice) plus sue (fire): the negative way in which the process of birth is regarded is shown by the fact that the adjectival form of mesue is the general word meaning 'taboo, forbidden'.

Fire consumes and renews: sumov (sue + mov : fruit) that is, white ash, is the only fertilizer known to the Umedas. Through fire and the production of the fertilizing ash, the garden is renewed. Fire is associated with sexuality

much as among ourselves (basic 'thermal' symbolism is practically universal, being rooted in physiological fact). Sexual activity is 'hot' (tane).<sup>1</sup>

Bachelors have to preserve a special attitude to hot food. They are not allowed to blow on their food to cool it; but must eat it as hot as possible. If they blow on their food their hunting will be impaired (i.e. it is part of their 'repressed' sexual style that 'heat' should be conserved).

'Hot food' so far as the Umedas are concerned is primarily sago jelly or vis: the food which is prepared during the ritual and is thrown about by the men in the vis ceremony. Vis is openly discussed by the Umedas as an analogue of (if not identical to) semen, bsas). Vis can be used in fact as a synonym for bsas: which in turn is an analogue of sap, the sugary exudations of sago shoots and so forth as I explained above. Here we have yet another ramification of the tadv nexus, the parallelism of reproduction and nutrition. The analogy of semen and vis goes deeper than mere surface resemblance. Their unity is founded on the very facts of procreation as they are understood by the Umedas.

The role of the father in Umeda eyes is not that of mystical begetter - indeed I did not find that informants had a notion corresponding to 'conception' as such - but

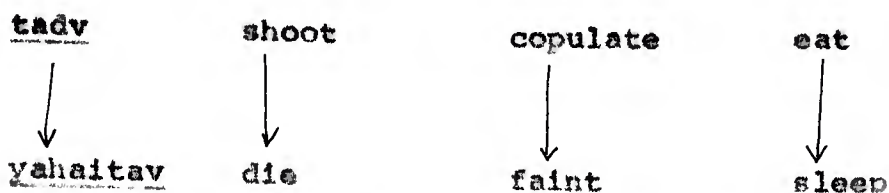
1. The word tane 'hot' is a member of the class of 'ta' words, some of which have been mentioned already, e.g. ta : hair, feathers, tali : testicles etc. Flames are swenta i.e. sue (m) 'fire' + ta 'hair'.

that of embryo-feeder. Conception and nurture are not two different things, but aspects of the same thing. Semen is the food of the embryo: the child is his father's semen - just as the liquid contents of an egg (also thought of as semen) turn into a chick, so the father's semen turns into a child. Consequently sexual relations after the conception of a child are intensified, at least during the earlier months of pregnancy. (This is a common phenomenon in New Guinea). Seen in this light, the father's role prior to the birth of a child is symmetrical with the mother's feeding role subsequently. The father is simultaneously sexual 'eater' and embryo-feeder. The vis ceremony, at one level concerned with 'cooking' and the culturalising effects of fire is, at another level, concerned with these fundamental ideas about the male role in reproduction (hot meals for the unborn).

But there is another aspect of all this which must be mentioned, before the separate strands are pulled together, and that is the relation between cooking, eating, sexuality and aggression on the one hand, and various kinds of 'death' on the other - the last 'transition' of all. (This relates back to the 'fainting' of Iniswe in the myth of the origin of Fire).

In the Umeda language a single verb yahaitav does duty to express a wide range of experiences of 'boundary-crossing' i.e. death, fainting, sleep and ecstasy. The basic meaning of this word is 'to go soft-jelly-like'. Now this verb with its wide range of meanings is, properly speaking, the 'passive' correlate of the tadv verb 'shoot, kill, copulate with, eat' etc. Thus





Shoot/die is obvious enough, but the other pairs need glossing. Copulation and fainting are associated in that Umeda men explicitly see sex as a 'death'-inducing experience, particularly for women, though men also 'die' particularly when raped (as occurs to the hero in the Pul-tod myth). The categorization of the sexual climax with 'death' is a common enough phenomenon, and harks back directly to the initial equation between masculine aggression and sexuality. Eat/sleep is rather less obvious. Food is regarded by the Umedas, not only as simple nourishment, but also as a narcotic, along with betel and tobacco. This applies particularly to high-value foods such as meat and fish. Food is an opiate and an aphrodisiac. This is interestingly brought out in the following brief myth, which incidentally relates to the ida ritual itself.

"Originally the women had the secrets of ida, and used to dance the ritual roles, the men being excluded. One day the women decided to hold the ritual. They collected the materials, paint etc., and made the masks which they stored in the enclosure. The men decided to set a trap for the women. They went hunting and killed a huge number of pigs. They made sago jelly and prepared a feast for the women. The women ate and ate until they were full of food. They lay about in postures of repletion with their knees spread and their skirts out of place. The



men copulated with the women who 'died' (slept, fainted). While the women slept the men broke into the secret enclosure which was unguarded and found the masks etc. When the women woke up they saw that the men had already begun to perform ida. They acquiesced in the situation. "We're no good" they said: "We fell asleep. From now on ida belongs to the men".

Here food figures as an opiate to which the women were only too susceptible. This attitude is carried over into everyday life as well: what is particularly appreciated about a large, hot, meal is the deep, dreamless sleep it induces (while a hungry man tosses and turns and dreams fitfully). Food is an aphrodisiac too: men are believed to overcome the resistance of women by gifts of food, so that a gift of food (or tobacco) is in certain contexts virtually tantamount to a love-transaction. Two foods in particular are believed to have special aphrodisiac properties above all others: these are fish (tamwa) and (wildfowl) eggs (ali). Lovers feast one another on these delicacies when meeting secretly in the bush. I will return to this association of fish, eggs and love-making later on.

In brief then, being born, dying, orgasm, fainting, sleep etc., can all be grouped together as climatic 'boundary-crossing' experiences, and in various ways the notion of fire or heat (anger, fever, lust or cookery) is bound up with them all. But how, it may be asked, is this 'boundary-crossing' expressed in the aba dancer's role and the vis ceremony? To explicate this it is necessary to examine the process of making vis more closely, because in this process

still another kind of 'death' is involved.

Uncooked sago flour is aba, cooked sago jelly, a very different substance, is vis: the transformation of aba into vis (by heat, actually by the addition of boiling water) involves a sudden and dramatic transition: the individual hard grains of starch in the bubbling mixture suddenly congeal to form a soft jelly. This transition is always called the 'death' of the aba (aba yahaitav) even in pidgin English (hatwara in-dai nau). Thus vis is aba which has 'died', vis is aba transformed by fire.

Now, to return to ida and the role of the aba dancers.<sup>1</sup> The aba dancer, it will be remembered, has to leap over the fire; this, besides being an obvious symbol of 'transition' (the motif is found in initiation rites elsewhere: e.g. The Bororo one described by Lévi-Strauss (1964 : 51-2) where initiates leap over the fire after having received their penis sheaths) - also refers to the processing of the (real) aba which is simultaneously taking place at the opening of the ritual fence. There aba is being converted into vis by the normal culinary means.

The climax of this phase of the ritual comes with the 'hand-plunging' ordeal described hitherto. Now this is regarded (and must indeed be in reality) intensely painful for the performers. It is the ultimate experience of 'heat'

1. Aba falls into a lexical class which will be discussed below in relation to the term ab: ripe - which is also an important colour term. Here let me note the significant grouping:
 

|             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>aba</u>  | sago flour (ripe)              |
| <u>absa</u> | a boundary, territorial marker |

 (= ab+sa). Another aspect of 'transition'. Umedas were sensitive about boundaries. The boundaries of the village are protected by (symbolic) fences in the months prior to the rites. If unwelcome strangers intrude, then rain falls.

- expressed in non-ritual circumstances, as I mentioned above, by the bachelors' eating their food as hot as possible. As a supreme ordeal and demonstration of masculinity, I think it must be classed along with the other 'death' experiences listed previously: a ritual death which coincides with the 'death' of the sago. The leaders in this are the aba dancers themselves, whose apotheosis it is.

Then, as I said, the scalding sago jelly is dismembered by the assembled men and broadcast about the arena. The cry 'ehm bah alehah' (it's head rises up) refers, according to informants, to the sago palms of the village. Why should the dismemberment of cooked sago portend the increase of maturing sago?

#### ix. The Nemesis of Reproductivity

Here I would like to recall what I said about the paternal role in reproduction. The father feeds the embryo with his semen; in so doing, implicitly he debilitates himself. We find, throughout those New Guinean societies where there is an extreme polarization of male and female, an ambiguous attitude towards active sexuality which both expresses, and in so doing diminishes, the essence of masculinity. A certain value is placed upon asceticism wherever masculinity is seen as a commodity which can be hoarded - the ascetic hermits and monks of South East Asia are among the most striking example of this phenomenon, but it is equally to be found in the highlands of New Guinea (where men conserve gris 'grease', a prosperous embonpoint by a careful metering of semen -



except, be it noted, when copulating dutifully with their pregnant wives). (Strathearn and Strathearn 1971 162-3). The highlanders, indeed, seem to have developed an elaborate, almost mathematical, theory of body-contents in equilibrating the relation between intake, output, and internal pressure, perhaps (though the ethnographers have not viewed the matter in this light) as a response to their highly-regulated exchange systems; the balanced receipt, storing, increase and redistribution of wealth being reflected in an 'economic' theory of the body. Though given less elaboration, these ideas are also to be found in the Uneda material. Sex is debilitating; bachelors openly quoted, as a reason for not ~~over~~ indulging too much in it, the belief that physical development is inversely related to sexual activity. This was not simply a 'mystical sanction' invoked in the interests of social control, though it is true that bachelors believed that sex would impair hunting success mystically. What I want to stress here is the physical effect that sexual relations were supposed to produce - gradual debilitation and the onset of the characteristic infirmities of old age. Contact with small children was taboo to the younger men - I was warned myself of the dangers I was running when I undertook to dress the burns sustained by a small baby: contact with so young a child would give me the hacking cough of an old man I was told. I was also warned, for the same reasons, against touching puppies.

What is involved here I think is a complex of related ideas which I have called 'the nemesis of reproductivity':



by which I refer to the ideological association of active sexuality, reproductivity and death. Thus, active sexuality, the antithesis of the bachelor ideal, was associated with the later years of a man's career: years of physical decline. The acquisition of a wife, family, an independent household and so forth were, in one sense, the goals of adult male existence, but at the same time the paternal reproductive role involved the mature male in sexual, nutritive, and domestic relationships which were intrinsically conducive to physical decline. So close an association with women was deadly in another way as well, because, as I pointed out, in Chapter 2, sexual relationships and sexual conflicts are at the root of all sorcery. 'The men kill the women and the women kill the men' -- as my informant put it. The pressures which impel a man to abandon the restrictions of bachelorhood and achieve the autonomy which comes with maturity, also induce him to enter into associations with women which contain the seeds of his eventual downfall.

To return to the question: why does the dismemberment of the vis portend the increase of the sago? I would argue that the 'death' and eventual dismemberment of the vis is directly related to this idea of the nemesis of reproductivity: it is the nemesis of the cassowary that is being acted out as well. Vis is semen, the food of the unborn. The reproductive role of the male consumes him, or rather, he is consumed by his children whom he nourishes. The vis ceremony is essentially an acting-out of this 'consummation'. The casting-about of the vis is (to be

perfectly explicit) a symbolic ejaculation: it is also a kind of nourishment and a kind of death. The vis (which is trampled into the earth) stands in the same relation to the maturing sago palms as the father's semen to the child: the former is consumed that the latter may thrive. And in each case this transition - which is essentially the transition between generations - is mediated by fire, and in each case it involves death.

As I remarked earlier, the vis ceremony is explicitly connected, by informants, with the maturation of sago, but it is essential not to overlook the latent sociological meaning it conveys: it is as much about the relation of successive human generations as about sago. Moreover, in the transition between the paternal (consumed) and filial (consuming) generations, a second 'transition' is involved. This is the transition from nature to culture.

In discussing the cassowary dancers I stressed the fact that the 'autonomous' existence, to which the cassowary gives ritual expression, is 'natural' by contrast to the oppressive 'cultural' regime to which the bachelors must bind themselves. If the cassowary is 'L'homme naturalisé', to use Lévi-Strauss' convenient expression (Lévi-Strauss 1962) then the aba role, which is essentially a continuation of the cassowary role (the continuity being established by the identical ageli mask) must be seen as a 'culturalization' of the 'autonomous' cassowary. This 'culturalization' by the feat of ritual 'cooking' analysed above. Hence the aba is to be seen as the first of the metamorphoses of the

cassowary, and a crucial one, since it involves the transition from nature to culture. It also involves consummation and liquidation of the cassowary role in the interests of the regeneration of the total society. After the teh interlude, which is of minor importance only, the focus of the ritual shifts to the tanwa, whose style is very different from that of the cassowaries, and who are, indeed, nothing other than the heralds of the looked-for regeneration.

#### x. The Rotten Tree

To understand the teh or ulateh dancer the reader ought, at this point, to re-examine the figure (26) in which the dancer and his mask are shown. The teh is a relatively unimportant role, conferring little prestige. The teh episode could be described as a 'coda' to the two more important ageli dancers (cassowary and aba), which also marks a transition between two main phases of the ritual; the ageli sequence and the subsequent tanwa sequence.

Teh means rotten (dessicated) wood or, more commonly, 'firewood'. Ula-teh, a variant form of the name, means 'netbag-firewood' (from uda: netbag). Ulateh is the word applied to high-quality firewood which is collected by women (wielding axes and bush-knives) in the forest and which they bring back to the camp or to the hamlet, in their big netbags (udapub). This task (the dismembering of dead trees and transporting the wood on their backs) is perhaps the most onerous that the women have to perform.

Why is it necessary to represent firewood in the course of the ida ritual?

First one may say that the teh refer back to the vis ceremony which has just taken place, by referring to the firewood which has been used on that occasion. They are thus thematically linked to the 'passage through fire'. Secondly, their mask, to be analysed in due course, links them to the general theme of 'man into tree' (cf. above section vi) since this mask is, like the ageli mask, a 'model of a tree'.

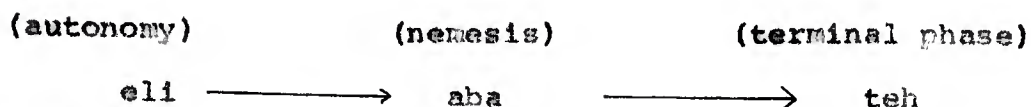
But perhaps it is more illuminating to phrase the question in more general terms. What is the relation between rottenness and regeneration? The answer, surely, is that the relationship is a necessary one: rottenness, dessication, is a natural precursor of regeneration. One sees this, particularly, in the case of gardens: the felled timber in the garden decays (and dries up) before the garden can be fired. One also sees this in planting, e.g. a coconut or yam rot in the earth before sprouting and producing new plants. (Coconuts are specially dried out before being planted). And in the previous section it has been shown that something of the same order is also involved in human reproduction, which draws the life out of the reproductive generation. Thus a teh (rotten, dry) phase is both the inevitable culmination of the life cycle both in plants and men, and is also a necessary precursor of the processes of regeneration. Logically this must be represented in the ritual.

If one now examines the teh mask it becomes apparent that this, precisely, is what is communicated. The teh mask is clearly a variant type of the aceli mask, possessing all



the features which, in the earlier section, I said constituted a model of a tree, and at another level, a symbolic representation of the society. Where the teh mask differs from the ageli mask is in the addition of the tall central element topped by a spray of coloured leaves called aboga. This is highly significant since aboga refers, not only to such coloured leaves but also to the terminal inflorescence of the sago palm. If it is conceded that this mask, like the ageli mask before it, is essentially a model of a tree, then the teh mask, displaying the diagnostic aboga is a tree at the conclusion of its life cycle. The sago palm flowers once and dies: here, I think, the reference is to this concluding phase of the life-cycle: and this, in turn, forges the link between the structural detail of the teh mask and its (verbal meaning) 'rotten wood' - which would otherwise, on the face of it, remain rather obscure. Titeh (rotten wood) is the terminal phase of trees, which, in the case of sago, is marked by the aboga.

In its 'biological' reference the teh mask refers to the terminal phase in the life cycle of trees, the same tree, one could say, as was exhibited in a flourishing condition in the structure of the ageli mask. In its sociological reference, the teh mask refers back to the vis ceremonial which has just been performed, in representing, in the guise of a sago-palm at the termination of its natural cycle, the nemesis of reproductivity. Very suitably, therefore, the teh episode comes as the conclusion of the ageli sequence:



prior to the entry of the tamwa dancers.

Finally, I should like to add a remark on the subject of the teh mask itself. It will be noted that the mask has all the distinguishing features of the ageli mask, the waving naveli fronds, the fringe of hubnab, the necklace of subove fruits etc. However, all these are diminished in scale: and if the 'lateral' dimension of the mask represents a diminution, this is balanced by an increase in the 'vertical' dimension of the mask. The addition of the tall central shaft assimilates the teh mask somewhat to the 'vertical' tamwa masks discussed in the next section. In the sequence agelic teh tamwa one finds a consistent diminution of the 'lateral' dimension of the mask accompanied by a consistent increase in the 'vertical' dimension. The teh mask therefore occupies a significant place in the sequence of 'transformations' of mask style which takes place as the ida ritual proceeds. The sequence will be analysed in detail below (section xx).

#### xi. Fish and Coconuts

What is the meaning of the transition: between, that is to say, a lateral emphasis, and a subsequent vertical emphasis?

To interpret this shift of emphasis it is necessary to recall the discussion of the central/lateral opposition in terms of the structural opposition of kin vs. Allies affines (Chapter 2). In the section devoted to the interpretation

of the cassowary, it was noted that the cassowary is mythologically associated with affinity, being the mythological origin of the affinal village of Punda. This in turn tied in with the 'autonomous', almost anti-social, character of the cassowary role; the cassowary is, structurally speaking, 'lateral' in relation to the total society, and this is expressed in the make-up of the ageli mask, both by a 'lateral' (age) emphasis in the form of the mask itself, and in the use of bush materials (shov sog and naveli) in its construction.

Turning to the tamwa one notes a radical change, both where the form of the mask is concerned ('narrow', 'vertical', 'neatly constructed', as opposed to 'wide', 'squat', 'bushy') and also where the material is concerned: for the basic material from which the tamwa mask is made is hwata i.e. the fibre from the coconut palms (sa) which, as has been emphasised on various occasions, grows only on the inhabited hamlet sites, not in the bush. This is an important clue which confirms our previous interpretation of the vis ceremony as mediating a transition between nature and culture: with the appearance of the tamwa masks the symbolism of ida shifts decisively into the domain of culture. This is further underlined by the fact that masks are painted with specific mythological designs, each one the property of a particular clan. The 'heraldic' aspect of the tamwa masks involves an explicit sociological reference to the constituent clan units of the society - whereas the sociological reference to the ageli mask is veiled, latent,



and made in terms of natural, not cultural, symbolism. The ageli mask totalises the society, the tamwa mask individualises the constituent groups of the society. this individualization can only be seen in terms of specifically cultural criteria.

But before entering into a more detailed discussion of the role of the tamwa at ida I ought to revert to the procedure I followed when discussing the cassowary namely, to say something about Umeda attitudes to fish outside the context of ida itself.

Tamwa is the generic term for all fish of the normal, finny sort (as opposed to ogud: eels, taipo: water lizards etc.). Numerous species are distinguished, of which the most important is pannatamwa, an unidentified fish recognisable by its red markings, (panna = red) a pattern of stripes and dots on its flank. This fish grows to a maximum length of about 8 inches, ~~large~~, Bannatamwa are among the largest fish to be caught in the streams and rivers in Umeda territory, which being extremely liable to run dry, cannot support the larger river fish. In fact an early patrol report on the Umeda area states flatly that 'there are no fish in the rivers', a curious and decidedly misleading statement, unless one assumes (charitably) that the word 'large' has been erroneously omitted before 'fish'.

Fish, in fact, figure quite importantly in the diet of the people, especially during the dry season when they congregate in the rockpools, or secrete themselves in holes in the banks of the river. They may be caught, as I have



described above, by poisoning, or by manual methods: they may be shot or simply attacked with a bush-knife. Though not large, fish are quite numerous, and very acceptable as a delicacy to be eaten with sago.

Certain taboos are in force, however, where the eating of fish is concerned. These fall particularly on children and young men, and the tabooed species is pannatamwa. Young children may not take or eat the pannatamwa fish. Should they do so it is said that the sago palms will not grow properly, and their starch content will be diminished. The same taboo also applies to young men in the 'neophyte' stage (i.e. who have just started participating in rituals): though the sanction is slightly different, since in this case it is the young man's hunting which is impaired by a disregard of the taboo on pannatamwa.

The existence of these taboos provides a significant clue for the interpretation of the fish in ida. Many Umeda food taboos can be explained in terms of a measure of identification between the tabooed object and the observer of the taboo. To take a simple, but rather striking instance. On one occasion I happened to give myself a cut on the finger with a knife I was using to peel some sugar cane. The cut was not serious and my spontaneous reaction was to put the cut finger to my mouth in order to lick the blood off. My Umeda companions on this occasion were absolutely horror-struck. They said that to lick their own blood would make them sick; they were almost sick to see me do it. Later, I saw how they would react in the same situation: I saw a small girl cut her finger just as I had

while peeling sugar-cane; instead of licking the wound, she held her finger in the air and waited, patiently, for the blood to stop dripping down her arm and onto the ground. Evidently the impulse, which one might have supposed was instinctive, to clean the blood from a cut finger by licking it off is not at all universal, merely a barbarous practice I have inherited from my ancestors: the Umedas, more fastidious in this respect, reject auto-cannibalism in toto (I noted also an entire absence of nail-biting, and finger-sucking only in earliest infancy).

Here a species of 'food taboo' preserves the integrity of the body against auto-cannibalism; more generally, food taboos preserve the integrity of categories.<sup>1</sup> (One might parenthetically refer to incest-taboos as a variety of food-taboos in this connection). A simple case is the taboo which prevents the cassowary-dancer from hunting or eating cassowary-flesh. A similar taboo deters small girls (but not small boys) from eating (or even seeing) the 'fruit' par excellence, the huge, red, pandanus fruit yag and the concurbits tet (see below) and wi. (See above for the fruit = daughter equation). The subject of food taboos is a large and important one: the 'identification' between the tabooed object and the observer of the taboo can take many forms, and I would not argue that 'identification' as such, suffices to explain all food taboos even in Umeda. But in the present context I hope that it will be conceded that some measure of 'identification' between the pannatamwa

1. Obviously this remark owes its origin to the work of Mary Douglas on Food Prohibitions (Douglas 1966).

and the children and youths who observe the taboo on the consumption of this species of fish, can be deduced from the existence of the taboo.

This problem can be approached from a different angle. Pannatamwa, the name of the tabooed fish, has another meaning besides, viz. 'shooting-stars' - this deriving from the belief that pannatamwa fish are produced when shooting stars fall into the streams. It has been noted elsewhere that 'stars' (painawf) are identified with the penes of the ancestors (satod): it is therefore highly significant that shooting-stars (which, so to speak, mediate between the empyrean and terrestrial regions) should be identified with the pannatamwa, inhabitants of the watery element which itself has distinctively masculine and generative connotations. Stars, shooting-stars, pannatamwa fish and water together form a group of entities strongly marked by a) an association with the vertical, and (b) an association with masculine sexual power. Earlier I discussed Uneda notions about rain and water (both po) which were openly likened to semen ('water' is often used as a euphemism for semen). The tropical storm (pofthuf) is likened to the anger (yaus) of the sexually frustrated man, being the result of his rain-magic. The rain falls (po) and the streams rise (po-pab) - the word pab also referring to the male erection. And with the rains, and the rising waters, comes also the renewal of the vegetation; the crops in the gardens shoot up as the rains fall.

This last is not a fanciful addition of my own to the list of up/down movements. I touched earlier, in discussing the li (digging stick), on the symbolism of Umeda garden magic: the li are plunged (down) into the earth, to fecundate the garden. The garden is also pounded with red-painted coconuts to achieve the same purpose. One might almost see this 'plunging' and 'pounding' in simple ~~statistical~~ terms as a device for achieving a reciprocal 'upthrust' of garden growth, thus (Fig. 34):

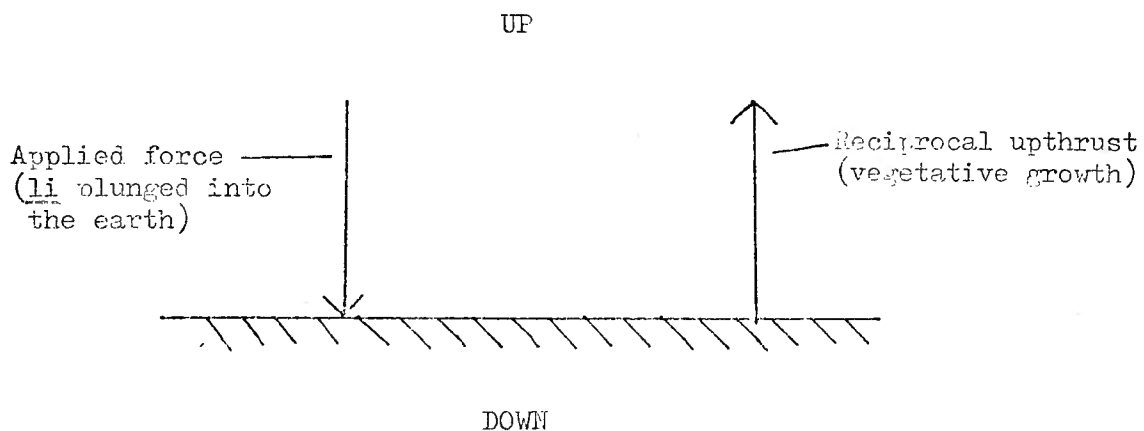


Fig 34.      Statical interpretation of garden-magic.

This motif may be implicit in the dancing at ida itself, in that the earth is pressed down by the leaping dancers. I was in fact told that a subsidiary ritual used to be performed during the first night of ida, whereby a man followed the cassowary dancers pounding the earth with a sewn-up limbum spathe filled with sand. For some reason



I did not discover, this was never done during the performances I witnessed myself. Perhaps the dancing has replaced the pounding ceremony because the two are symbolically equivalent: it is notable that in the garden magic of Efid clan, a leaping pedasuh dance, in the garden, replaces the normal garden ritual of the other clans, suggesting a symbolic equivalence between 'pounding' the earth and dancing on it.

However to return briefly to the question of the up/down movements of water and the correlated upward thrust of plant growth. The spells recited over the garden to hasten its growth refers to all the various springs and creeks in the bush: "mesa - water rises up, momwe - water rises up etc." According to an informant all the springs and creeks must rise up together, and the garden plants will rise up likewise. The association between rising water and garden growth is therefore made quite explicitly, as is the analogy between both these 'rising' movements, and the male erection.

These remarks about garden magic reinforce the association postulated above, between the vertical dimension, water, and male generative power. It is not difficult to incorporate the pannatamwa into the same general picture, though in this case the 'vertical' movement involved is not the falling rain, but falling stars. Are fish emblematic in any way of male generative power?

Fortunately for the argument, a crucial piece of evidence is on hand to demonstrate that fish are, indeed,

endowed with precisely this symbolic role. The evidence concerns Umeda ideas of dream-augury, the belief in question being that, if a woman dreams of fish, it means she will bear a child. This was the only dream-augury of child-bearing that I recorded, among many others concerned with hunting, illness, sexual relations and so forth, suggesting that fish occupy a unique position in this respect. 'Panna' is a common personal name, given to babies of either sex, commemorating the fact that their mothers dreamed of pannatamwa fish at their conception, and there are other 'fish' names as well. This idea that dreaming of fish foretells the conception of a child raises a number of issues, particularly to the comparable Australian material on 'fish dreaming' (Leach 1969).

There are beliefs parallel to those of the Aborigines where 'ignorance of physiological paternity' (actual or simply 'theological') is concerned closer at hand: e.g. the Abelam (Forge 1965) who deny the male role in conception. It must be stressed that at no time did my informants seem to suggest that dreaming of fish was a 'cause' of pregnancy. The male role in conception was not denied, not even 'theologically': copulation was a necessary adjunct to conception. Actually I never uncovered a word equivalent to 'conception' as such: it did not appear to me that my informants had any precise notion as to what the necessary conditions of reproduction were: copulation took place both before and after a woman had become pregnant: but not, it is true, during the period of the post-partum sex

taboo which lasted between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years after the birth of a surviving child. I had the greatest difficulty in obtaining information in this subject, and it is quite possible that my data are somewhat defective; though some security may reside in the fact that the conclusions I draw are mainly negative. Thus, it does not seem to be the case that Umedas have a 'theological' view of conception either with, or without, the participation of the male. Ideas concerning the 'soul' (midi) do not seem to be involved in the indigenous theory of conception in that I was told that a child acquires a soul only after birth (some weeks after in fact) when it acquires a name and a personality. Most informants would go no further than to say that the child is formed with its father's semen in the womb, with no spiritual intervention one way or the other. In the light of this rather 'matter-of-fact' view of conception, the dream-augury of the fish must be interpreted, not as a 'cause' of conception (in the sense that the 'spirit-child' dreamed of by an Aborigine woman is regarded as causally involved in her becoming pregnant) - but simply as a sign of conception.

This reservation, however, nowise diminishes the interpretative importance of 'fish-dreaming' as it applies to the tanwa dancers at ida, since it suffices to establish the symbolic association of fish, on the one hand, and progeny on the other, which was suggested also by the taboo on the young eating the pannatana.

Why, in the context of Umeda symbolism, do fish stand for progeny and foretell the conception of children? To

call them 'phallic' or 'sexual symbols' (though those attributes might be justified) seems hardly adequate: the word 'phallic' can be applied to such diverse objects that it hardly suffices to distinguish fish as a class, hence it can hardly contribute distinctively to their meaning. The fact that fish inhabit the watery element is more to the point, as I suggested above, since water is strongly associated with masculine sexuality. The name Tamwa is, in itself, a clue, since it incorporates fish into the class of ta words, some of which have been introduced already, e.g.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <u>ta</u>     | hair, feathers                          |
| <u>tali</u>   | testicles (coconut) shoot               |
| <u>tai</u>    | whisker, shoot                          |
| <u>tag</u>    | fire-tongs ( <u>ta</u> + <u>ag</u> )    |
| <u>swemta</u> | flames                                  |
| <u>yinta</u>  | bird (generic term)                     |
| <u>tane</u>   | hot                                     |
| <u>wata</u>   | coconut fibre ( <u>wa</u> + <u>ta</u> ) |

Hair is explicitly symbolic of sexuality (as will be discussed in another connection shortly). The other ta words on this list are largely self-explanatory in the light of material which has already been introduced. Rather than delay matters, I will briefly look at the other segments from which the compound from tamwa is composed: these are: i) a(m)b and ii) wa. The first of these is rather problematic; however, I suspect that Umeda tamwa is a slightly corrupt form of the form tambwa which is found



in neighbouring dialects. Amb in its turn is a member of the ab group which gives such words as:

|              |                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>aba</u>   | sago flower ( <u>amba</u> )    |
| <u>abwi</u>  | ripe ( <u>ambwi</u> ... etc.)  |
| <u>aboga</u> | flower, inflorescence etc.     |
| <u>nab</u>   | 'cabbage' from crown of a palm |

I.e. the group of words indicating 'ripeness'

'readiness to eat' and so forth. I am more inclined to believe that this is so in that fish are edible in the highest degree (and inclined to putrefaction if not eaten quickly). Is the 'edible' connotation of a(m)b consonant with the 'masculin e' connotation of ta? My earlier remarks concerning the role of the father during the gestation of the infant - the phallus doing duty as an organ of nutrition as well as a weapon of aggression, should suffice to resolve this query. Seen in this light - the role of the male as sexual feeder of the unborn child - the conjunction of ta and a(m)b in ta~~m~~wa is significant, especially in the context of the intrinsic association between fish and reproductivity. The fish is both phallic and nutritive. The final syllable wa I need not delay over: it is frequently a marker of 'power' in a generalised sense (cf. wata below) and it is appropriate to find it here, since the fish is, indeed, a symbol of masculine power.

But in stressing the phallic and nutritive prestige of fish I have not, perhaps, touched on their most important characteristic, at least so far as their symbolic role is concerned. This is their extraordinary, almost paradoxical, reproductivity. When the fish appear in the

streams, they appear, not in ones or twos, but in shoals. At certain seasons not a fish is in evidence, at others they seem improbably numerous. The outstanding characteristic of fish is multiplicity. Any individual fish is insignificant in itself, so that fish become significant (as food, and also from the point of view of symbolism) only en masse, a shoal of identical individuals, mysteriously proliferating. The seasonal fluctuation of the fish population is socially indicative, in that the period when fish are plentiful in the early dry season i.e. the period just before the ritual is performed. The seasonal abundance of fish is thus a signal for the performance of the ritual - a fact that is appreciated by informants, who mark off the month before ida as a time specially devoted to catching fish. Moreover, this time (early dry season) is the time when human births do in fact seem to cluster - at any rate that was the impression I received during the dry seasons of 1969 and 1970 - so the association between the proliferation of fish and human reproduction may, indeed, be more than purely symbolic. Incidentally this point about the piscine symbolism of 'proliferation' applies also to some extent to another symbol conventionally called 'phallic' namely hair: once again the individual hair is insignificant (the aged demon sebuha has but one hair on his head) - hair becomes a symbol of active sexuality by virtue of its multiplicity, its infinite reduplication.

Let me summarise the above remarks before returning to the interpretation of ida. Fish, in Umeda, play an

independent role as symbols of regeneration, reproductivity. In dream-augury, fish (particularly the red-marked pannatamwa) portend the birth of children, and the identification is carried over into the taboo on children and youths consuming these fish. Fish are also identified with shooting stars, (stars themselves being satod, ancestors) and thus, more generally with the 'vertical' (masculine) axis, the axis of falling rains and rising waters (movements of male sexual energy) and the vertical axis of growth in plants, trees etc.

Fish are symbols of reproductivity, both by virtue of their association with water, which is intrinsically masculine (po or ho, water or rain are masculine personal names) and through their nutritive properties. Fish and eggs I noted above are sexually 'tendentious' foods: a gift of fish or eggs is a symbolic transaction between lovers. Eggs are thought to be full of semen: and rather the same idea applies I think where fish are concerned. The sexual connotations of fish as food may also be invoked to explain the taboo on bachelors eating pannatamwa since this social category has to eschew overt sexuality, and avoid any association with reproductivity.

Finally, fish are associated with the ritual season of reproduction in biological organisms, and the ritual regeneration of the society in ida. Fish stand for multiplicity, proliferation, the repopulation of the social world one might say, after the 'death' of the aba.

xii. The black and the red (Ahoragwana and Tetagwana)

My basic argument, where the fish-dancers are concerned is that the fish are symbolic of the renewal of the fertility of the human and natural world after the climatic transition of the dawn ritual, the dismemberment of the vis and the passage through fire.

But, in effect, the first effort after renewal, the repopulation of the world is a failure, since it results only in the appearance of the negatively-valued ahoragwana tarwa: the 'black fish' played by the older men of the village.

Consultation of the tabular diagram reveals that the ahoragwana tarwa occupy what is, in many respects, an intermediary status, vis-a-vis the initial actors in ida (the eli) and the ipele, who terminate the sequence. The ahoragwana tarwa share with the cassowaries their black bodypaint, and their (social) seniority. But the 'transformation of the cassowaries' has resulted also in certain distinctive changes: the replacement of the ageli mask with the tarwa mask, the acquisition of the bow and arrow (the cassowaries being unarmed) and a new, more orderly, dance-style. Moreover, where the cassowaries are but two, one for each moiety, the ahoragwana tarwa appear in much greater numbers, a maximum of 10-12 in a large village such as Ureda.

This multiplication in the number of dancers in the tarwa role relates back directly to the point made above concerning fish as symbols of 'multiplication' in a biological sense.



The 'throwbacks' to the attributes of the cassowary which seem to be apparent in the attributes of the ahoragwana tamwa (blackness, seniority) invite comment.

I shall deal fully with the black/red opposition in Umeda colour symbolism in a later section: here I may anticipate the argument to some extent by introducing the basic premise of Umeda colour symbolism, as I understand it, namely: 'black is to red as senior generation is to junior generation' - so much will, I think, already have been apparent to the reader and needs no elaborate justification for the present. Thus the gradual replacement of the black ahoragwana tamwa by the 'red' (or polychrome) tetagwana tamwa over the course of the day dance reflects the overall black → red transition (eli (black) → ipele (red)) which is characteristic of the entire ritual (Fig. 35).

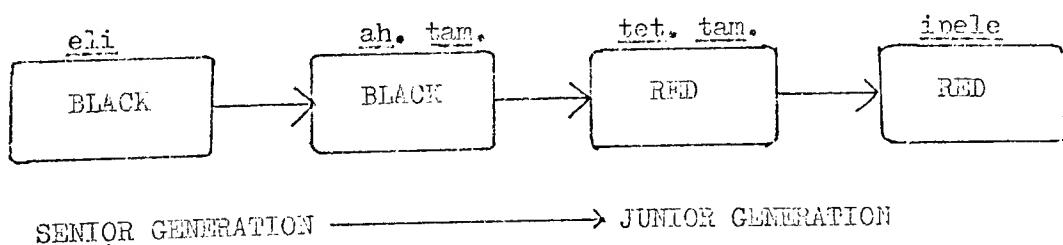


Fig 35 . BLACK → RED

But whereas the symbolic relationship: senior generation : junior generation :: cassowary : ipale is made perfectly explicit, over the course of the whole ritual, in the case of the ahoragwana tanwa and the tetagwana tanwa the generational opposition is less explicit: younger men can dance ahoragwana tanwa, and the more active senior men are far from averse to appearing in the resplendent body-paint of the tetagwana tanwa: the generation opposition among the fish is less a rule than an unacknowledged tendency.

#### xiii. Ahoragwana and Tetagwana

Meanwhile, one can be certain that the opposition is not arbitrary by looking at the opposition ahoragwana/tetagwana in the light of the mythological detail surrounding ahoragwa, the toad-woman and tetagwa the tet-fruit woman, from which the designations of the opposed types of 'fish' are derived.

The full myth is given in an Appendix (II). The essential details which are of concern at this juncture are as follows: Pul-tod ('Areca-nut man' the 'Oedipal' Hero) finds a tet fruit (a large, wild concurbit, red in colour and in shape recalling a pendulous female breast - also called tet : see drawing). He returns later to find that the tet has been turned into a young woman, Tet-agwa. The two of them return to Pul-tod's house, there later to be visited by Toag-tod ('smoked meat man') - who is Pul-tod's elder brother. Toag-tod, wifeless, tries various ruses to lure Tet-agwa away from Pul-tod, as well as trying to kill Pul-tod. Frustrated, he makes

magic (as we have seen, this is still considered to be the natural response of frustrated men). Rain falls. Toads (ahora) emerge from their subterranean burrows and croak (pwa-pwa). By his magic Toag-tod obtains the Toad-woman Ahoragwa (toads are black, inedible, much feared and despised by Umehs, and Ahoragwa is supposed to have these negative qualities also as opposed to the delectable Tet-agwa).

Thus far the myth brings into being two couples, one senior (Toag-tod/Ahoragwa) and one junior (Pul-tod/Tet-agwa) the senior pair being characterised by 'blackness' ('smoked meat: 'toad') vs. the junior pair (areca-nut, tet-fruit) which are 'red' (Fig. 36).

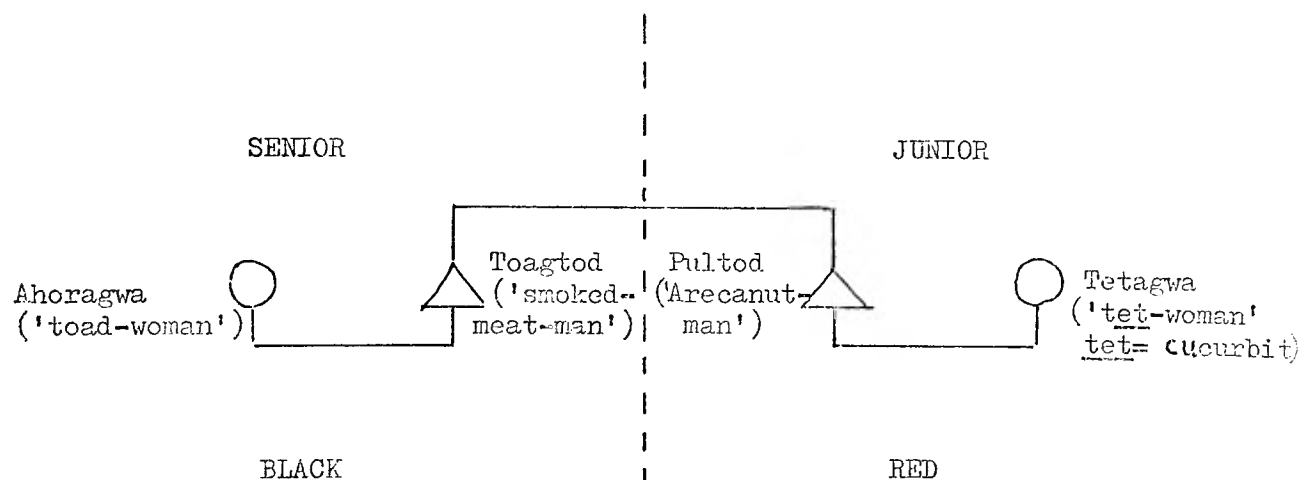


Fig 36 . MYTHOLOGICAL OPPOSITION OF SENIOR AND JUNIOR

It may be objected that whereas I have identified black with the senior generation and red with the junior generation, no 'generational' difference exists between Toag-tod and Pul-tod, who are elder and younger brothers. There are two replies to this objection: i) Pul-tod and Toag-tod are competing over women: now in Uneda proximate generations cannot so compete (because of the generational marriage rule and the ban on 'oblique' marriage) consequently 'oedipal' jealousy does not focus on the paternal generator so much as on elder members of ego's own generation - this is what is represented in the first episodes of the myth. ii) This 'fraternal' jealousy is part of 'surface reality' - at deeper (psycho-analytic) levels of interpretation it would no doubt remain true that the basic pattern filial jealousy of the monopoly of the father over the mother remains unresolved (the 'generation marriage rule' being no more than a means of softening its social impact). In the myth of the 'elder brother' is a synonym for the father: the jealousy, overtly over wives, and between brothers, is covertly a reflection of the Oedipal situation between father and son. This emerges much more clearly in the later stages of the myth.

The reader is referred to the appendix devoted to this myth for further details. Here I wish only to establish the nature of the opposition between the Ahoragwana Tanwa and the Tetagwana Tanwa. What precisely is the relation between the mythological heroines and the fish-dancers at ida? It should be noted that, as with the cassowary-dancers who called 'avalna' 'of the mothers' - but do not



represent 'mothers' but belong to them, so the fish do not represent the heroines, but are, so to speak, their 'genii' or 'familiar'. Let it be recalled that the interpretation of the 'fish' dance is founded on the dream-augury of fish, which foretells the birth of children is it not legitimate to see this whole phase of ida as the acting out of the dream augury?

But whereas Ahoragwa has only a negative role in this myth of the foundation of human society - especially where reproduction is concerned (her orifices are 'blocked up' by Tetagwa) - the latter heroine is the reproductive female par excellence, the 'first woman' and prototype of all the other heroines. Though more closely associated with Keda than the others Umeda clans, in the context of the ritual she clearly stands for successful reproductivity as against the negatively-evaluated Ahoragwa, who leaves no progeny.

The 'acting-out' of the dream augury of the fish therefore takes place in two stages: first arrivals are the negatively-valued 'black' fish - corresponding to Toag-tod's first, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to achieve a female partner by 'bad' (rain) magic. Then, just as Tetagwa supersedes Ahoragwa in the myth, so the 'good' red fish associated with Tetagwa supersede the black ones. These 'red' fish may be assimilated to the pannatamwa, the red fish particularly associated with reproduction, as I have described above (panna = red).

#### xiv. The Symbolism of the Tamwa Masks

In pointing to the contrast between the ageli and teh masks (above section x) I noted a consistent 'diminution of the lateral dimensions' corresponding to an additional emphasis on the 'vertical' dimension in the mask-sequence.

'lateral' ageli → teh → tamwa 'vertical'

The Tamwa masks marking the culmination of the 'vertical' (which is subsequently 'reduced' in the ipele masks). What does this stress on the vertical correspond to in symbolic terms?

Secondly, it is necessary to understand the implications of the material from which the masks are made (coconut fibre) and the significance of the designs with which they are decorated.

Finally, it will be necessary to look at the tamwa dance itself.

Basically, the answer to all these questions is the same; in the structure, materials and decorations of their masks, and in their dancing, the tamwa represent a shift away from the 'feral' image of the cassowaries, and towards the 'culturalised' image of the ipele bowmen. Apart from anything else, the fact that they possess bows and arrows represents an approximation to the ipele type. This is still more apparent in their masks.

The vertical axis, it has been argued, is the axis upon which a male ego is situated, and in sociological terms, is the axis of the continuity of the patrilineal clan, whose 'lateral' relationships are mediated by the exchange of women.

The 'vertical' axis is the axis of masculinity, and also of culture, i.e. the cultural patrimony of the agnatic clan, descending ultimately from the ancestors (satod) whose 'vertical' relationship to ego is expressed in the identification of the ancestors with the stars above. This vertical axis is also the axis upon which the pannatamwa (as shooting stars) descend to the earth: the axis of masculine mediation, as opposed to feminine mediation which is lateral. In the designation 'avalna' 'of the mothers', in the mythology associated with the cassowary, in the 'lateral' emphasis of the mask, and in the 'autonomous' sociological role of the cassowary dancer the emphasis was consistently on the lateral/peripheral realm: conversely, in the fish the emphasis is on the 'vertical' continuity of the society, on clanship (as opposed to affinity/alliance) on masculine medication, and on culture. It is to this 'vertical' axis that the tall tamwa masks must be referred.

The crucial symbol of 'culture' in the Umeda symbolic system is the coconut palm. I have discussed this elsewhere here it is only necessary to recall that human beings in general are called 'the children of the coconut'; that ancestors are 'coconut-men', that Toag-tod, the culture hero, descended from a coconut palm, that coconuts mark the permanent agnatic clan-hamlet sites and that the inhabitants of the hamlets and their coconuts pass through life synchronously and are profoundly identified with one another. Hence, the use of coconut fibre (wata) for the construction of the tamwa masks is not an arbitrary choice,



or motivated solely by technical considerations, but is a crucial marker of the 'cultural' status of the tamwa dancers, one which places them unambiguously on the 'vertical' (or cultural) axis, and demarcates them sharply from the cassowaries.

Wata fibre is a symbol of culture not only because it comes from the coconut palm, but also because it plays a crucial role in Umeda productive techniques, being used as a filter in the sago-teaching process, and in the preparation of pandanus sauce. Umeda culture is actually dependent on wata for its continued existence, since without wata sago flour cannot be produced (and only pigs eat sago raw).

This cultural emphasis of the tamwa mask is intensified by the fact that each is decorated - one could say 'heraldically' - with a clan emblem. These designs, some of which are reproduced among the illustrations, show mythical figures associated with the clan concerned, and some natural species whose association with the clan involved is quasi-totemic in this connection, in that the animals are used to classify social groups. (Totemism, as such, is not highly developed, though totemic 'echoes' abound in the Umeda material - the Sepik, a great centre for totemic institutions is not far away after all). Here there is another sharp contrast with the ageli mask which is a generalised model of atree: the tamwa masks reflect the cultural demarcation of group from group, and though 'fish' are, undeniably, a natural species, the whole emphasis of the 'fish' masks run counter to this: the fish



are made to represent the component clans of the society. The clan designs are 'cultural' - though they may represent natural species - in that they are regarded as the inventions of specific men. Some designs are known to be relatively recent innovations, named ancestors having introduced them after having had a dream in which a new design was revealed.

Meanwhile, my investigations did not seem to lead to the uncovering of any specific 'magical' role for the designs - though some designs showed spirit-beings, it did not seem to be the case that the spirit was participating in any way in the ritual. Though informants could provide a little 'exegesis' for some of the designs there is no clear connection between the exegesis of the designs and the function of the masks upon which they were painted - except the connection with clanship.

Finally, it is necessary to remark on the masks in relation to the symbolism of hair (ta). It will be seen that the mask forms a kind of tubular extension over the dancer's head. Actually, this 'extension' of the dancer's head could very well be thought of as a 'wig' in that wata (coconut fibre) is a member of the ta (hair) class (cf. above), and this is no accident in that coconut fibre is hairy in texture, and, emerging at the crown of the coconut palm does indeed occupy a position, vis-a-vis the palm, that hair occupies on the human head. The ritual use of 'wigs' (especially in contexts where masculinity is being stressed) is widespread in the western highlands of New Guinea (Strathearn and Strathearn 1971) - however, while

actual human hair is used in the highlands 'wigs' the tamwa masks use a vegetable analogue of hair instead. In both areas, however, hirsuteness is strongly associated with masculinity. Before the pacification of the area by the Dutch and the Australians hair was worn very long, bound up to form a vertical column. Early photographs show men sporting 'vertical' hair-arrangements of this type more than a foot high, though I myself never saw hair worn longer than about eight inches, and most men wore their hair no more than three or four inches long. Nonetheless, this traditional male preoccupation with long hair, carefully trained into the vertical, is essential to the understanding of the tamwa mask. I was told that the dancer's hair ought to protrude out of the aperture at the top of the tube of wata. The mask would then both represent an exaggeration of the normal hair-style, as well as displaying the dancer's own hair to advantage.

There is an element of straightforward phallic symbolism in this attitude to hair: long hair being indicative of sexual potency. What is more important, perhaps, is the discipline which goes with this attitude to hair: i.e. the hair is not permitted to flop sideways, or form an unkempt bushy mop, but is subject to careful control, a disciplined 'vertical' coiffure. (Contrast the bushy abundance of the sago-fronds on the ageli mask). Bushy, unkempt hair was regarded as indicative of the social autonomy of the most senior men, while neatly arranged hair characterised the bachelors and younger men. Thus the sexuality of the tamwa dancers is emphasised by the 'wig-

like' aspect of the tamwa mask, but at the same time hair is subjected to a cultural restraint, which emphasises the vertical axis.

Thus the fish are to be opposed to the cassowaries who opened the ritual as 'relatively subject to social constraint', and this 'constraint' is as apparent in their dancing as it has proved to be in the other features mentioned. Where the cassowaries leap and gyrate in an autonomous, unstructured way, occasionally holding hands (laterality) the fish dance in single file, agwatodna leading, maintaining a disciplined formation.

It would be wrong, however, to overstress the 'constraint' of the tamwa role, which is only relative. Their dancing is openly phallic, not the restrained shuffle of the molnatamwa (above section v) nor yet the tight-reined loping of the ipele. Moreover there is a distinct element of conflict in their mutual interaction in the dance. Thus, besides proceeding in single file, the fish also frequently turn about, facing each other in pairs, seeming to threaten each other with drawn bows. It is perhaps not going too far to see in this an expression of the conflicts which divide the component clans of Umeda society: armed conflicts did occur within the village in pre-pacification days. If the tamwa, representatives of the Umeda clans, behave aggressively among themselves, it is also true that they behave aggressively towards spectators, particularly women. In a word, the 'metamorphosis of the cassowary' reaches only a half-way stage in the

dancing of the tamwa: while relatively subject to constraint, the tamwa remain overtly sexual in their dancing, and their aggression is by no means lacking in that element of 'autonomy' which was characteristic of the cassowary. The tamwa do not represent the regeneration of the society - which must await the arrival of the ipele bowmen - but are, so to speak, only the harbingers of that eventual regeneration.

xv. The manipulated augury

Before leaving the analysis of the tamwa dance I should like to add a few remarks which relate back to the discussion in section iii 'Ida and Fertility',

I have suggested that, in essence, the 'fish' dances are an occasion for acting out, in the arena of ritual, the dream-augury of the fish - a kind of public dream of good omen. This idea raises some more general issues in the interpretation of ritual. In a separate paper (not yet published) I have attempted to arrive at a conception of 'ritual efficacy' based on the idea that ritual is fundamentally designed to provide the 'significant conditions' of the desired outcome. (Gell N.D.). That is to say, in ritual, men seek to artificially bring into being the 'signs' or 'indications' which, in the course of nature, or according to the cosmological beliefs of the people concerned, are necessary indications of the successful outcome. According to this view of ritual, the explanation of ritual activity as a means to practical ends (rather than mere expression of sentiments), must be sought less in the 'belief systems' which may, or may not be invoked in order



to justify ritual action, but in the far more general propensity, which is common to all men, to see the world as a 'system of signs'.

This is hardly the place to attempt a full-scale justification of this point of view, which has ramifications into Philosophical Anthropology. I will restrict myself to saying that I agree with the conclusions of Dorothy Lee (1960) who has contrasted the 'linear' quality of (ideal-type) 'western' thought habits - an emphasis on causal sequences, ordered progression from point to point with the Trobriand and Wintu situation, where the emphasis is not on 'line' so much as on 'pattern'. Rather than see the world as we (should!) do in terms of linear causal sequences, she argues that the Trobrianders think in terms of patterned complexes of activities and experience whose inter-relations are not 'lineal' but are to be conceived as a 'mosaic' in which the individual elements are not causally related, but are linked together as part of the overall pattern. Thus garden magic is not causally geared to the increase of crops, but is, nonetheless, a way of formulating the total pattern of garden activity (cf. Tambiah 1968). I do not follow Lee in her wholesale opposition of 'us' vs. 'them' where cognition is involved, but I do concur in thinking that the idea of 'pattern' is essential to the understanding of the means whereby ritual action comes to be considered practically efficacious.

To my mind, what Lee calls 'pattern' is identifiable with the 'natural' or 'commonsense' attitude to the world, which is the attitude which 'takes for granted' the

orderliness of patterned sequences of events, activities, processes, and so on, taking place in the immediate or social environment, and uses them as a system of 'signs' or 'indications' of further events, activities, processes etc., which lie outside the immediate situation of the particular experiencing ego. This is the point of view which has been put forward by Schutz in his essay 'Symbol, Reality and Society' (1967, p.287). In this far-reaching paper Schutz offers the following definition of 'indication' which, though involving certain technical terms, should be intelligible in isolation from his text: 'Indication arises when certain facts, objects or events are linked together in a more or less typical way such that X, which is immediately perceived, is experienced as being related to past, present or future Y in such a way that X can form an opaque (unanalysed) motive for believing Y. X is a witness for Y, a tangible sign that Y is, or will be, or has existed' (Schutz 1967). The 'natural attitude' (as distinct from the critical, scientific attitude) is suffused with such relations of 'indication' which are, in fact, the basis of symbolic systems of a more elaborate kind.

Returning to the problem of ritual, I would argue that everything that happens in the mundane world is generally considered as being 'conditioned' by certain signs, signs that are the accepted concomitants of that process or event: either as portents of its imminent occurrence, indications of hidden processes, or states imperceptible to immediate observation, or traces of things past. What ritual does is to grasp actively the 'significant' aspect of the world so

as to create the sign-conditions of the desired outcome.

'Magical rationality' sees the world built up of complexes of relations of indication, a pattern of meanings, portents, signs and auguries, pre-figurations of the patterns of the future in the patterns of the present. And since the mutual inter-relatedness of those complexes of meaning, the general stability and continuity of the pattern, is 'taken for granted' it can be seen that it is perfectly legitimate, from the point of view of one immersed in the pattern, committed to the cognitive style imposed by it, to seek to manipulate the world by manipulating the meanings.

I think that this idea comes out particularly clearly in relation to the fish-dancers at ida. By representing the fish, which, in dreams, augur the birth of children, the men participated actively in the 'pattern' of reproductive events, manipulating the augury so as to bring about the desired outcome as an automatic consequence. Stated thus baldly, the device seems merely naive, but one should remember that the dancers are not overtly orienting their behaviour to human fertility, but, if anything, to sago-fertility (section iii). Questioned point-blank as to the efficacy of the fish-dancing in making the women fertile, my informant laughed and asked whether I didn't know of readier means to make women bear children. My mistake, in this instance, was to 'linearize' a situation which properly should be seen in terms of 'pattern'. Rather than apply a crude and inappropriate 'mechanistic' model to ritual action, it is necessary to see it as a means of participating in the patterned flux of events, an act of poetic



legislation over the course of nature. In representing the augury of the fish in a public and collective dream, the men signified fertility and so brought it into being.

It is necessary to recall, also, that ritual acts on more than one level simultaneously. While my informants rejected a linear interpretation of the fish-dancing, as a 'magical' means of promoting fertility, they were well aware of the implications of the fish-dance for mundane (rather than mystical) erotic relationships. The young men who take the tetagwana tamwa roles, many of them bachelors or only 'technically' married to small girls, were very conscious of the opportunity it gave them for self-display before an audience of admiring women. At the cosmological level the fish-dancers portend the onset of bio-social regeneration, as individual actors, potential lovers and husbands, they, individually, will be in on the process. The dogma that the women were well and truly 'tricked' by the fish, thinking them to be genuine, was pure theology as the men well knew. The tamwa dancer, despite the concealment of mask and body-paint, was immediately recognisable to everybody present, as an individual. His identity was merged with the 'fish' only at the level of formal symbolism; as an individual dancer he was, in a very important sense, playing himself. One rapidly became accustomed to identifying individual dancers, despite their masks, by their body build, their carriage while dancing and other idiosyncracies. I would go so far as to say that the young men I knew in Umeda were never themselves so much as when they put on masks, and danced as fish. Each



dancer's style was a revelation when considered in conjunction with his character in daily life: Pom, (the Councillor) tense, controlled, feline; Wapi (my 'cookboy') gross, dionysian; Hupwo tentative, inhibited ... these observations are only anecdotal, and I mention them only to stress that ritual role-playing is only an aspect of role-playing in general, 'the presentation of the self' the expression of individuality channelled into a ritual context. The ritual arena is not hermetically sealed off from the arena of everyday life, and for the individual dancer the possible consequences of a performance may be far-reaching. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the 1970 ida resulted in the elopement of a pretty young widow with a muscular young 'fish' of Waina clan, an event which had very serious repercussions for all concerned.

Thus, while at a cosmological level the fish are harbingers of regeneration, at a mundane level the sexual relationships expressed or brought into being as the young men and women of the village share the ritual arena with one another (tacitly conscious of each other's presence, though overtly indifferent) do, in a very real sense, further the perpetuation of the society. The dancing is, indeed, as the men say, a trick (mokus) though the 'trick' is not played solely upon the women, who know very well what is afoot. Rather, it is a 'trick' that is at the heart of all ritual, the 'joke' (also mokus) which creatively juxtaposes mundane and cosmological frames of reference.

There is a final idea to be added to the foregoing, an idea which played no part in my thinking while I was in

the field, but which may perhaps link the ida ritual to the ritual performances of the groups on the main course of the Sepik, the Abelam in particular. My supervisor, Anthony Forge, has frequently emphasised the underlying ideological contrast, characteristic of Sepik societies, between the 'cultural creativity of men' versus the 'natural creativity of women' (Forge 1965, 1967). It is as if the men, secretly resentful of the reproductive capacities of women, seek, in their rituals, to compensate themselves for being biologically de trop by mounting elaborate cultural analogues of feminine reproductive activities (hence, e.g. penis-bleeding, 'rebirth' ceremonies at initiation etc.).

The Umeda do not show these traits in their most marked form (no penis-bleeding, no elaborate initiation, no belief in parthenogenesis etc.) but there is, I think a clear relation between the ida ritual and the ideological opposition between 'cultural' and 'natural' creativity or reproductivity. In ida the men, unaided by women, mount what constitutes a dramatic enactment of reproductive processes, a drama mounted for the benefit of female onlookers, stressing the male contribution to the cycle of regeneration. One cannot say that the men actually enact the female role in any explicit way: rather they show reproduction devoid of any female participation at all. This purely masculine creative enterprise is essentially 'cultural' - bio-social regeneration, as I will demonstrate further below, is made synonymous with 'culturalisation': the 'natural' cassowaries are metamorphosed into the 'cultural'

ipele bowmen as the price of their regeneration. It is as guardians of 'culture' in this sense that men participate, in ida, in the sphere of reproductive processes, otherwise the monopoly of women.

xvi. The amov - termites

Before going on to discuss the ipele dancers, in whom the ritual of ida culminates, I ought to say something about the subsidiary figures who enliven the day dancing, the amov (termites), the neophytes (nemetod) and the various ogres and ogresses (yaut). Of the three types of subsidiary dancers, the amov are the most important as well as being rather spectacular.

The amov role is played by senior men, though it is not particularly prestigious. The decoration of the amov is striking. The yellow face-mask is topped by undulating cassowary plumes and surrounded by yellow-speckled nu (codiaum) leaves, the whole being set off by brilliant polychrome body-paint. Despite the magnificent decoration, the role is, in Umeda eyes, implicitly rather ridiculous. This arises from the Umeda attitude to termites which must be explained.

Two features of the termite (alias 'white ant') attracted comment from Umedas; firstly their odd proportions a big head attached to a little, soft body, and secondly, their numerousness. Nobody who has ever been to the tropics could fail to be astounded by the sheer number of termites that can be crammed into a nest or an infested log. It is fascinating (but to tender western sensibilities, also rather disturbing) to watch a termite-infested log burning

on a slow fire. Hundreds upon hundreds of helpless-looking little creatures come tumbling out of the cooler end of the log, to fall into the ashes on the hearth where they surge about like a crowd in the grip of mass-hysteria to perish miserably in the ashes as the heat overcomes them. Such vast numbers - a termite nest is a pullulating community containing hundreds of thousands - cannot fail to impress the population-conscious Umedas, whose own numbers - clans of 10 or 20 individuals, nowhere more than 70-odd, is a matter of real chagrin to them. (They were incredulous at my stories of Western cities). It is this inexhaustible reproductivity which is the clue to the interpretation of the amov at ida.

But it is this very reproductivity which makes the amov ridiculous. One can see this in the following way.

It is said that if a man hears the secret words (the 'black' words - mo pidiki) of women certain consequences ensue, one of which is the acquisition of a big yellow ridiculous head like a termite.

These 'womens secrets' are concerned with reproductive topics, and men I talked to showed real unease at the idea of probing too deeply into them, and they certainly would not willingly overhear private female conversations for fear of being degraded in this way. The 'termite head' is not apparent to the victim himself, but is visible to the women, who hold the possessor of such a head in contempt - the unfortunate man will have no success with women thereafter.

The ridiculous termite head is represented by the spherical head-covering of yellow-dyed ehov sog. The



termite role (suitably enough, taken by experienced married men rather than 'pure' bachelors) symbolises 'possession of knowledge of reproduction' or 'reproductivity' in general. This is distinguishable from 'sexuality' as such which is more appropriate to the tamwa, for while the latter dance with the overtly 'phallic' pedasuh, the amov wear only the small peda of everyday use, and their dancing is far less aggressive than that of the tamwa. Where the tamwa interact aggressively with one another, and also occasionally with the women on the periphery, the amov have a special role vis-a-vis the children, who form their retinue. The children in this instance are 'playing themselves' in the ritual, just as the young men dancing fish, or the older men dancing termites are also 'playing themselves' under cover of a ritual disguise. Here the children symbolically confirm the reproductivity of the amov, and also, in a sense, mock them with their reiterated refrain 'amov - e-e - amov e-e' (Termite! Termite!).

It is possible to see the amov as the ultimate 'weakening' of the cassowary, a modification in the direction of 'impotence' of the ithy-phallic 'autonomous male' stereotype. In place of the belligerent black paint, we find elegant polychrome designs; in place of the phallic dance, a restrained, undulating motion; in place of 'autonomy' a retinue of vocal children; in place of the ageli mask - the amov head. This last transformation, the contrast between the ageli mask and the amov head is particularly instructive, since, in highly 'reduced' form, the amov head

is in fact analogous to the ageli mask at all points. (See Fig. 20). The hubnab fringe, the shov sog, the necklace of subove fruit are all to be found, in 'miniaturised' form, in the decoration of the amov dancer, though the naveli fronds are replaced by waving cassowary plumes and nu leaves. This 'reduction' of the cassowary in the guise of the amov relates back to the discussion of the 'nemesis of reproductivity': the 'weakening' of the attributes of the cassowary in the decoration of the amov corresponds to the theory that reproductivity is 'debilitating' (see below on the kwanugwi for a further demonstration of this). I shall return to the amov head in the general discussion of mask types (below section xx).

To conclude on the amov: these dancers, who accompany the fish in the later stages of the day dance, are, in a sense, the fulfilment of the promise of reproductivity made by the fish. They show reproductivity in action, and the point is underlined by their retinue of children (all male - 'masculine' reproductivity again). But the amov are only 'metaphors' for reproductivity, like the fish, and ida cannot culminate until specifically human progeny, fully 'culturalised', have come onto the scene, in the form of the ipele bowmen. The fish and the amov share the feature of multiplicity, thus, they serve as 'metaphors' for the human project of social regeneration. Equipped with dizzying powers of self-replication they can stand as an image, a mark for man. By participating, symbolically, in the fantastic reproductive capacity of the amov - which verges on the ridiculous - the significant conditions of

human reproductivity are established and confirmed.

The reader will perhaps find this line of argument easier to follow if he attempts to visualise the 'mathematics' of ida up to this point. Ida begins with a duality, the two eli dancers who dominate the first night (effacing the molnatamwa who play a subsidiary role). The pattern of 'twos' continues with the aba and the teh - there are only two dancers present at any one time. As the day dancing proceeds, with tetagwana tamwa succeeding ahoragwana tamwa the numbers progressively increase, first by the addition of more fish and then by the addition of amov dancers and the retinues of children. At the height of the amov dancing in the middle and late afternoon the arena becomes quite crowded with dancers, singing children, musicians, spectators, and women. This effect of 'multiplication' is enhanced by the decorations of the dancers themselves, (nodding plumes and sprays of leaves) and by the womens' feathered poles napoda (which they carry while dancing). The effect is of a fluctuating pattern of brilliant colours, animated by the musical pulse of the huf orchestra. The impression of 'multiplicity' is related to the overall symbolism of ida itself, which is indeed a ritual of multiplication. To this effect the amov dancers, and their retinue, make a very important contribution.

xvii. The subsiding figures

1) yant, sebuha, sogwa, naina, kwod, alito

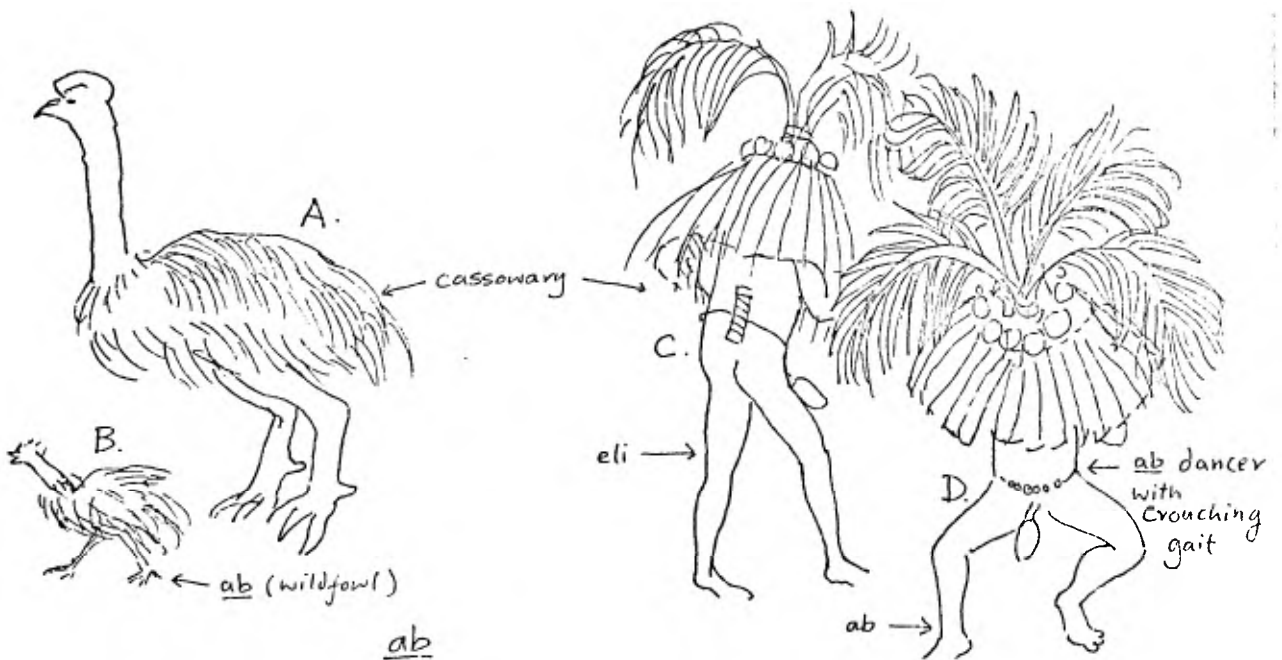
These 'ogres' and 'ogresses' have been described in the previous chapter, and I do not feel I need devote any further discussion to them, since, on the whole, they do little more than provide some 'comic relief'.

2) ab 'wildfowl'

This figure, it will be recalled, appears during the second night of ida (not shown on the tabular diagram) the night otherwise devoted to singing awsego songs. The 'wildfowl' are not at all important but they do provide an interesting variation of the 'cassowary' theme. The ab dancer wears the ageli mask, but is unpainted. The dancing of the ab is a quick scurrying, knees bent, close to the ground, imitating the wildfowl itself. The ab, coming during the second night, are very clearly a 'weakened' form of the cassowaries, though not so far removed from their prototype as, say, the anoy just discussed. They echo, in a less exuberant avian disguise, the dominant symbolism of the first night of ida, and point to the way in which the progressive 'weakening' of the attributes of the cassowary (here 'absence of black paint', 'restrained dance-style' etc.) are the condition of the appearance of the 'new men' (the ipele) at the conclusion of the ritual. I would compare them, perhaps, to the abortive restatement of the theme of the first movement at the opening of the finale of Beethoven's ninth symphony. Incidentally, the cassowaries themselves make a very brief entry towards



sunrise on the second day, 'restarting' the proceedings, a still more precise counterpart to Beethoven's musical idea. As to why I consider 'wildfowl' a 'weakened' form of 'cassowary' I think I can hardly do better than make my point visually by juxtaposing four drawings, showing a) a cassowary, b) a wildfowl, c) and d) their ritual impersonations (Fig. 37).



### 3) The ambiguous kwod

The Kwod ogress has been described above (Chapter 4, section xiii). This figure is important, not so much for itself, as for the light it sheds on other, more important, ritual impersonations, particularly the ipele. It will be seen, meanwhile, that the kwod shares the 'ridiculous yellow head' with the amov figures. This 'ridiculous' aspect of sexuality is carried over, also the treatment of the penis and body-paint of the dancer. The penis is bound up, in the same manner as the ipele: but the effect here is not to communicate 'repression of male sexuality' but actual 'femininity', since the kwod is an ogress. This attempt to negate masculine characteristics, combined with the prudish behaviour of the dancer, covering the genitals with a frond and advancing in a crouching manner, ridicules female sexuality in rather the way that the amov ridicules aspects of male sexuality. This is also true of the body-paint of the kwod dancer, which is red, like the ipele. Red paint, generally speaking, indicates nascent sexuality (see on 'Colour symbolism' below) here, applied to feminine sexuality, it evokes decidedly derogatory associations. Men spoke of the female genitals as 'red (swetde) things' - a reference to redness where women were concerned, being automatically construed as a reference to the genitals. Hence the red paint of the kwod ogress, though apparently identical to that of the positively-valued ipele bowmen, evokes a very different response, for it is a direct allusion to the ambivalent topic of feminine sexuality.

As I noted earlier, kwod is also a kinship term meaning 'Father's sister'. This relative is in an ambiguous position in the kinship system, being poised between the dichotomous categories of kin and affines, which are otherwise kept rigidly separate. This 'ambiguity' of the kinship status of the F 2 is reflected in the ambiguous way in which masculine attributes are given to a feminine role in the figure of the kwod. The kwod is feminine yet, like the vagina dentata ogress soqwa naina she carries a bow. Similarly, though feminine, the kwod is naked, otherwise a masculine characteristic. In effect, the kwod seems to reveal a baffling identity between positively and negatively valued stereotypes: sharing three of the most important features of the ipele bowmen (the red paint, the bound penis and the bow and arrow) the kwod is a feared and despised ogress, the ipele the ritual hero. Is the difference simply that the kwod is an ambiguous female, the ipele a norm-conforming male? I have so far been unable to resolve the issue.

#### 4) The nemetod, precursors of the ipele

With the nemetod, I return to less murky waters. A neophyte youth, participating in the ritual for the first time has but two roles open to him: the molnatamwa role, discussed previously, and the role of neme tod ('new man'). In the latter role, the neophyte, painted red all over, but wearing the oktek and pedasuh, is permitted to make but one circuit of the arena accompanied by his mother's brother (undecorated) in the role of his preceptor. Such

a neophyte may be referred to as an ipele, just as the ipele proper may be referred to as a 'new man' like the neophyte - however, the ipele role is an important and senior role, while the neophyte is a relatively insignificant participant.

This formal identity between the role of the neophyte and the role of the ipele is of the greatest significance for the interpretation of the latter, and will be discussed further in due course. Here I would like to stress the features of the behaviour of the nemetod a) that his dancing is restricted to one circuit only, the sanction being that otherwise his hunting will suffer and b) the relation between neophyte and preceptor, which bears an obvious relation to relation between ipele and kwanugwi ('old man').

The restriction of the neophytes' dancing is instructive because it shows very clearly the way in which dancing is classified as a form of 'sexual activity', and hence taboo to the ideally 'repressed' neophyte. Summarizing the situation, one can say that, at this point in his career the neophyte's ascetic vocation as a 'hunter' is endangered by three types of activity, which he must eschew: i) sexual relations, ii) eating the 'tabooed foods' (molkakoi) iii) dancing with the pedasuh. All these are symbolically equivalent. The neophyte's 'repression' is not only sexual, but also social, and this is made apparent in the way in which he appears, not as an autonomous actor (like a cassowary or a tamwa dancer) but only under



the guidance of a member of the senior generation, his real or classificatory mother's brother, a member of the opposite ritual moiety. One might be tempted to see, in this situation, the 'inversion' of the relation between the amov dancer and his retinue of children. The neophyte is subject to constraint 'from above' the amov to constraint 'from below'; i.e. the dancing of the amov is equally subject to restraining influences (as compared, say, to the cassowary) but of a very different kind, not excessive immaturity, but excessive maturity, the debilitation of those who have succumbed (as the nemetod has not) to philoprogenitive impulses.

xviii. Breadfruit and Coconut (the ipele)

The verbal segment ip has been discussed briefly in the chapter on language and symbolism (above p.255).

The significant grouping:

|              |                        |                |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| <u>ip</u>    | breadfruit             |                |
| <u>ipud</u>  | immature growing shoot | (part of tree) |
| <u>ipudi</u> | forefinger             | (body-part)    |
| <u>ipudi</u> | eldest son             | (social role)  |

places the segment ip at the centre of a group of words whose common denominator is the idea of a 'growing point' - natural or social. This clearly provides an important clue for the interpretation of the role of the ipele in ida. Let us look at this name and its various meanings more closely.

- i) ipele ritual bowman (ip + ele)
- ii) ipele 'leaves of breadfruit tree' (cf. naveli)
- iii) ipele multipronged bird-arrow

I argue that all these three meanings are based on the conjunction of the segment ip with ele, ele being a variant of the li segment (eli) analysed above (section v). At first sight though, the conjunction 'ritual bowmen' and 'leaves of the breadfruit tree' seems rather arbitrary (not to mention the further meaning 'multipronged bird-arrow'). Yet, in the light of my many previous remarks on the subject of Umeda tree-symbolism, it is not without interpretation. First of all I have already commented on the fact that leaves (-vle) fit into the 'sociological' model of 'tree-structures' as the counterparts of the filial generation of sons (as opposed to fruit, mov, the filial generation of daughters). Now 'the filial generation of sons' is precisely what the ipele dancers represent in symbolic terms. But why 'breadfruit' leaves in particular?

The breadfruit tree (*Autocarpus*) is an important food resource in Umeda, a welcome addition to the diet in the early and middle dry season period (it is basically a dry-season food like fish and coconuts). Groves of breadfruit trees are planted on the fringes of permanently-inhabited clan hamlet sites, but more usually in the garden-house areas in the bush close to the main village. They are, like coconuts, associated with human habitation, but not only with the main village itself like the coconuts. (Informants recognised a linguistic connection between ip on the one hand and iuv (house) on the other). The opposition between the 'hamlet-moieties' ivil and asila (see chapter on

social structure) is founded on the opposition ip (breadfruit) versus asa (garden) i.e. between the (male) habitation site and the (female) garden. Thus in terms of symbolism, breadfruit are quasi-synonymous with coconuts, the opposition between the focal point provided by the inhabited clan-hamlet site with its coconut palms (sa) associated with agnatic continuity, masculinity and culture, versus the peripheral field, femininity, the 'wild' being echoed in a weakened form in the breadfruit/garden opposition. Thus in both types of moiety-organisation (village moieties and hamlet moieties) one member is central and one lateral (Table 7).

|         | CENTRAL                  | LATERAL                 |
|---------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| HAMLET  | <u>ivil</u> (breadfruit) | <u>asila</u> (garden)   |
| VILLAGE | <u>edtodna</u> (coconut) | <u>agwatodna</u> (sago) |
|         | MALE                     | FEMALE                  |

Table 7 Ivil vs. Asila

But if, in this, the breadfruit shares something with the coconut, in other respects it is sharply differentiated: although the breadfruit stands in opposition to the garden

(ip/asa) breadfruit are, nonetheless, associated with gardens in the Umeda mind, since that is where they are mainly found. And gardens, as I have pointed out elsewhere, are the location where the birth takes place (Umedas indeed one could say, are born under breadfruit trees) - never in the hamlet itself. The garden-house areas, with their associated groves of breadfruit, reproduce, 'on a small scale' the structure of the main village habitation site: in fact, Umedas are aware that the present 'permanent' hamlets on the central ridge have actually developed from such garden-house sites. For instance the present Klalumda hamlet, established about two generations ago, was originally a garden-house site and this fact is preserved in the current name of the hamlet: 'Yatunekēbeh' (from yatune 'garden shelter'). Thus a garden-house site is, in effect, a miniature, secluded hamlet - with the potentiality for developing into a permanent clan - hamlet. Let me summarise these distinctions as they bear on the breadfruit/coconut opposition (Table 8).

The nature of this 'small-scale/large-scale' opposition becomes clearer when not only the typical location, but also the physical features of the two species are taken into consideration. This is best done by referring to the drawings (Fig. 38A, B) provided. It will be seen that coconut and breadfruit as trees are very dissimilar: (one is a palm, the other a relative of the mulberry). However, if comparison be made between a single leaf-bearing branch



| B R E A D F R U I T                          | C O C O N U T   |
|--|---|
| Garden-house sites                           | Permanent hamlets                                       |
| Mark sites where birth takes place           | Taboo on births in hamlet                               |
| Habitation sites 'in statu nascendi'         | Established habitation sites                            |
| Basis of hamlet-moiety opp.<br>(ivil /asila) | Basis of village-moiety opp.<br>Coconut vs. sago(naimo) |
| Small-scale social units                     | Large-scale social units                                |

Table 8 Breadfruit vs. Coconut

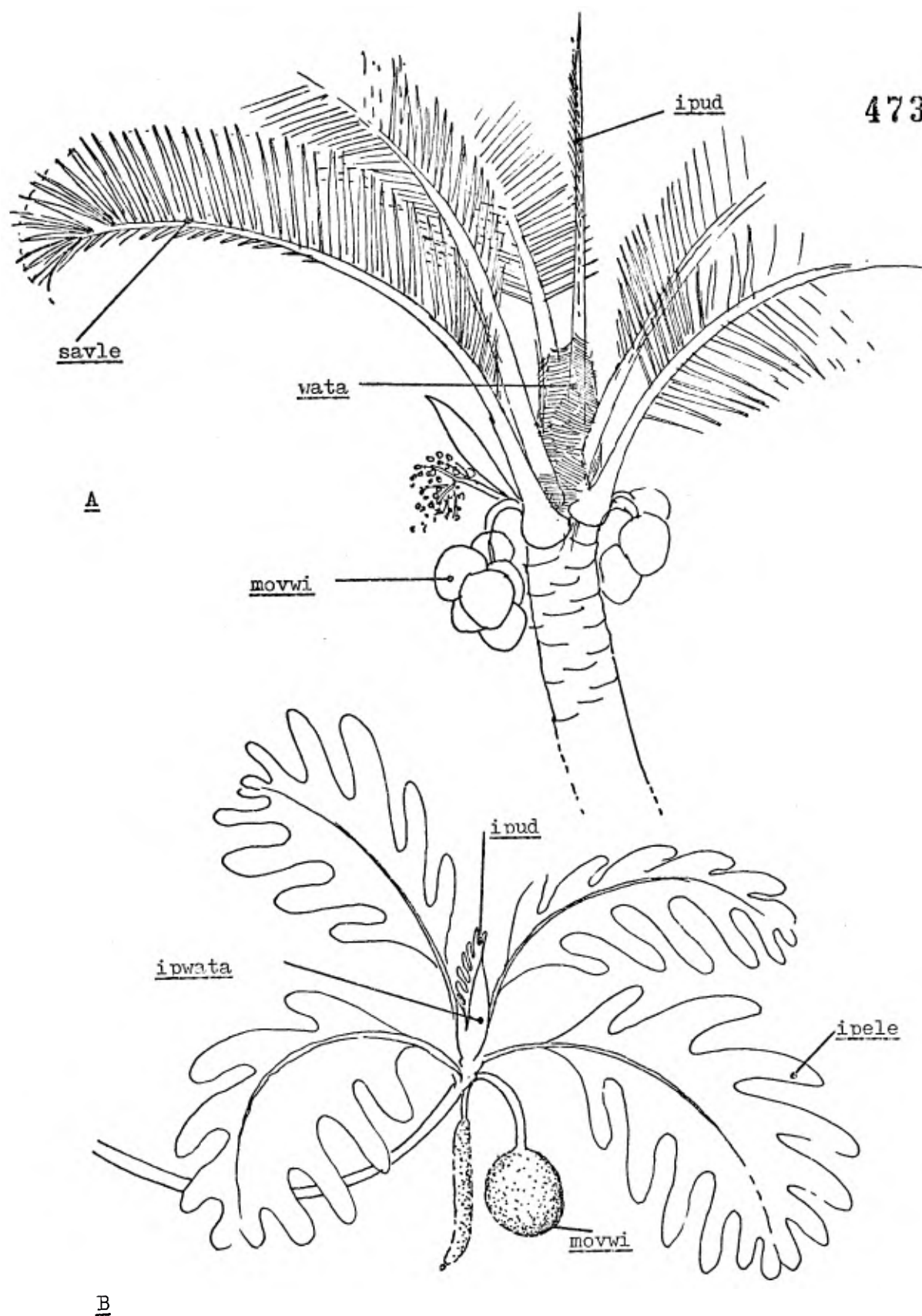


Fig. 38

A CROWN OF COCONUT PALM

B LEAF BEARING BRANCH OF BREADFRUIT

of the breadfruit tree, and the crown of a coconut palm, definite resemblances do begin to become apparent. On the tip of its many sinuous branches the breadfruit produces a symmetrically-arranged array of four very large leaves (up to two feet long) with deeply serrated edges (this is the Umeda breadfruit - there are other varieties with less serrated leaves). In the centre of the array of leaves is a new leaf-bud surrounded by a kind of sheath which protects it while it is developing. This sheath - and here we have clear linguistic evidence that Umeda regard coconut and breadfruit as being in some way analogous - is called ipwata. Now wata, as has been pointed out, is otherwise the term applied to the fibre which protects the shoot (ipud) of a coconut palm - that is, the developing frond emerging from the centre of the crown (see fig. 38A). In short, the general arrangement of the individual leaf-bearing branch of a breadfruit tree - the symmetrically-arranged pinnate leaves, the shoot, the wata and the dangling fruit, reproduces that of the coconut palm. But with two important differences: in the case of the breadfruit the arrangement is a) MINIATURIZED and b) MULTIPLIED.

There is another point to note about the breadfruit, which also distinguishes it from the coconut. When the bark of a breadfruit is cut the tree produces large quantities of white sticky latex. This is called nen (literally 'milk' - to be sharply distinguished from sap (bsas) identified, not with milk, but with semen). This soft, milky bark contrasts

with the tough, gnarled outer bark of the coconut. The same kind of contrast is also apparent in the leaves and fruit: coconut fronds being hard and spiky, breadfruit leaves being flexible and soft, coconut fruit tough, breadfruit squashy and so on. It may also be important that breadfruit leaves have a special use of their own and one very central to the interests of the people, namely, as the standard wrapping material for cooking meat, particularly large game such as pigs or cassowary. The meat is wrapped up, already cut into joints, with hot stones, bound up tightly and placed on the embers of the fire. In about 10 minutes the meat is (slightly) cooked and is ready to eat. The association of breadfruit leaves and successful hunting is significant, since the ipele are very much the exponents of this side of life, the ascetic vocation of huntsmanship.

The relation coconut/breadfruit can be seen, therefore as encoding the relation 'large-scale' to 'small-scale' which is, at the same time, the relation of relatively mature to relatively immature (ipude : young, immature). The breadfruit, in terms of tree-symbolism, stands on the side of regeneration, as opposed to the coconuts, standing for ancestral values. In the following sections I turn to 'the attributes of the ipele' to see how this idea of regeneration is made manifest in the figure of the dancer himself.

#### xix. The attributes of the ipele

In connection with the other ritual figures, particularly the cassowaries and the fish, I have devoted



considerable attention to the attributes of each figure as shown in the tabular diagram. Having now arrived at the ipele, and the conclusion of the ritual, it is now possible to go back over the whole sequence, starting with the eli, to see the way in which the 'attributes' of successive ritual figures are gradually and cumulatively modified with a consistent aim in view, the aim being the eventual appearance of the ipele.

I will devote separate sections to the transformations of mask and body-paint styles - though I daresay the reader has been waiting impatiently for me to embark on the obviously crucial question of 'Colour Symbolism'. I treat colour symbolism last of all, because, in a sense, it sums up everything else, giving a synoptic picture of the ritual as a whole; but for the present I shall deal with a number of other, less obvious, issues. One of the most important of these is the ipele arrow, and the treatment of the dancer's penis.

Fig. 39 shows the ipele arrow, and for comparison, a typical ceremonial arrow of the type called kis. The ipele arrow is a modified form of the multipronged arrow of everyday use - also called ipele - which is used for shooting birds and small game. Comparing the ipele arrow with the kis it is notable that the relation of ipele to kis is exactly that which I shall have just shown to subsist between coconut and breadfruit: namely, 'miniaturization' and 'multiplication'. In place of one, big point (elaborately carved with spines) the ipele arrow consists of three, very small, very sharp

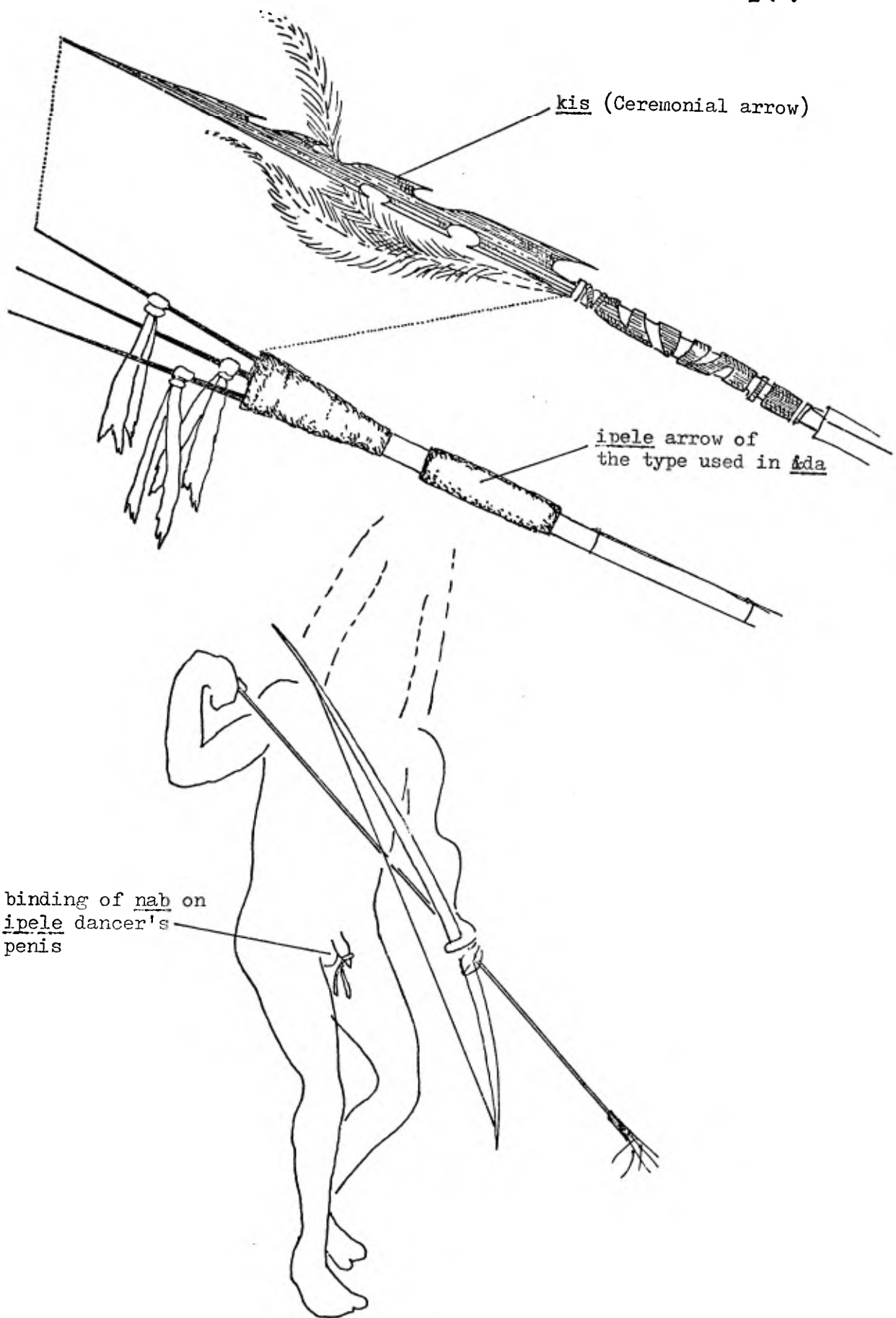


Fig 39 . ATTRIBUTES OF THE IPELE

points. These individual points are, so to speak, a 'repressed' version of the big, elaborate kis arrowhead; a kis point 'in statu nascendi'. The 'idea of 'repression' is made still clearer when one considers the binding of nab (white material from the crown of the linbum palm) on each spine. The binding of nab corresponds exactly to the treatment of the dancer's penis. (fig. 39).

For a fuller discussion of penis-binding or 'kynodesme' the reader is referred to my article on penis-sheaths (Gell 1971) and the previous paper by P. Ucko (1970) on which it is based. Here it is necessary to recall only that the ipele are 'new men' (nemetod) - though the actors of the ipele roles should be men of considerable experience, for the role carries prestige second only to the cassowaries' - symbolically, the ipele stand on a par with the neophytes, who have barely attained the status of young adulthood. Corresponding to this status in life are two major obligations, which I have been stressing all along, namely, the obligation to hunt, and the obligation to refrain from sexual relationships. The potency of the bachelors as hunters is reciprocal to the social, and particularly the sexual 'repression' to which they are subject. This 'repression' is given symbolic expression in the binding of nab on the dancer's penis - the opposite extreme, in fact, from the exaggeration of phallic characteristics brought about by the use of the elongated pedasuh gourd. This opposition pedasuh/nab-kynodesme articulates

the basic social opposition between married men and bachelors. The following diagram, taken from my article, shows this in action (Table 9):

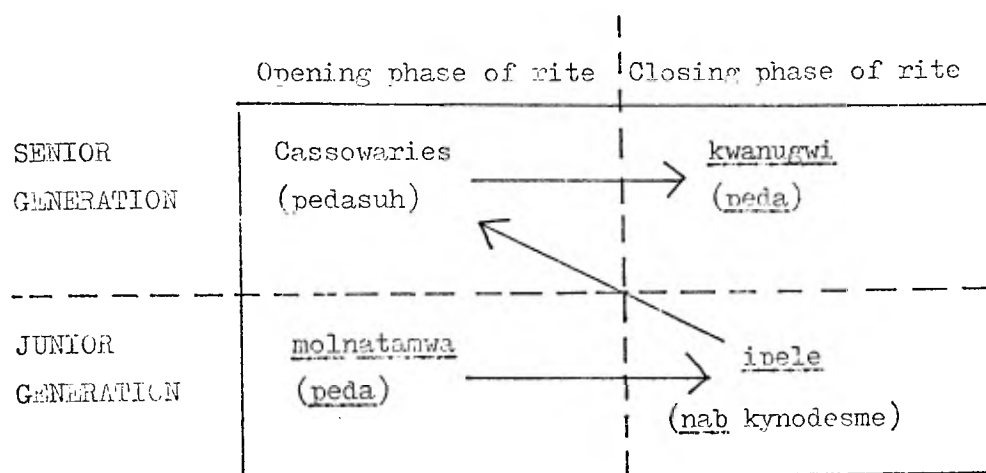


Table 9 . Peda vs. Pedasuh vs. nab-kynodesme

(The arrow shows the order in which the four roles are played over the course of a man's ritual career).

The position of the peda in relation to the pedasuh/nab-kynodesme opposition is an ambiguous one; in fact, as I have argued, the penis sheath is an ambiguous artefact altogether (cf. Ucko 1970 : 50 sqq). Looked at from one point of view, the peda is an artefact which blocks off the socially discouraged route whereby a bachelors' sexuality might manifest itself. This, I have suggested, is the meaning of the ritual associated with the neophyte's assumption of the peda at the hands of his mother's brother -



a ritual oriented entirely towards making him a successful hunter, not at all towards sexual activity as such. But on the other hand the peda is, inescapably, a sign of sexual potential, and moreover, a metonymic phallus. (One finds peda as a linguistic alternative for paiha: penis, for instance). This ambivalence of the peda is reflected in its use in the ida ritual, where it is worn by figures who are not yet sexually active (i.e. the molnatamwa) and by figures who are past their sexual prime, the philoprogenitive amov and the kwanugwi, the preceptors of the ipele (see below), i.e. the peda is used in ida by those figures whose sexual status is only weakly defined; where a clear-cut opposition is called for, the 'extreme' variants, the pedasuh or nab-kynodesme (neither of which are employed in everyday contexts) are used.

Thus, the ipele, culminating exponent: of the 'bachelor' stereotype, with its attendant rejection of overt sexuality, are given a treatment of the penis which, though it conveys essentially the same message (repression) as the peda donned by the neophyte, makes the same symbolic statement in a way which is much more forceful for being purified of the intrinsically ambiguous associations of the peda.

Next, I shall turn to the characteristic dance-style of the ipele, their relation to their preceptors, the Kwanugwi, and the firing off of the ipele arrows.

As with the respective treatments of the penis, the dance-styles of the cassowaries and the ipele are maximally contrastive. The dancing of the ipele is highly structured, tightly controlled, both as to the pattern of the dance

and also its duration. The cassowary dance lasts for about seven hours - the ipele dances for only ten minutes at most. This brevity recalls what I said earlier concerning the limitations placed on the dancing of the neophyte: the 'new man' conserves himself, conformably to the bachelor stereotype, by refraining from dancing overmuch. The dancer of the cassowary role, on the other hand, fearlessly accepts the challenge of the long dance, the privilege and dangers of untrammelled display.

As to the dancing itself, it is notable that the movements of the ipele are decidedly jerky and rigid (this being underlined by the sharp, staccato huf chords which mark their entries). It is as if they had not learned to use their limbs smoothly: their performance certainly lacks the nimbleness and grace of the other dancers. It is quite possible that inelegance of the ipele dance is a direct reflection, in choreographic terms, of that tendency to hobble or limp which Lévi-Strauss has noted as a characteristic of 'Oedipal' heroes in mythology (Lévi-Strauss 1958, p.237). (Cf. above for the same motif in Umeda myth). One can certainly say that the peculiar dance of the ipele is expressive of the fact that they are 'new men', unfledged dancers, appearing for the first time.

If the ipele have not yet learned to dance, nor have they learned how to shoot, it is the role of the kwanugwi 'the old men' to act as their preceptors - I have already pointed out the parallelism between the relation of the neophytes and their mothers' brothers and this ipele/kwanugwi relation. In part, as I have suggested, the ritual device of

keeping the ipele 'under instruction' until the very last seconds of the ritual expresses the social subservience of the junior generation, the same subservience to social pressures as is expressed in the penis binding of nab; but, at the same time, it must be stressed that it is the ipele, not the kwanugwi, who are playing the most prestigious role. Kwanugwi is a role to which no particular value is attached. This corresponds to the sociological position of the aged in Umeda, which was not particularly advantageous, as it is in more 'gerontocratic' societies. The very word kwanugwi is a compound of nugwi, meaning 'rotten' or 'stinking'. Superior knowledge does not give superior social prestige because it is accompanied by a decline in qualities of masculinity, hunting prowess and so forth. The old men I knew hardly relished their situation; they found in their status as old men no compensation for their physical decline, which they saw not as a natural consequence of age, but as the result of attacks by hostile spirits who would soon be ready to finish them off altogether. The deaths of most or all of their contemporaries filled them with loneliness and foreboding, and more than one old man in Umeda showed strong signs of becoming a recluse, (one old man of Punda was, in fact, a total recluse, living alone in a bush house). Most men died before having to encounter these problems, but it is certainly true to say that old age in Umeda was not so much respected as ignored: polite behaviour towards the old consisted in treating them as if they were not old.

Thus, the role of the instructors is not a prestigious



one, though, from the point of view of the symbolism of ida, it is an essential one. The relatively low prestige of the role is marked, first of all, by the absence of any disguising mask, or decorated body-paint, where this dance is concerned. The use of the peda rather than the pedasuh is significant; bespeaking, in this context, a reduction of sexual prowess. Still more illuminating, perhaps, are the kwanugwi's arrows, which are headless, dummy arrows, weighted with a roll of clay. These contrast sharply both with the typical ceremonial kis arrows, barbed and feathered, and the multi-pronged 'miniaturized' ipele arrows with their bindings of nab. The headless arrows of the kwanugwi are, in fact, identical to the dummy arrows used by small boys, suggesting that the kwanugwi have made a 'full circle' back to the point where their careers began as small boys hunting lizards and insects with toy bows. The arrows of the ipele, on the other hand, though marked by the symbolism of 'repression', are, by virtue of that very repression, uniquely potent. For it is these arrows, released by the ipele in the closing seconds of the ritual, which, falling into the bush, are held to renew its fertility in the coming year.

In short, where the kwanugwi are concerned, it can be said that the 'nemeses of reproductivity' has run its course: where, in the opening phase of the ritual, the senior generation (the cassowaries) dominated the junior generation (the molnatamwa), in the concluding phase of the ritual the position is reversed: the junior generation (the ipele) dominates the senior (the kwanugwi): theirs are the potent



arrows which renew the bush.

One thing stands out in all this: where ida commences with the impersonation, by men, of a natural species, it concludes with men taking on specifically human roles. To be sure, the ipele are idealized men, anonymous, masked exponents of a 'type' rather than individuals, but their essential humanity is expressed, above all, by the fact that they are bowmen. The ceremony in which the ipele participate is called yintavalm 'shooting birds': the celebration of 'man the hunter'. The reference to the cassowaries (who are 'birds' yinta) is inescapable: I was told that the ipele send the cassowaries, fish, amov etc. back to the bush where they belong. The ipele thus restore the accepted boundaries of the spheres proper to humankind and natural species, which the entry of the cassowaries (heralding an invasion of the cultural domain by natural species) threatened to overturn.

In the cultural symbol of the arrow the uniqueness and pre-eminence of men is unequivocally asserted. But the emblem of culture, the arrow, is also the emblem of the repression which culture imposes upon men. Ultimately ida comes to reflect a paradoxical confrontation of individual and collective autonomy. In discussing the cassowaries I spoke at length of 'autonomy' as a kind of limiting point towards which the trajectory of the individual male life-cycle is directed, always falling short of it. Only in the ritual guise of the cassowary is autonomy, in this sense, given full expression, and I have tried to show how, in the subsequent development of the ritual, a kind of nemesis, the

nemesis of reproductivity, overtakes autonomy and transforms it by means of the 'passage through fire' and the climatic moment of the yis ceremony, to the perpetuation of the very fabric of society from which autonomy always seeks an escape.

In the opposition between the cassowaries and the ipele is implicit the much more general opposition between the autonomy of the individual and the interests of the society at large, between spontaneity and the social order. In the guise of the cassowary is represented a kind of natural spontaneity; in the dancer and the ageli mask (the model of a tree) the society represents itself to itself sub specie naturalis. But the cassowaries, though given the greatest ritual prestige, represent a limit: a point beyond which spontaneity degenerates into disorder, 'communitas' into mere chaos. As the ritual progresses, the balance of forces shifts: on the first night the perimeter defences of the society collapse under attack from the 'outside' represented by the cassowaries; by the conclusion of the rites the situation was been reversed and the 'new men' fire their arrows outwards, over the bush, bringing about its renewal. Thus the yintavalm ceremony asserts, not only the pre-eminence of man the hunter over the natural species, such as cassowaries who form his prey, but also asserts human control over the processes of regeneration in nature. Beginning by incorporating nature (or l'homme naturalisé) into itself, the society finishes by assuming responsibility for nature, by 'culturalizing' the very process of natural regeneration. It is for this reason that I spoke earlier

of ida as a rite which 'normalizes' natural process, even as an act of poetic legislation: the symbolic act of 'fertilizing the bush with an arrow (which only elaborates, in a more generalised way, an idea already present in the 'plunging of the li (digging sticks) in garden magic) expresses, not a passive subjection to natural process but an active participation in the on-going cycle of bio-social regeneration. It is a victory of a specifically cultural kind, the normalisation of natural process through subsuming nature under cultural categories. But this victory, like all victories, is obtained only at a certain cost. The cost is repression; autonomy, of the kind represented by the cassowary, being placed under restriction in the person of the ipele, by an order whose very oppressiveness implies that it can only be temporary. The conflict between spontaneity and order, autonomy and repression, never ceases to be joined: implicitly the ipele are well on the way to becoming cassowaries themselves, as I will demonstrate below. The sacrifice of individual autonomy expressed in the symbolic repression of the ipele is, so to speak, the price paid for the restoration of the human order against the natural world, the collective authority of the society being obtained only at the expense of the autonomy of the individual.

But if, at one level, the ritual seems to oppose cassowary and ipele as fixed stereotypes, at another level of interpretation the relation between the two is clearly one of transition over time. By studying the sequence of ida as a whole one arrives rapidly at the idea that there are not



many ritual figures, but basically only one such figure in process of transformation. The two following sections (xx and xxi) on masks and body-paint will attempt to make this idea clear. This idea of transformation is important because it means that the cassowary and the ipele cannot be opposed as 'le diable et le bon dieu' - as good and evil. Umeda religion, to use a phrase of William James' which has been taken up recently by Mary Douglas, is, in certain respects, 'dirt-affirming' (Douglas 1966, p.164) - that is, a creative role is assigned to disorder; the cassowaries, lords of Misrule, are as essential to the eventual emergence of 'order' as the ipele themselves, for it is from them, through the sequence of transformations, that the 'order' is ultimately derived. Order and disorder (autonomy and repression, cassowary and hunter, senior and junior generations) are locked in a dialectical struggle from which neither emerges as the final victor.<sup>1</sup>

1. I have nowhere discussed ida from the standpoint of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, mainly because my knowledge of the subject is limited. Nonetheless, the ipele/cassowary relationship has rather obvious Freudian overtones, which may briefly be pointed out. The basis of the 'Oedipus Complex' it hardly need be said, is the child's jealousy of its father, which is manifested by the child's projection of its own hostility onto the father, who becomes the imagined castrator-figure. At the same time the child has fantasies (disguised in various ways) of eliminating the father-castrator. Turning to ida, we find both these themes represented. The treatment of the ipele's penis, though not actually castration as such has, surely the same symbolic meaning from the standpoint of Freudian theory. The ipele ('the son') is claiming symbolically that he has been castrated by the senior generation. However, he also has his revenge in the yintavalm ceremony, where the 'shooting' (of the cassowary = senior generation = father/castrator) allows him to project his own hostility outwards in an acceptably disguised way.



xx. The transformations of mask-types

The argument of this section is couched in visual terms: to follow it, it is necessary to refer to the figures displaying the various hair-styles and mask-types. (Fig. 40 and 41). The first two drawings show men with traditional hair-styles: (A) shows the hair bound up with stripped vines to form a column on the top of the head. (B) shows a man wearing a bol headpiece of woven cane. This object (the bol) is nowadays only worn in Umeda on ceremonial occasions, but I believe that a few years ago they were worn also in everyday contexts (in Waina and Sowanda a few men were still to be seen wearing the bol on non-ritual occasions). The name, bol, applied to this object is significant, because it brings out very clearly the 'phallic' implications of hair (ta). Bol otherwise means 'vulva': the way in which the hair (central) is drawn through the bol (peripheral) could hardly make the point with more explicitness. Combined with the fact that the effect, both of the bol hairstyle, and the method of binding the hair with vines, is to emphasise the vertical axis, one can, I think, argue that the purpose of these treatments of the hair is to emphasise the masculine characteristics of the head, to make it a 'male' head with specific characteristics. Women's hair, so far as I am aware, is given no special treatment, and is kept relatively short, as is children's hair as well.

But at the same time as emphasising masculinity, these treatments of the hair can be seen as symbolising the subjection of masculinity to 'control'. In this, the

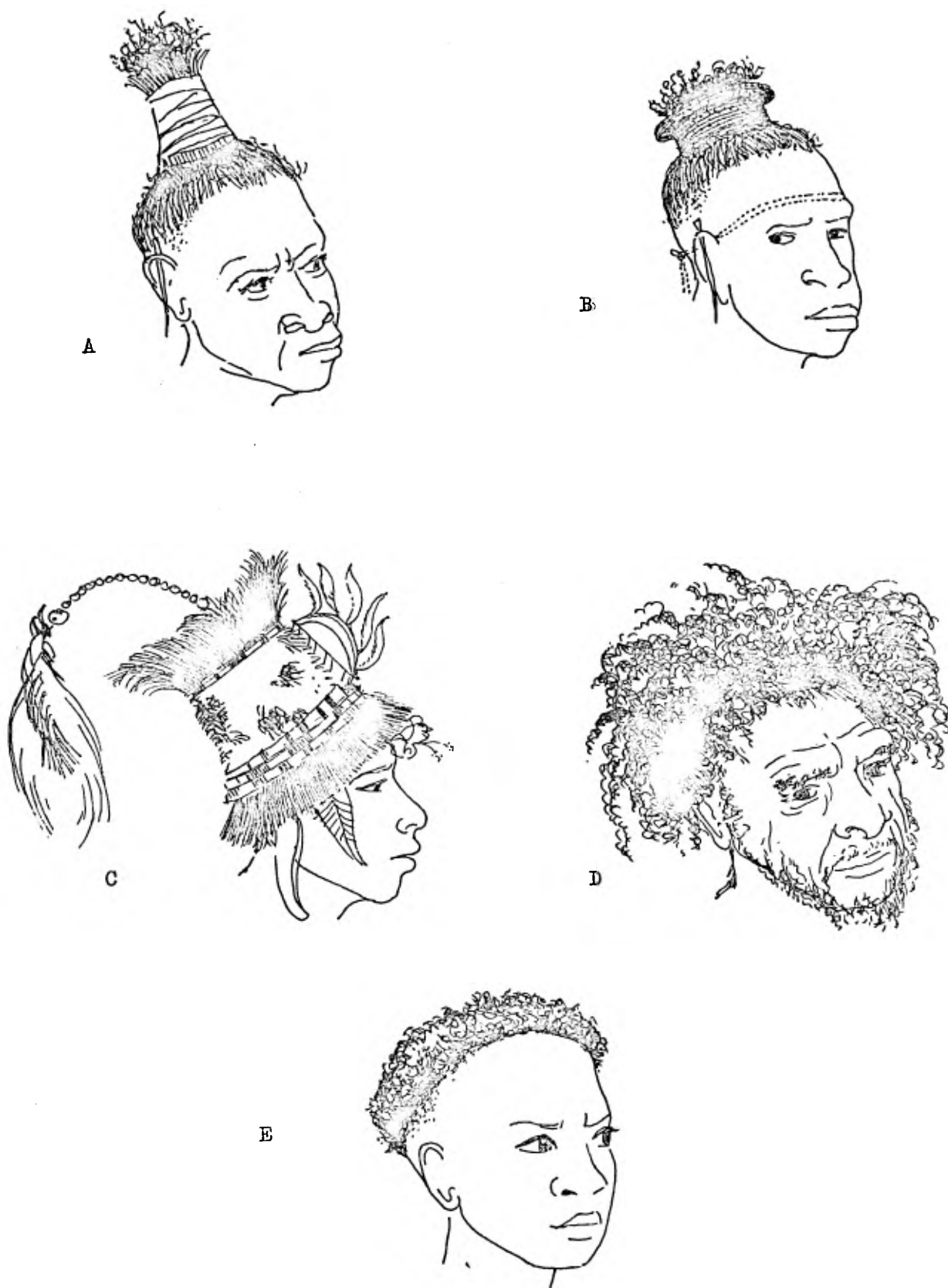


Fig 40 • HAIR-STYLES

treatments of the hair under discussion share a good deal with similar treatments given to the penis: there is, for instance, a clear link between the practice of kynodesme, the binding of the penis, and the binding of the hair shown in fig. 40A, B. The masculine hairstyles contrast both with the 'unmarked' female and infantile hairstyles, and also with the floppy uncontrolled mop of hair (D) which would be worn by older men (Table 10).

Table 10

|       | Controlled              | Uncontrolled           |
|-------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| long  | younger married men     | mature and elderly men |
| short | neophytes and bachelors | women and children     |

The oppositions long hair/short hair; controlled hair/uncontrolled hair give four combined categories (long/controlled, short/controlled, long/uncontrolled, short/uncontrolled). Reconstructing the situation somewhat - for post-contact influences have been more rapid to take effect in hairstyles than in almost any other department of life - it is plausible to think that each of these 'boxes' is filled by a distinct social category. Short uncontrolled hair characterises women and children; long uncontrolled hair the older men (see figs. 40D, E) - let it be noted that this is the group whose 'autonomy' is expressed in the 'bushy' ageli mask.

Long, controlled hair is characteristic of the younger adult men: obviously men might vacillate between the long/

controlled and long/uncontrolled categories, which merge into one another. Controlled, but shorter, hair was worn by bachelors and neophytes, whose hair, longer than that of the women and children has not yet reached the length it attains in later life. It is the bachelors and young men who are under the greatest pressure to conform to strict standards of dress and coiffure: they are the ones who punctiliously wear the peda (see Gell 1971, p.170 sqq) and they would also have been the most punctilious in wearing the bol. (Alas, they do so no longer, having taken to wearing cropped hair, in imitation of native policemen, catechists, prison guards etc.). Thus, before the recent period, the male life-cycle would have seen a progression through four stages, each marked by a change in coiffure:

| 1                      | 2                    | 3                   | 4                     |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Infancy                | Bachelorhood         | Young married man   | Older married man     |
| short/<br>uncontrolled | short/<br>controlled | long/<br>controlled | long/<br>uncontrolled |

with a possible final stage (old age) accompanied by progressive baldness, and so relative hairlessness once more.

It is not difficult to see that this 'encoding' of sociological status in terms of hair-styles is of direct relevance to the transformations of mask styles at ida. It would be true to say, in fact, that the mask styles take their point of departure, not from the fish, cassowaries, termites, or whatever entity they are overtly intended to represent, but rather from the human head itself: the mask is not an image of nature, but an elaboration of man.



Forming an intermediary category between the everyday hair-styles shown in figs. 40 A, B, D, E and ritual masks properly speaking, comes the ceremonial headgear shown in figure 40C. The bol forms a foundation around which are wrapped successive layers of ribbon and finally a decorative possum skin. Cassowary plumes, sulphur-cockatoo plumes, beads and coloured leaves complete the headpiece which is set off by white wallaby's tails dangling from the ears. Despite its greater complexity this ceremonial headgear is recognisably the bol hairstyle of everyday life: implicitly, the headgear is an elaboration of the 'vertical' controlled, hair-style; and the abundant black cassowary plumes (yapata) are doing duty for the wearer's own hair - in comparable fashion, I think, to the human hair used in the highlands 'wigs', worn, similarly, on ceremonial occasions in the Western Highlands of New Guinea (see Strathearn & Strathearn 1971).

A headpiece such as that shown in fig. 40C, is also the basis of the upper part of the amov mask (fig. 31): though for the amov longer and more abundant cassowary plumes are used, and the face and shoulders are, of course, covered.

There is thus a measure of continuity between everyday hairstyles, and the system of masks found in ida. In a sense, all the masks do is take up and elaborate certain expressive 'means' which are implicit in everyday usages - the same is true, for instance, of the expressive use of treatments of the penis in ritual (pedasuh vs. nab kynodesme) where, once again the usages of everyday life are taken up

and modified in various ways in order to make symbolic statements. By juxtaposing the various motives found in ritual with their counterparts in everyday contexts it is possible to anchor the ritual, which, by itself is relatively unintelligible, to mundane social conditions which, by contrast, are far more easy to understand.

To turn to the masks themselves, all of which have been described in the previous chapters (Figs. 23, 26, 27). The ageli mask has been analysed in detail (section vi above). One detail of the construction was not discussed at that time however: namely the binding of stripped vines which is used to fasten the apex of the mask beneath the point where the four arms emerge (the vine used is called lisog and is possibly the same as that used traditionally by men to bind up their hair). This binding corresponds, of course, to the hairstyle shown in fig. 40A. The four springy arms with their abundant sago fronds (substituting for cassowary plumes) correspond to the hair itself, emerging out of the top of the binding. In the case of the ageli mask the element of 'control' (represented by the binding of lisog) is highly inconspicuous, whereas the bushy ta element is very much in evidence: in terms of the present argument the ageli mask corresponds to the 'uncontrolled' (long) hair-styles of the mature married man. This, needless to say fits with what has already been said about the symbolic status of the cassowary role, and its meaning in relation to the social status of the men who ideally play it (i.e. the mature married men).

Taking the ageli mask as point of departure, a perfectly

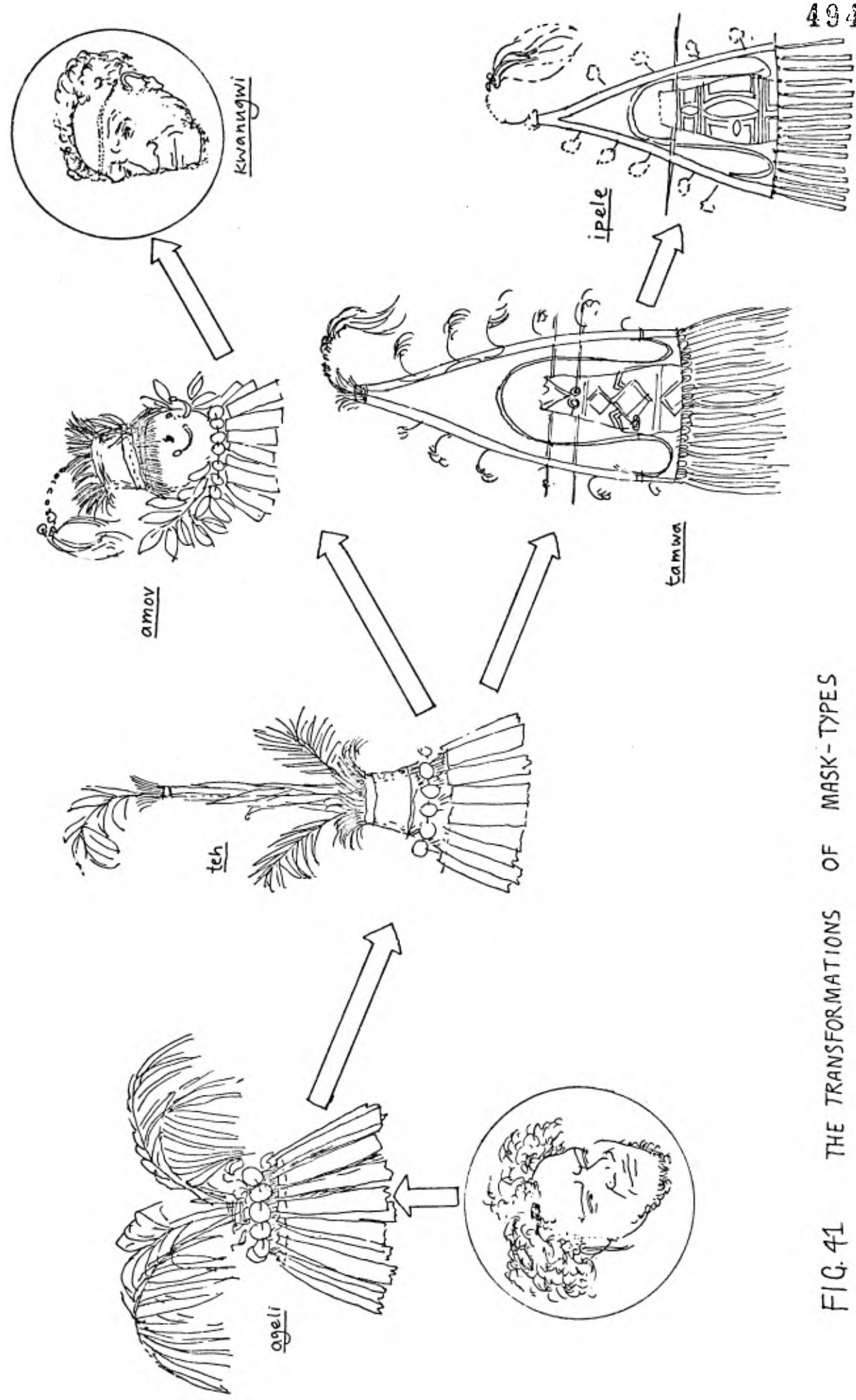


FIG. 41 THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF MASK-TYPES



consistent pattern can be seen in the modifications of successive masks. The first transition is ageli teh (cf. above section x). The 'lateral' dimensions of the ageli mask are reduced, the fronds and waving arms become vestigial, the hubnab fringe becomes shorter, the cone covering the dancer's head and shoulders more compact. Another very interesting phenomenon is apparent. Beneath the (now vestigial) arms a fringe of cassowary plumes has appeared, beneath which are found possum skins - i.e. the whole mask is moving in the direction of the amov mask which is distinguished by cassowary plumes and possum fur (fig. 41). The teh mask can be seen as a 'reduced' form of the ageli mask, and simultaneously, as an 'expanded' form of the amov mask - which is, in turn, a variant of the ceremonial headgear shown in fig. 40C. In essence, then, these are not separate masks, but a single 'ur-mask' (on the lines of Goethe's famous 'ur-plant') which can be manipulated to produce a theoretically infinite number of variant forms. The particular way in which the 'ur-mask' is manipulated - the particular dimensions which are emphasised or reduced - will correspond to the particular meaning given to the mask within the system. But this general system, of which the masks are specific realisations, goes beyond the ritual itself, to include, not only the hair-styles worn in everyday life, but even the basic dimensions of 'central vs. lateral' or 'vertical vs. peripheral' which, I have argued, are basic to Uredas' awareness of their society. Thus, the particular emphases given to mask-types give concrete realisations of what is, essentially, an 'unconscious



model' of social structure. In ida though, the unconscious model whose realisation is achieved in the transformations of mask-types is not a 'static' model, but a model of process; within each realisation of structural relationships is implicit a series of subsequent modifications (Fig. 41).

The teh mask, then, modifies the ageli mask in the direction of the amov mask; but at the same time the addition of the tall central column, topped by the aboga spray, looks forward to the tamwa mask (figs. 26, 27). There would appear to be little superficial resemblance between the tamwa mask, and the ageli mask: but closer analysis reveals more continuity than might have been anticipated.

The tall central shaft of the teh mask is made of stripped sago leaf-stems (napod). This material reappears in the tamwa mask, not as the central shaft of the mask, but as the tall, pointed outer framework. Schematically the change can be represented thus (Fig. 42).

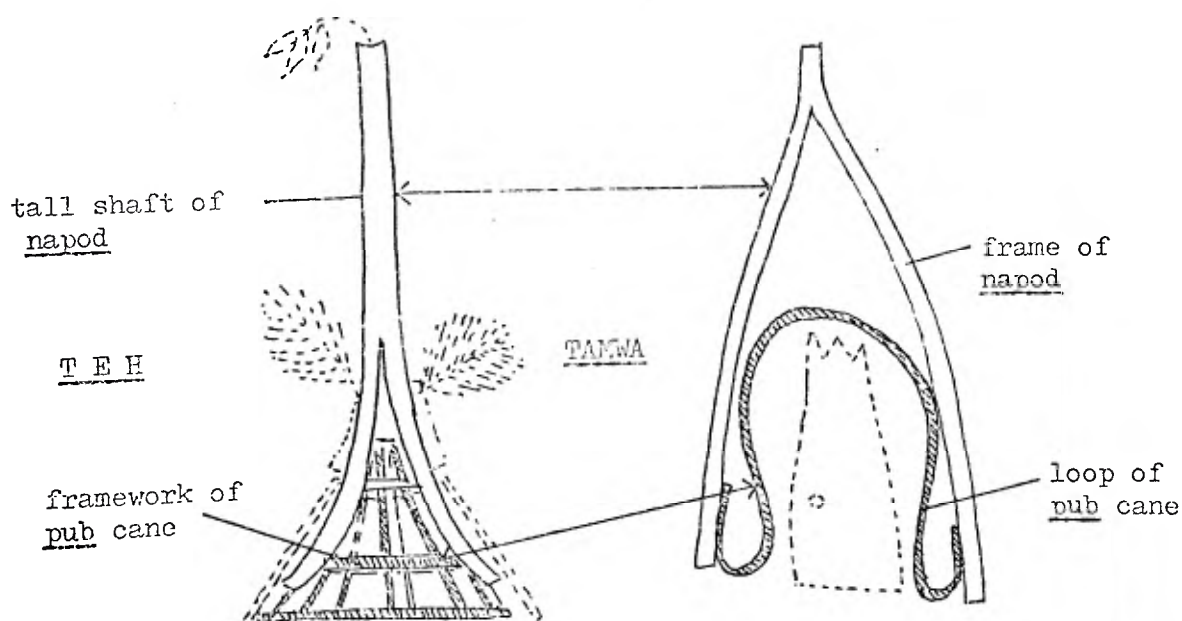


Fig 42 . STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TAMWA AND TEH MASKS

I.e. the napod component of the teh mask and the napod component of the tamwa mask is basically one and the same, only in the latter mask the napod is split up the middle to incorporate the wata face-mask. If the napod component of the teh mask finds its counterpart in the tamwa mask, what of the other components? The lower part of the framework, it is true, is very extensively modified; the framework of pub cane being reduced, in the tamwa mask to a single loop of pub between which the wata is stretched.

The cone of ehov sog has vanished entirely, and the binding of lisog, but both are replaced, effectively, by the tube of wata, whose function was, as I said, to retain the dancer's own hair. The transition from ehov sog and lisog to wata encodes, as I remarked above, a shift away from 'natural' materials towards 'culture' of which the coconut palm is a dominant symbol. At the same time, there is a clear relationship between the tube of wata and the hair style in which the hair is bound up to form a column (fig. 40A). If this ageli mask with its bushy naveli fronds corresponds to the 'long/uncontrolled' hair-style, then the tamwa mask corresponds to the 'long/controlled' hairstyle; moreover, this can be seen to conform to the sociological statuses of the actors of these roles, the elder 'autonomous' married men, and the more punctilious younger married men respectively.

In the tamwa mask, the leafy fronds and/or the cassowary plumes which substitute for the dancer's own hair in the case of the ageli and the teh masks have disappeared

entirely. However, these are replaced, first of all, by the dancer's own hair which should, ideally, emerge at the top of the mask - though nobody wore hair long enough to do this in 1969-70. Moreover the wata is, itself, an analogue of hair (ta) the equivalent of hair in relation to the coconut palm.

Finally, attention must be directed to the fringe of subnab covering the dancer's neck and shoulders: this is the obvious counterpart to the fringes of hubnab on the ageli and teh masks.

The contrast hub (wild pandanus) versus sub (limbum) is significant. Hub is a wild forest species, not utilised by man except for ritual purposes (it is distinguished from the domesticated pandanus, yaq, which is planted in groves and whose fruit is eaten). Sub, on the other hand, is a semi-domesticated species, planted around habitation sites, not edible, but utilised for its spathes, which are needed to make the ubiquitous limbum-spathe buckets, used for cooking and many other purposes. It is, then, to some extent, similar to the coconut as a 'cultural' palm, though not confined to the permanent hamlets (it also grows wild in the bush). More important, though, in its association with 'growth' - particularly its capacity to spring up to a great height in only a few years. (See below on 'subove' section xxi). It is associated with the subterranean 'growth-spirits' (subadagwa). The use of subnab for the fringes of the tamwa masks contains an implicit reference, I think, to the upward growth-potential of the limbum palm, sub. The

opposition hub/sub encodes first, a tendency towards 'culture' - in that sub is a culturally-utilised species - and secondly towards the 'vertical' axis - the tall slender palm with its small fronds and its astonishing capacity to attain heights of up to a hundred feet, contrasts with the squat hub which proliferates outwards rather than upwards, forming dense thickets with its many aerial roots. The contrasts between hub and sub as natural species conform with the change of emphasis (lateral → vertical      natural → cultural) which occurs in ida subsequent to the vis ceremony, i.e. with the arrival of the fish as harbingers of bio-social regeneration.

The contrast hub-sub makes sense, not only in terms of the particular tree species involved, but also in purely formal terms. Fig. 43 shows the fringes of the various masks in (approximate) scale as they appear when laid out flat. Comparison of these fringes provides a particularly clear illustration of the idea of 'miniaturization' - which is apparent in all the details of mask construction, but never so visibly as in this instance. The contrast is also apparent between the broad, flat, hubnab sections and the long, thin subnab sections.

Comparison of the fringes makes a suitable point of departure for integrating the ipele masks into the general scheme. It will be seen that in all major details of construction the ipele masks conform to the pattern laid down by the tanwa masks. In these masks, though, miniaturization is carried to the ultimate degree. The tube of wata has shrunk



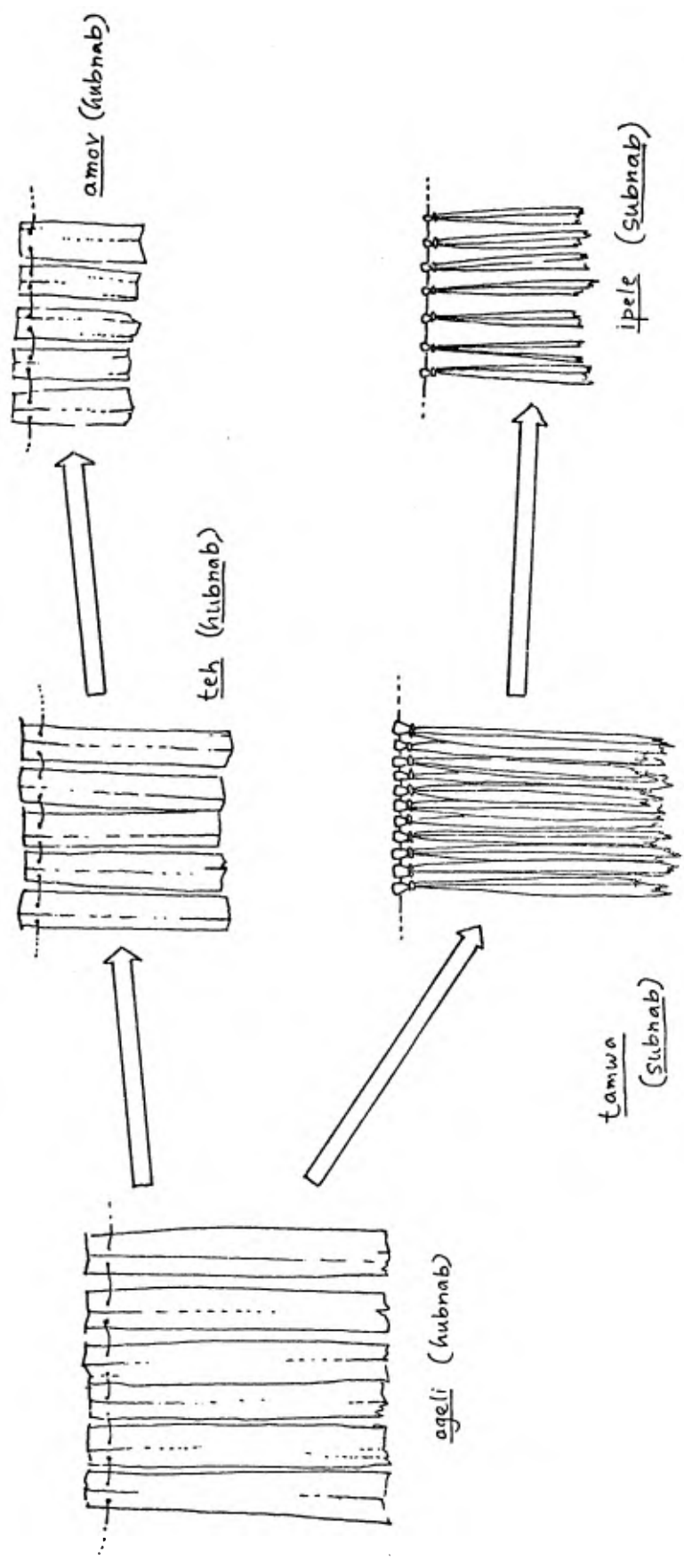


Fig 43 . MASK-FRINGS

to about half the length that it has in the tamwa mask. Implicitly, this diminution of the vertical dimension of the mask corresponds to the fact that the dancer's hair is also shorter, since the ipele is a 'new man' - symbolically a neophyte is not one in actuality.

This reduction of the vertical dimension of the mask corresponds also, according to the argument being advanced here, to the 'short/controlled' hair-style adopted by younger men and youths, whose hair has not yet attained the length it will in later life. This 'miniaturization' of the mask expresses the 'repression' to which, I have argued, the ipele are subject - one sees the same phenomenon in comparing the ipele mask to the tamwa mask that was previously pointed out in relation to the ipele arrow, which is a 'miniaturized' version of the arrow-types carried by the fish (fig. 39).

Not only has the tube of wata been reduced in the ipele mask but also the outer framework of napod. The framework is decorated with tufts of white cockatoo-down (ebata). This is a significant detail, for it marks a change from the feather decorations of the other masks, black cassowary plumes in the case of the teh and amov masks, black hornbill feathers and blue-purple gouria pigeon feathers as in the case of the tamwa masks, plus smaller quantities of red or green parrot feathers, yellow bird of paradise plumes, and the sulphur crests of the cockatoo. Feathers will be dealt with further in the subsequent section on colour symbolism: here, it is sufficient to note that

the use of ebata by the ipele (and only by them) once again bespeaks 'miniaturization'. Moreover, these white feathers imply a degree of immaturity on the part of the ipele, and the repression of overt sexuality, since ebata feathers are otherwise only worn by the women, who tie bunches of white ebata to the long tails of their dancing skirts. Short, downy ebata feathers are, so to speak, feathers in a 'nascent' condition, contrasting to the large, darker-coloured feathers found on the other masks.

These facts suffice, I think, to confirm the idea that the masks used in ida form a highly coherent system, a system of 'non-verbal communication' which can be reduced to a restricted number of interacting principles, which serve to articulate the social status of the various ritual figures.

The principles which govern the interpretation of ritual masks, derive ultimately from the conditions governing the interpretation of non-ritual experience i.e. they are grounded in social usage in mundane contexts. And what they express is, essentially, a process: each transformation of the 'ur-mask' captures a transitory phase of development - be it specifically human development, or the development of a 'tree'-model of the bio-social universe - and makes it permanent, while at the same time harking back to the previous condition, and looking forward to the subsequent condition of the organism. I stress this aspect particularly, (and perhaps rather tediously) because it seems to me that a consideration of process must form the crux of any analysis

of ida. The whole ritual is about processes, transitions: to understand it, it is necessary always to think in terms of an implicit or explicit time-dimension, either as regards the internal relationships of the various ritual impersonations, or, equally, in seeking to relate the ritual as a whole to the social context.

The question of the social meaning of various 'time-dimensions' is taken up in the very last section (xxii): before going on to that problem, I have to deal at some length with the problem of colour symbolism and the significance of the various body-paint styles. I will sum up the argument of this section, not in words, but in the form of a 'flow-chart' juxtaposing the various mask types according to their implicit temporal or 'processual' sequence <sup>(Fig. 41)</sup> ~~which, as it noted, is not the sequence in which they appear in a performance of ida. I will return to this apparent paradox in section xxii.~~

## xxii. Colour Symbolism

### (a) Introduction

Since the publication of Turner's important paper on 'Colour Symbolism in Ndemba Ritual' (Turner 1967, Chapter III), anthropologists have tended to be extremely alive to the problems of colour taxonomy, classification and symbolism. Colour taxonomy - as distinct from symbolism - has been the topic of a book (Kay & Berlin 1969) with many contributions by anthropologists (mainly American) who all evidently made very careful studies, while in the field, of the various colour-terms found in their informants' languages. Studies



of nomenclature may be expected to proliferate, both under the impact of Kay and Berlin, (whose work acknowledges an important debt to Conklin's paper (1955) - which I discuss below); and also because studies of nomenclature must precede studies of 'colour symbolism proper', after the manner of Turner. When one looks for a similar proliferation of discussions of 'Colour Symbolism Proper' one looks in vain; nothing very substantial has been published, to my knowledge, with the honourable exceptions of Tambiah (1968) Strathearn & Strathearn (1971, chapter 7) and Beck (1969). This seems odd in the light of the undeniable impact of Turner's pioneering researches into this field: is it a subject about which people would rather talk than write? Or could it be that the very nature of Turner's argument - his division of the spectrum into the triad Black/White/Red, and his subsequent identification of this triad with 'substances' evoking 'heightened bodily experiences' (Turner 1967 : 89) has had the opposite effect than that which the author hoped: that it has tended to smother, rather than stimulate, further debate? I am more fortunate than many, perhaps, in having collected material in a society who definitely 'had' colour symbolism, and who used it in ritual in a way which really bears very little relation to the 'Turner hypothesis' on colour symbolism. For Turner, the basis of colour symbolism is psychological, or, more specifically, affective: colours classify out 'emotional' experiences, and they are used in ritual to evoke a certain shade of emotional feeling. I found this approach unsatisfactory:

in directing attention to the human body (or rather body-products) as the source of all colour symbolism Turner ignores the whole non-human environment (which is much more rich in colour than the human body per se - as well as being just as 'interesting') and, still more, deflects attention away from the essential factors of continuity between the human and non-human world. The 'essence of redness' or 'blackness' cannot be sought in any privileged domain: 'red' becomes symbolically significant only as the consequence of being the 'common factor' between many domains, and thereby a means of generalising experience - and not only 'emotional' experiences, but also 'concrete knowledge' ('la science du concret' in Lévi-Strauss' sense).<sup>1</sup>

Let us suppose for instance, that the only red substance in the whole world was blood - under such circumstances the use of 'red' as a 'colour symbol' would be unthinkable; 'redness' would have no generality, only one meaning would be attached to it; namely, 'blood'. 'Blood' might be used in ritual: but it would not be used to mean 'red', it would mean itself. Conversely, if our blood were not red, but rather an uninteresting greyish-brown, would we paint pillar-boxes that colour? - try to breed a grey-brown rose? I doubt it. Rather than adopt Turner's approach, I am inclined to see the source of the universality (relatively speaking) of colour symbolism in the fact that everything is some colour, rather than in the fact that certain things are certain colours (i.e. semen/milk = white, blood = red etc.). So many more things than blood are 'red', and many of them are brighter

1. 1962, chapter 1.

shades of red than blood is itself. It is easy to think of many 'significantly' red objects whose redness has nothing to do with blood: ripe apples and strawberries, Reynard the fox, the glowing mouths of volcanoes, the red rose, the scarlet woman of Babylon, the red hair of Queen Elizabeth I, and so on. The 'Red Flag' has immeasurable interpretations, only one of which is that it is drenched in blood of revolutionary martyrs (e.g. it is red because it stands for the dawn of the 'New Era': it is red because the skins of the proletarians are red, weatherbeaten by a life of labour, as opposed to the effete white, which stands for aristocracy etc.). In short, the intrinsic 'colourfulness' of the world presents consciousness with an inchoate field which can be the object of an indefinite number of pattern-building exercises. If there is certain regularity observable in colour symbolism at the level of cross-cultural comparison -- and Turner has gone a long way towards demonstrating the existence of such regularities -- the explanation ought not to be sought in specific coloured 'substances' but in the unity of colour phenomena within many domains. It is in its power to express underlying continuities between disparate domains that colour became symbolically significant.

To demonstrate this in relation to the Umeda material, it is necessary to turn, first of all, to the question of colour terminology. I shall not discuss the psycho-linguistic approach of Berlin and Kay here, since their work -- predicated on a hard-and-fast distinction between 'basic' and 'derived' Colour Terms (which I find dubious) involves too high a degree of abstraction to be of use as a starting point for

a discussion of colour symbolism - as the authors admit. Rather than seeking to identify any 'basic' terms (an abstraction from language) or attempting to plot their 'spectral' reference via Munsell Colour cards and similar sampling materials (an abstraction from reality) my own interest in Colour nomenclature has been focussed entirely on the way terms are used in real-world situations. To my mind, the best starting-point for a theory of colour symbolism, is trying to see how the everyday world is classified out according to colour discriminations.

Linguistically-minded ethnographers, such as Conklin (1955) and Bulmer (1968) have progressed further in an attempt to relate colour terminology as a component of language to the environment - the environment which has been developed in order to classify. One, relatively obvious but nonetheless important, conclusion which has emerged is that the use of colour terminology may be partially or wholly dependent on what the other classificatory discriminations are being brought to bear upon the object.

Conklin writes "the basis of this level I classification (by which he means the four 'irreducible' colour categories in Hanunoo) appear to have certain correlates beyond what is normally considered the range of chromatic differentiation and which are associated with non-linguistic factors in the external environment". He argues that the four terms (roughly, white, black, red and pale green) rest on a two-way opposition, irrespective of spectral hue, between, on the one hand 'light' versus 'dark' and on the other hand 'succulence'



versus 'dessication'. Consequently 'colour' as such, is virtually ignored in classifying visual appearances as 'light-toned' (white and pallid colours) 'dark-toned' (black and all very dark coloured) 'succulent' (greens, yellows) and 'dessicated' (brown, red, orange, etc.). Evidently the reds and the green may overlap. Conklin tells us that pale brown newly cut bamboo is malatuy (green) while dried plant material of equivalent colour is 'red' (mamara) - a classification which makes no sense of 'colour' is the absolute standard employed.

Conklin's all-too-brief paper does establish one essential point, which is of direct relevance to the interpretation of colour symbolism: namely, that colour terminology is intimately associated with other discriminations and cannot be treated as a phenomenon in isolation.

This theme has been taken up in an admirable and much more circumstantial account of the Colour Terminology of Keram, a New Guinea language, by R. Bulmer (Bulmer 1968 120-134).

Like Conklin, Bulmer notes that Keram has no isolable concept of 'colour' as such and that the Keram terms fall into contrastive sets involving, besides spectral hue, extraneous dimensions such as ripeness/unripeness, succulence/dessication, dirtiness, patterned contrast and so on. Bulmer gives a particularly interesting discussion of contextual restrictions on the application of Keram Colour Terms: "in different domains of application (such as vegetation, soil or human skin) the same term may in some cases be applied to different colour ranges, and different, normally contrasting,

terms may be applied ... to the same colours" (ibid. p.131). Thus pk, glossed by Bulmer as 'ripe' (of fruit) and which used for bright yellow-orange shades when applied to ripe bananas or pawpaws, can also be applied to human skin, denoting a lighter colouration, which, if transferred from human skin to a fruit-skin would be classified as gs (dirty brownish grey) or gac (greyish brown or green).

I would like to suggest a tentative generalization at this point. There seem to me to be two basic alternatives for Colour Terminology. The first, which underlies scientific colour theory, can be visualised as an ordinary rigid ruler held up to the spectrum the measured divisions being identified absolutely with a set of colour terms. The second alternative which is more characteristic of Keram Colour Terminology, must be visualised as a special elastic or rubber ruler marked with divisions which vary in size as the ruler is stretched or compressed. As the rubber ruler is stretched or compressed to conform with the range of colour discriminations required within a given domain, so the spectral divisions vary in proportion. Stretched to its uttermost it might encompass the plumage of birds, compressed more narrowly it might discriminate among the relatively slight variations in human skin colour. I suggest that natural languages contain combinations of both species of terminology: i.e. they have one set of terms with fixed meanings, calibrated by direct reference to known objects (e.g. 'violet' or 'orange' in English) combined with a set

of terms of flexible significance which can be used for discriminating within domains. An example of the latter type is the English set black/white as variously applied to coffee, skin colour, wood, etc., or red vs. brown as applied to hair, furs, skin colour, soil and so on. The two types of colour terminology could be identified with 'secondary' and 'primary' colour terms respectively (Berlin and Kay) or Conklin's 'Level II' and 'Level I' terms (Conklin op.cit.). While this rigid terminology, based on absolute criteria, is arbitrary, the flexible terminology generates a system of classification of objects within disparate domains which is much more amenable to interpretation, and much more likely to be invested with symbolic significance. Colour, as defined by the flexible system, becomes the overt manifestation, which can be re-defined as the context changes, of covert dimensions - themselves of greater ideological significance than colour as such, but far less readily perceptible as part of sensory reality.

(b) Umeda Colour Terminology

When I attempted to elicit colour terms from Umeda informants using non-vegetable objects such as paint, coloured cloth, or household objects, my informants tended to employ a terminology based on matching substances: if the object resembled in colour some form of paint or coloured earth known to them, a colour-term derived from it would be employed: i.e. yellow objects were lele, the normal word for 'yellow paint' (also a yellow-plumaged bird species), black objects were sunbwi meaning 'charcoal', also 'black

paint' which is made from charcoal. There was a sizeable vocabulary of such 'matching' terms: red : suetde (from sue : fire) green : ylenatuf (yle : leaf + natuf : sago leaf-stem) yispeda : purplish or grey 'stale yis', pwioowe : dark blue from the dark blue waters of a rock-pool (pwioh); silvery or metallic objects were ponoesogwe from ponoesog the silvery bark of the ponoe tree and so on. At this level, the terminology of matching substances might be extended indefinitely, with scant consistency in usage. But with regard to living matter whose colour was actively commented upon outside the context of my formal enquiries, I found a greatly simplified system, using five categories at most applied in the 'flexible' way outlined above. I found this puzzling at first, but eventually I discerned systematic principles beneath the confusion of usage. The terms in this set are: i) midiki or pedidi are synonyms meaning roughly 'black', 'dark coloured' 'discoloured' etc. ii) pusi, puskakoi 'white', 'light coloured' iii) abwi : 'yellow', 'yellow-brown' - abwi is the usual word meaning 'ripe' iv) subove : a word indicating living matter in a state of rapid growth or ripening applicable to a wide range of colours ranging between pale green or reddish or orangey brown, including purple and orange, and, finally, v) panna : 'red' whose meaning is included in the range of subove.

I want now to look at the linguistic associations of these terms, taken individually, since this will help to shed some light on the meaning of colour symbolism in ida. First, midiki : black. This falls into a group with midi



meaning 'a ghost' a 'dead man' and likewise midnem meaning finished 'finished', 'dead', 'unconscious'. Thus hopkway midnen - to shoot an animal or a man so that it dies, yahaitav midnem : to become unconscious, either in sleep or death. Midiki is also found as timidiki (ti 'tree' + midiki) : this term links the colour black with the idea of the terminal phase of the growth cycle of vegetation. Timidiki could be glossed 'dead wood'. Pediki, the alternate term to midiki carries with it similar connotations, combining the meanings 'dark coloured' and 'rotten' (peda = 'rotten' as well as 'penis-gourd'). Thus yis (sago jelly) is, when fresh, a delicate pink colour, which becomes, as the yis grows stale and old, a dark greyish purple at which point it is yispeda and would be classified as pediki.

Secondly, pusi, puskakoi 'white'. Pusi otherwise means 'latex' (in which context it is a synonym for nen = latex (= milk). Latex appears when the bark of various trees is cut open: the idea of pusi being what is revealed when an object is cut open is carried over into the verb form pusitav 'to butcher an animal' 'to cut something open'; oktapusm: the butchering of a pig etc. Puskakoi, the other more usual form of the word adds kakoi, which means 'unripe'. Together, therefore, the two components of puskakoi relate to the structure of the living object, the white insides that are revealed when it is cut open - the immaculate innards of a pig as contrasted to its dark hairy skin for instance - and also to a temporal process, the association of whiteness with youngness, unripeness, immaturity.

Opposed to kakoi in ordinary speech is ab or abwi 'ripe' which also has a colour reference. Ab has already been encountered as a component of many words (e.g. aba 'ripe' sago-flower, absa 'boundary' etc. The essential point about 'ripeness' is that it is a 'transitional' stage between immaturity (kakoi) and rottenness (peda): this is reflected, in the ritual, in the 'transitional' status of the aba dancer (cf. section iix and ix above).

Finally, I would like to comment on the linguistic associations of subove. As a noun, subove refers to the orange-coloured fruit which are strung together and decorate the ageli, teh and amov masks. But compare the following list:

|                  |                     |   |
|------------------|---------------------|---|
| <u>sub</u> words | <u>Sub</u>          | limbum palm                               |
|                  | <u>Subul</u>        | earthworm                                 |
|                  | <u>Subudagwa</u>    | subterranean growth-spirit                |
|                  | <u>Subove</u>       | orange decorative fruit                   |
|                  | <u>Sbbove</u> (adj) | colour term: green-red-yellow-purple etc. |
|                  | <u>Subof</u>        | gouria pigeon                             |

The gouria pigeon (subof) is the largest flighted bird, the rationale of the association subove/subof is probably given by the striking colour of the breast feathers of the gouria pigeon which are of an irridescent crimson-purple colour hard to describe. These feathers are subove in Umeda colour classification.

Rather similar in colour, to the breast-feathers of the gouria pigeon are the spathes of the limbum palm sub, which I would identify as the central member of this class of related words. The way in which the limbum palm is associated with 'growth' has been mentioned in the previous section, in the discussion of mask-fringes (cf. above section xviii). The subulagwa spirits, which are responsible for

plant growth, and also certain illnesses. Invocations to these spirits may be made at the base of a sub palm, or a sago palm. These spirits in turn are identified with earthworms (subul) which Umedas regard as very dangerous, taboo creatures (their agriculture does not involve turning the soil to any depth, so they never see earthworms under normal circumstances except after heavy rains when some come to the surface. The taboo attitude also applies to the sub palm, though these are planted around settlement sites because of their useful spathes and their trunk wood which is used in house construction. The tabooed region of the limbum palm is the crown - the region in palm trees where growth takes place. The immature material in the crown of the limbum palm - the original 'coeur de palmier' is highly, and obviously, edible but is strictly tabooed as food; the sanction being that if limbum were eaten, then the sago stands would not mature. This restriction applies to other wild palms which bear a resemblance to sago: e.g. 'naimo'; the integrity of the category 'edible palm' has to be maintained by tabooing competing species of potentially edible palms. The mystical association of sub with growth processes are also responsible for this taboo, just as earthworms are shunned because of their association with growth, The crown region of the limbum palm must be briefly described because it is, so to speak, the epitome of growth processes in plants, and also because it is strikingly and significantly pigmented. The central region of the cylindrical crown is dead-white in colour, made of pure starch, sweet and crunchy - this innermost material is the material from



which the fringe of the ipele mask is made, and the arrow-bindings etc. As one moves outwards towards the surface of the crown, the nab becomes progressively darker and tougher, forming pale green immature fronds towards the top of the crown (the material of the tamwa fringes) and towards the bottom an astonishingly tinted series of immature spathes, wrapped round one another like annular rings, graduated between dead-white through pale yellow, pink, pale reddish and purplish tones, to become red and purple when the outside layer is reached, while the outermost surface of outermost spathe is blackish-purple in colour. This graduated series (white → pale pink/red/yellow → purple → blackish, discoloured) must be borne in mind as a model for interpreting Umeda colour symbolism.

(c) Colour Terms in use and the association of colour

From this brief discussion I think that a consistent picture begins to emerge. Colour terms express the visual correlates of two axes of discrimination 1) a 'structural' axis which opposes inner (white) to outer (dark) and ii) a temporal axis which opposes immature (white) to maturing (subove, abwi) (i.e. coloured) to mature (dark). These two axes can be combined and are, in fact, in the crown of the limbum palm. Fig. 44 attempts to depict this double relationship of colour, structure and process.

Before attempting to apply this to the use of colour symbolism in ida I would like to make a few additional points about the use of colour in (everyday) magical and medicinal contexts, and about the use of colour terms.



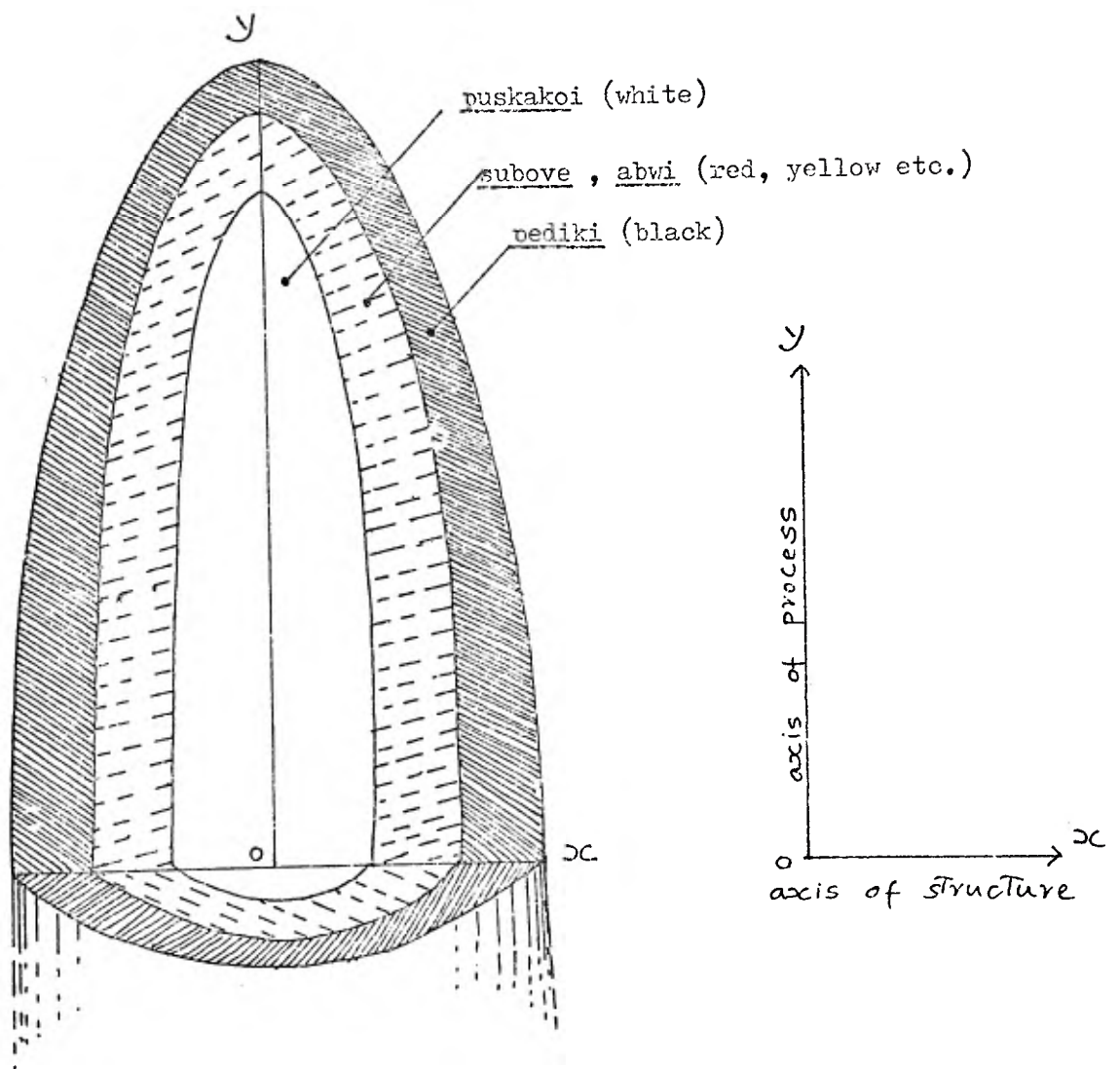


Fig. 44 COLOUR, STRUCTURE, AND PROCESS.

About the symbolism of white there is little to add, though it is significant that the most potent magical substance according to Umeda informants, is a kind of whitish loam, called ogurubwe, dug from the ground (the white insides of the earth) in a secret place known only to senior men. People spoke of this substance in tones of deepest respect, and I could discover little beyond the bare name: I was certainly not offered a sample or told how to use it. (It was employed in garden fertility magic, and was pressed against sago-palms to make them full of starch - among other uses). Two essential features stand out, the origin of ogurubwe in the interior of the earth, and its power of initiating vegetable growth, and the association of these with whiteness. (Incidentally, a myth tells how white men once lived in brotherhood with black men, but subsequently descended into the bowels of the earth, with all their good things, as a result of a quarrel. Once again whiteness is associated with the subterranean regions).

About subove, the term ranging between pale green (for instance the leaf buds of the breadfruit - ipwata) and reddish-brown (Melanesian children's hair-colouration) - there is more to say. Conspicuous colour, redness or yellowness, seemed to predestine objects for ritual or symbolic use. For example, the suffix panna marks out a whole class of conspicuously 'red' varieties of common species e.g. pannakta red sugarcane, pannapwi red pitpit, pannamesa red parrot, pannatamwa red fish - the whole class being tabooed en bloc to those in a ritually dangerous condition, particularly

youths just beginning to hunt, since eating these panna varieties is believed adversely to affect hunting, or, in the case of girls, success in processing sago (i.e. eating panna varieties of common foodstuffs interferes with the proper development of the individual into adulthood).

Girls are not even allowed to look at the giant, red pandanus fruit (yag) nor to eat the fruits tet and wi. Discussing the pannatamwa taboo in an earlier section (above section xi)

I argued that food taboos reflect an identification of the thing tabooed and the observer of the taboo. These taboos on girls eating fruit are a clear instance of this. More generally, I would say there is a consistent opposition between social persons in a state of rapid maturation and 'red' foods. Redness (panna, subove) is a sign of growth-in-process and the taboo on those who, themselves, are in a critical state of maturation eating such 'red' foods is a taboo on signified eating sign, on (growing) ego eating his own image. In magic designed to secure growth the connection is equally striking. For example, the coconut which is pounded on the earth in garden-sowing magic is painted red in colour. People are painted red too: particularly young people. I have a very vivid memory of stumbling into a village in the late afternoon after a long walk, to be met by a reception committee consisting of a gaggle of small children, all painted red from head to foot, including their hair, a strange and rather beautiful group. Eventually an old man with black wrinkly skin arrived to take charge of me; the contrast with the children could not have been

sharper, or more significant.

In fact Melanesian children are born pink, not black, and their pigmentation only develops gradually over the first months, while their hair retains a coppery-red tinge into late childhood. This colour scheme, particularly the youthful hair colour, was described as subove. Moreover, when they are born, Melanesian children exhibit the characteristic 'melanin spot' - a purplish patch over the buttocks, which disappears after a few weeks. When I indicated interest in this patch of colour, while examining a new-born child, my informant responded with the single word 'subove' delivered sotto voce, very indicative of the taboo-laden atmosphere surrounding reproduction and growth-processes as perceived by Umeda culture. The area occupied by the 'melanin spot' remains through childhood, the site of various magical and curative treatments, to promote growth on the part of the child and fend off illness. The area is switched with stinging-nettles (ko) which make the child strong (the habit of brushing with nettles is continued throughout life). The area is also brushed with a red herb called ord. Ord is the word used otherwise to mean 'red ochre' - I see a degree of continuity here between the symbolic meaning of the red herb with which the child is brushed, and the red ochre used in the ritual body-paint. Later on the site of the melanin spot (i.e. above the buttocks) is the area in which bodily strength is supposed to reside: the oktek is a magical artefact which increases bodily strength by reinforcing that region.



Children are encouraged to paint themselves with the seeds of bixa<sup>1</sup> to ensure good skin and growth. (Bixa is the specific against tinea). Young girls at puberty painted red designs on their breasts. The underlying idea here is not difficult to grasp: the colour subove is an indication, a natural sign, of being in a state of growth. Red things in nature (swelling tet fruit, the red suckers of sago palms etc.) are manifestly in process of maturation: hence, to achieve the maturation of the human organism, 'redness' must be encouraged. Hence the red-painted children: redness is the 'sign/condition' of maturation, to use the terminology of section xv above ('The manipulated augury').

Finally let me add a word on the symbolism of black. Ghosts are black-skinned (midiki) and walk at night. They do not appear in the village itself, but in the vicinity, lurking on the paths leading in and out of the hamlets. They are seen by hunters seeking game by night, and by women and children absenting themselves from the secure pool of light cast by the camp fire. (The opposition between 'outer darkness' versus the secure, lighted, centre has relevance, I think, for the interpretation of the cassowaries egregious 'blackness'). Ghosts also walk in peoples' dreams, threatening to entrap the unwary spirit of the dreamer. Black is the colour of terror, and also of violence. Warriors, preparing for battle, covered their faces and bodies with charcoal, and perfumed themselves with the perfume plant inis, called 'black' by informants, though really a dark green. The equipment of the warrior, his bow, his war-arrows, his

1. A shrub whose seeds exude a brilliant red pigment.

body armour, were all alike blackened by smearing with blood, betel-juice and certain tree-gums which, though red when fresh, are applied so as to impart a black sheen, which they very effectively do. And this blackness is intensified by the smoking the equipment receives while it is stored in the house-roof over the fire. Other items were smoked in this way, including the pedasuh dance-gourds, the huf trumpets, and, most notably perhaps, dead bodies which were smoked before being abandoned in trees and disused bush-houses. (Burial is a recent introduction, which had not entirely displaced the traditional method of corpse-disposal in 1970). The artificial blackening and drying out of corpses is the reciprocal of the artificial reddening of childrens' skin; it reinforces the point made above concerning the relationship between colour and natural processes as the basis for the symbolic use of colour. In the same light must one view the strong association between toq (black, smoked meat) and the role of pater-familias. The prize food is kept in the familial smoking basket, blackened by use, under the watchful eye of the head of the family, by whom it is dispensed. (The child who receives smoked meat at his father's knee will live to see his own father smoked). Smoking over the fire makes things black, but also makes them hard, permanent, lasting. Smoking the bodies of the dead is an act of piety, an attempt to preserve them, as meat is preserved for festivals. Hence, blackness stands not only for the 'outer darkness', the dark forests inhabited by ghosts, ogres, prowling sorcerers,

black-painted warriors bent on killing - and cassowaries - but also for the blackness of antiquity, an immemorial quality. Toag-tod ('smoked-meat' man) the first man, is described as having a black skin, as opposed to his 'younger brother'-cum-'son' Pultod whose skin is 'red' (i.e. subove). (The same black/red opposition exists between Tetagwa and Ahoragwa, the female counterparts of Pultod and Toagtod respectively. Cf. above section xii).

(d) Body Paint

How do these ideas tie in with the body-painting at ida? Body-painting is a subject with a considerable literature of its own (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1961, pp. 160-180; Strathearn & Strathearn 1971; James Faris 1972) - which cannot be sampled here. The simplest and most basic thing that one can say about body-paint is, that it is a modification of the skin, even, perhaps, the acquisition of a new skin. In a Melanesian context this modification of the skin may carry a deeper ideological meaning than might be expected under other circumstances, since New Guinea is the classic area for myths about renewable skin. A new or modified skin is a new or modified personality. In the Umeda context, the painting of the body, to a greater or lesser degree of elaboration, is the sine qua non of ritual action - and I have said that men painted themselves before going into battle as well. In curing rituals men paint themselves with designs representing the illness-causing spirits with whom they identify themselves while symbolically removing their 'spears' from the patient. Here, body-paint functions



as a means of temporarily identifying men with spirits; other kinds of body-paint are less specific in intention but the general idea is the same. For minor curing ritual the paint is reduced to spots of red ochre on the joints of the body, the nipples, the cheeks and the forehead. Here the paint does no more than indicate a temporary assumption of ritual power: contrasting the active participant in the curing ritual from the patient, who is always left unpainted.

In ida the contrast between painted and unpainted actors in the ritual is equally marked. Fully painted actors are the most important, the players of ritual roles: that is, persons who have temporarily assumed an ideal, as opposed to a mundane, personality. But at this festival, even the women, especially young girls, paint themselves to some extent, with the characteristic face-paint design of the women (vertical stripes on the nose and cheeks - said to represent the tail-pads of a possum). The skin is also reddened with powdered ochre. The only radically unpainted participants are the elderly, particularly the old men (kwanugwi).

The body-paint styles occurring in ida are classified in the form of a 'tree-diagram' (Fig. 29). This shows how the various alternatives, ranging from 'unpainted' (extreme right) to the most complicated tetaguana tamwa designs (extreme left) are distributed among the various categories of actors. The problem now is to understand this particular distribution of body-paint styles. To begin with, it is best not to think too much about the individual motifs



characterising the more complex designs, but to concentrate on colour and colour-relationships.

An objection might be raised at this point, namely, that this ignores entirely the 'representational' significance of body-paint. For instance, the cassowary dancer is painted black: why invoke colour symbolism to explain this when in real life the plumage of the cassowary is black? To explain the patterned designs of the tetagwana tamwa why look further than the red markings on the pannatamwa which informants explicitly equated with ritual body-paint designs? and so on.

To this objection I would reply i) that such an approach would produce only fragmentary, piecemeal explanations, and that it would miss the essential unity of all the body-paint styles, the overall coherence of the system, and ii) that while a 'representational' interpretation fits some designs, and in at least one instance (the ipele kwituda design) is really very important from the interpretative point of view, in many other cases there is no obvious connection between the function of a given ritual role in the overall sequence of ida and the particular named design associated with that figure. In these cases the 'representational' aspect of the design seems to be projected onto what is, basically, an abstract decorative pattern, of no intrinsic ritual significance, which is only given 'representational' significance ex post facto. Moreover the two most important ritual figures, (the cassowary and the ipele) have monochrome or very simple body-paint styles: the basic

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To this objection I would reply i) that such an approach would produce only fragmentary, piecemeal explanations, and that it would miss the essential unity of all the body-paint styles, the overall coherence of the system, and ii) that while a 'representational' interpretation fits some designs, and in at least one instance (the ipele kwituda design) is really very important from the interpretative point of view, in many other cases there is no obvious connection between the function of a given ritual role in the overall sequence of ida and the particular named design associated with that figure. In these cases the 'representational' aspect of the design seems to be projected onto what is, basically, an abstract decorative pattern, of no intrinsic ritual significance, which is only given 'representational' significance ex post facto. Moreover the two most important ritual figures, (the cassowary and the ipele) have monochrome or very simple body-paint styles: the basic

opposition involved is not in the design elements, but in the colour contrast black/red.

I could go further than this, however. It is entirely possible that certain animals are singled out for ritual attention and representation because they are a particular colour. Thus to 'explain' the designs or colours on the basis of their representational function explains nothing, since it is the colour which motivates the choice of the animal species and not vice versa. For instance the cassowary is 'interesting' (symbolically) very largely, just because of its colour, its dense black plumage. It would be just as true to say that the eli dancer represents a cassowary because (for extraneous, symbolic reasons) he is painted black, as to say that he is painted black 'because he represents a cassowary'. It is still more obvious that the pannatamwa have been singled out for ritual attention just because they are red: since it is their red markings which alone distinguish them from other fish, not singled out in this way. Hence it can hardly be argued that the pannatamwa fishes' red markings 'explain' the polychrome tamwa designs - what has to be explained is the meaning these red patterns (either in nature, or artificially produced in body-paint designs) have for the people themselves. This, as I said, can best be done by ignoring the representational element on the whole, and by concentrating on the colours used, and their relative predominance in the various designs. The material is summarized in the following coloured diagram (Fig. 45).

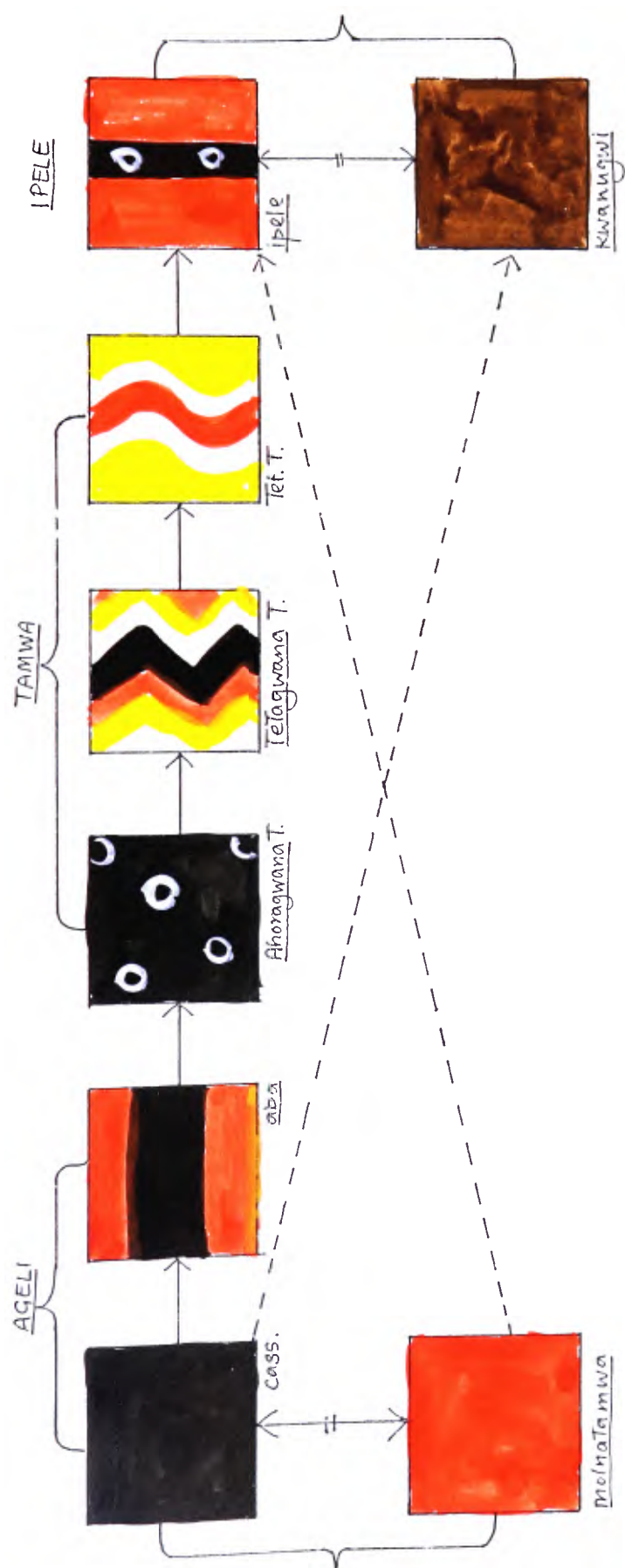


FIG. 45 THE SEQUENCE OF COLOURS AT IDA



The point made in figure 45, and the basic point of this whole section on body-paint is a simple one, and I should hope by now a tolerably obvious one, namely that the black/red opposition of cassowary and ipele encodes a contrast of generations, or a contrast within the developmental cycle:

Black : Red : senior : junior

I have argued that colour is intrinsically linked in the Umeda mind with an implicit classification of surface appearances in terms of the cycle of maturation and decay. The very utility of the flexible 'rubber ruler' type of colour nomenclature resides in its power of transcending the arbitrary diversity of absolute colour as it is found in natural appearances, so as to encode an implicit awareness of the orderliness of relative colour contrasts within domains, deriving from this conception of natural process. Colour contrasts give manifest expression to covert processes, unobservable transitions. The colour code of body paint in ida is less than a mimetic evocation of external objects, than the codification of a set of relationships internal to ida itself. I would here paraphrase a remark made by Anthony Forge about Abelam art: That it 'is about relationships not about things' (Forge 1965). One could say exactly the same thing about body-paint styles at ida.

The basic black/red contrast is relevant to the interpretation of the following dyadic oppositions between ritual figures (Table 10).

|                     | B L A C K             |     | R E D                |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----|----------------------|
| i) Successive       | Cassowary             | vs. | <u>ipele</u>         |
|                     | Cassowary             | vs. | <u>aba</u> .         |
|                     | <u>Aharawana Tam.</u> | vs. | <u>Tetawana Tam.</u> |
| ii) Synchronous     | Cassowary             | vs. | <u>Molnatamwa</u>    |
| Table 10            | <u>Kwanugwi</u>       | vs. | <u>ipele</u>         |
| BLACK/RED CONTRASTS |                       |     |                      |

In all these instances the relation black/red is also one of senior/junior. But in some cases the contrast is 'weakened'. For instance, the black/red contrast is at its sharpest in the opposition Cassowary/molnatamwa, both of whose body-paint is monochrome, black or red as the case may be. But the contrast between cassowary and aba is mitigated by the fact that the aba body-paint design includes prominent black bands on the joints, lessening the proportion of coloured areas to black areas in the overall design (see figs. 24, 25). Again, the ipele/kwanugwi opposition affords another example of the way in which the black/red contrast may be mitigated: in this instance neither is the ipele wholly red - since there are additional design elements of black - nor is the kwanugwi the 'absolute' black of the cassowary, but the mitigated or 'weakened' black or ordinary (old) human skin.

The ritual opens with the synchronous opposition of black and red, cassowary and molnatamwa. This is perfectly

intelligible in the light of the formula quoted above, but how can we integrate the subsequent vagaries of polychrome designs and 'weakened' black/red oppositions into the overall scheme? The cassowary and the molnatamwa constitute, I suggest, 'polar' types, while the other designs, vary the proportions of the basic colours, black and red (plus, in some cases, yellow and white) so as to mediate between these polar types. The blackness of the cassowaries corresponds with their place within the implicit model of natural process (the terminal phase) and also with their structural emphasis on the lateral/peripheral dimension (blackness increases towards the periphery: cf. fig. 44 above). The cassowaries come from the 'outer darkness', they are identified with the senior generation, and with outsiders, mother's brothers etc. (avalna). The molnatamwa are neophytes: in structural terms they are identified as central. Their redness corresponds to their sociological position as maturing (subova) rather than mature, individuals. The redness of the nemetod relates back directly to the special relation between children and adolescents and the whole class of 'red' things pointed out above. We have seen that children paint their bodies red, for quasi-magical reasons, in everyday contexts as well.

But the opposition cassowary/molnatamwa as it is manifested on the first night is 'unmediated'; as the ritual progresses, the category opposition is progressively eroded; the polychrome designs with greater or lesser proportions of

black design elements mediate between the original black/red opposition posited at the beginning of the ritual.

This is particularly apparent in the case of the body-paint of the aba dancers, whose 'transitional' status has already been discussed (section ix above). The transition mediated by the 'passage through fire' and the ritual cookery of the dawn ritual is reflected in the 'betwixt and between' body-paint style of the aba dancers, which is an intermediate stage between cassowary (black) and ipele (red) (Fig. 46):

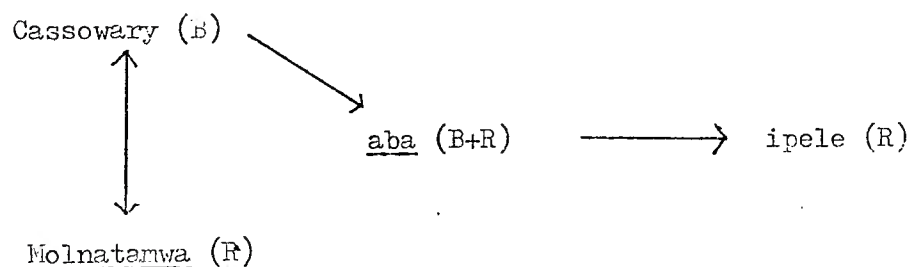


Fig 46 .

#### THE MEDIATION OF BLACK AND RED

(This is made even more explicit by the aba design used in the rituals in Sowanda village (shown in fig.25 inset).

After the aba and the teh (who show a diminution of black) come the ahoragwana tarwa, who mark a reversal to the black paint of the cassowaries. This corresponds to the fact that this role is one for men of the senior generation. But even in this case the black paint is modified by white, red and yellow splashes and circles - in our terms a 'weakened'



form of the black paint of the cassowaries.

The tetaqwana tamwa show the greatest elaboration of body-paint styles, ranging between designs with a considerable element of black, to some (such as lelimigi 'yellow legs') with none at all. This corresponds, first of all to the replacement of the older actors of the ahoragwa tamwa by younger dancers.

At this point, perhaps, it is necessary to introduce another factor into the analysis, namely the factor of pattern. I have suggested that the transition, mediated in ida between cassowary and ipele, is also a transition between nature and culture. The transition between the unpatterned skin of the cassowaries, and the ever more elaborate polychrome designs of the aba, tetaqwana tamwa and amov encodes this shift of emphasis in aesthetic terms. I made a rather similar point in discussing the transition between the ageli mask and the tamwa masks, the latter distinguished by specifically cultural patterns, 'heraldic' emblems of the various Umeda clans. Pattern bespeaks order and orderliness distinguishes culture: the ipele mask, the most 'cultural' is also the most painstakingly constructed and neatly inscribed with patterns.

If the tamwa masks of the ahoragwana tamwa herald the onset of 'culture' this is contradicted by their body-paint, black and marked only by 'aleatory' splashes and circles: this 'lack of fit' between their mask and body-paint style, is, once again, indicative of the way in which they mark a transition point on a continuum between nature

and culture. Let me pause for a moment to consider the overall sequence: cassowary → aba → ahoragwana tamwa → tetagwana tamwa in this light, looking at the relation between mask and body-paint in these successive figures.

If a shorthand notation N (for nature) and C (for culture) is used to contrast, on the one hand, the ageli mask (N) versus the tamwa mask (C) and on the other black paint (+ aleatory splashes) (N) versus polychrome patterned designs (C), then it will be seen that these four figures run the gamut of all possible combinations of N and C:

|       | Cassowary | <u>Aba</u> | <u>Ahoragwana<br/>tamwa</u> | <u>Tetagwana tamwa</u><br>(and <u>ipele</u> ) |
|-------|-----------|------------|-----------------------------|---|
| mask  | N         | N          | C                           | C   |
| paint | N         | C          | N                           | C   |

There are further 'intermediate' stages which can be fitted into this sequence. The tah, as has been pointed out, is an intermediate stage between the ageli mask and the tamwa. Another mask, not mentioned previously in this chapter, is the alited mask, worn by the alited ogres (cf. Chapter 4). This mask is made of wata like the tamwa mask, but differs in being painted, not with a polychrome pattern on a red ground like the tamwa mask proper, but black, with splashes and spots of colour, as is the body of the alited dancer. This mask, worn by an aggressive ogre, is a negatively-valued modification of the tamwa away from the 'cultural' stereotype. The contrast in the masks and body-paint of the alited and the tetagwana tamwa is intriguing since it demonstrates that the opposition between an 'aleatory' manner of applying paint (sometimes decidedly

reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionism) and a controlled 'formalistic' style (the style of the heraldic masks and polychrome body-paint patterns) has the same force, in this miniscule New Guinea society, as it has in the painting traditions of the West. In both cases the formalistic style stands for the acceptance of a particular social order (the quietism of Matisse who painted for 'tired businessmen', the Utopian socialism of Leger) while the 'aleatory' style is fundamentally anarchical (Soutine, Pollock himself, Dubuffet ...).

In sum, therefore, the tetawana tamwa both in colour-symbolic terms (the progressive reductions of black) and in aesthetic terms (complex polychrome designs) encode a shift towards the 'cultural' stereotype of the ipele bowman. With the ipele, red, the very colour of regeneration, emerges triumphant. I have already had occasion to note the continuity of the all-red body-paint style which links the molnatamwa, the nemetod (neophyte fish) and the ipele and the way in which this links up with the special relationship between individuals, in a critical state of maturation and redness, which is a 'sign/condition' of the process of maturation. Certain additional remarks are needed, however, to explain the characteristic black designs which distinguish the ipele of each moiety. The edtodna design (kwituduh) consists of two vertical black stripes, the agwatodna design consists of two pairs of circles symmetrically placed on the abdomen and the lower part of the back, identified as the eyes of the nu frog (nunov) a device much used in Umeda painting.



Here, surely is a piece of evidence to trounce any sceptic who remains in any doubt as to the correctness of my analysis of the formal basis of the edtodna/agwatodna opposition! Masculinity (the male, edtodna moiety) is, I have argued, identified with the central, vertical, structural axis: femininity (the female agwatodna moiety) with the peripheral/lateral field. In the opposition between the kwituduh vertical stripes, and the nunov circles this opposition is given graphic representation. The edtodna stripes versus the agwatodna circles are perfectly intelligible as social-structural diagrams; I myself, addicted to such diagrams could not conceivably do better, albeit the significance of these designs is entirely unconscious where the Umedas themselves are concerned. The diagram over-page shows how, if the two body-paint designs are superimposed, an elegant structural model - the very hub of my whole analysis - is automatically produced (fig. 47).

It only remains to add a word about the significance of nunov and kwituduh from the standpoint of their representational meaning, rather than their purely abstract, formal meaning.

The verbal similarity between nov (eyes) and mov (fruit) is, I think, not fortuitous. Eyes, like testes (wamov) or breasts are, unquestionably, lateral, fruitlike appendages of the body: the nunov design of twinned circles could conceivably represent any of these appendages. Soft, fruitlike, duplex structures are, on the basis of the central/lateral opposition, intrinsically associated with femininity and reproductivity. The nu frog which is dis-



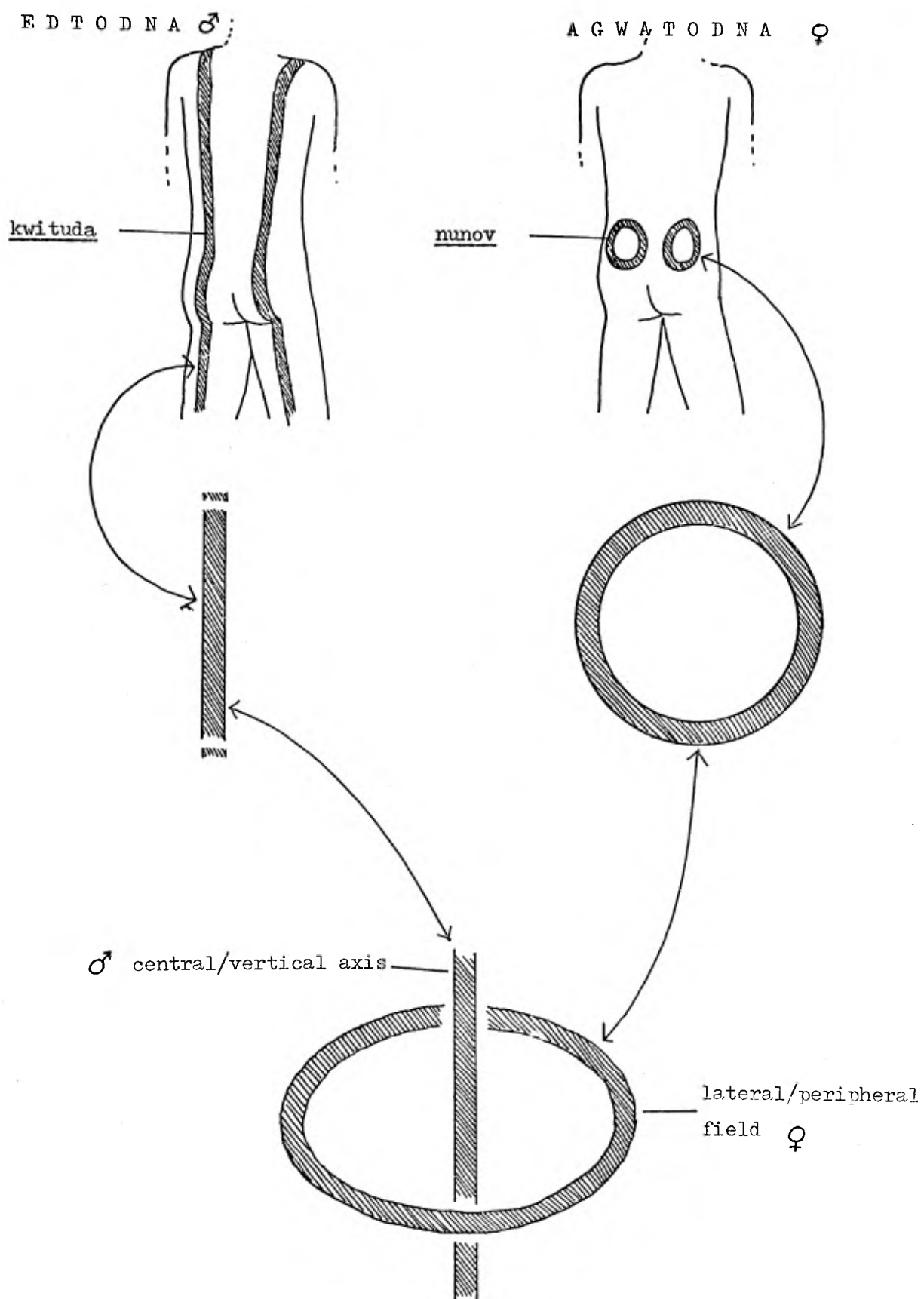


Fig. 47. THE STRUCTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IPELE DESIGNS.

tinguished by its patterned green and yellow skin and its big protuberant eyes, is classified as feminine, like most frogs (e.g. Ahora: toad, is feminine too, and appears as a female character in mythology). Nu is also identified as a (female) subulagwa growth-spirit. There is, thus, a general association between the nunov design and femininity, quite apart from formal considerations or its association with the agwatodna moiety.

The kwituduh design is symbolic in a more direct way: in fact it provides yet another piece of clinching evidence for my overall analysis of the ida ritual. Kwituduh means 'cassowary chick' - this hardly requires exegesis in the light of everything I have said above. The ritual here seems to come full circle, and the essential continuity of the overall sequence of ritual figures is definitively established; the ipale is revealed as a nascent cassowary, bearing on his sides the longitudinal stripes which are, indeed, a distinguishing feature of young cassowaries.

#### xxii. The symbolic representation of Time

The reader may perhaps have noted a paradoxical consequence which arises both out of the analysis of mask-types (section xviii) and the analysis just concluded, of body-paint styles. In discussing mask types I argued that the masks should be interpreted as transformations of a single 'basic' or ur-mask, and that these transformations followed a sequence derived from four alternative hair-styles, corresponding to phases in the male life-cycle, thus:

| hair style :         | short/<br>controlled | long/<br>controlled | long/<br>uncontrolled         |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| mask :               | <u>ipele</u>         | <u>tamwa</u>        | <u>ageli</u>                  |
| social<br>category : | youths               | younger<br>adults   | 'autonomous'<br>mature adults |

The fourth hairstyle (short/uncontrolled) being appropriate to women, children, and perhaps also to the very old.

The paradox here is the fact that the sequence of masks ipele → tamwa → ageli is the inverse of the sequence of masks as they appear in a performance of ida.

The same phenomenon is apparent in the sequence of body-paint styles. I have argued that the colours (white)<sup>1</sup>

1. In parenthesis, it might be asked 'what has happened to white'? White does not characterise the body-paint of any of the main ritual figures - but perhaps this is only to be expected since, as I said white puskakoi is the colour of the insides of things (what is revealed when an incision is made) and hence is not a suitable treatment for surfaces - which body-paint, in Umeda, essentially is. The three-colour sequence white-red-black is reduced to a dyadic opposition red/black with various intermediary stages red, red+black, black+red, black ... On the other hand elements of recognisable 'white' symbolism are present in ida. This is particularly the case with the fringes of the ipele mask, which, as I have mentioned are made from dead-white material from the middle of the crown of a limbum palm, as opposed to the fringes of the tamwa mask which use pale greenish-yellow material from nearer the top of the crown. This ultra-white material is also used for the bindings on the penis of the dancer and the ipele anov. The intensification of 'whiteness' in the fringe of the ipele mask, and the use of white bindings, is, I think, symbolic of the 'newness' of the ipele and their structurally 'central' position. But on the whole I do not think that white plays an important role in Umeda colour symbolism. Like Ndembu 'black' symbolism it is a 'shadowy third' in the colour triad, conspicuously hidden. (cf. my remarks above about the secret deposits of ogurubwa, the white magical earth, whose possession is forbidden to the young).

Red  $\rightarrow$  Black are implicitly related by a temporal sequence, yet the overall sequence of colours in ida (fig. 45) is Black  $\rightarrow$  Red rather than Red  $\rightarrow$  Black, the 'natural' sequence, i.e. another 'inversion'.

Now is there a real paradox here, and if so how is it resolved?

My first response is to say: no, the paradox is more apparent than real, because the process of bio-social regeneration, dramatised in ida naturally presupposes the priority of the senior generation over the junior, the precedence of the cassowaries over the ipele. Ida is essentially a 'rite de passage'; though not formally classifiable as such, it has the same basic structure. Viewed in this light the cassowary is a variant on the 'initiatory monster' theme - one very widespread in the Sepik. On the middle Sepik the crocodile is the animal usually identified as the 'monster' in initiation (cf. Mead 1970, p.424). The ipele is the initiate, whose coming-out dance is celebrated in the final phase of the ritual. Actually, initiation ritual is not performed in Umeda or Punda, the tradition being said to have been 'lost' in the distant past. On the other hand an initiation ritual, ipmhuf (the huf-playing of the ip') is performed in the villages to the west i.e. Waina, Wyalla and Sowanda, though unfortunately I had no opportunity to witness these rites in 1969-1970. It is quite clear, however, that the initiates in these rituals - which are of the conventional type involving seclusion, instruction, and a coming-out dance - the initiates are identified as ipele, wear red body-paint, and ipele masks.



The identity between ipele and initiatory novices is well known to Umedas, who are perfectly cognisant with the principles of initiatory ritual, although, for reasons of historical accident, or some other cause, initiation ritual with seclusion is not practised in Umeda itself. Indeed it is plausible to think that the organisation of the ida ritual makes initiation, per se, redundant, since the hierarchy of ritual roles in ida provide a functional alternative to a system of initiatory grades. But the essential point to note is the identity of the ipele with the 'up and coming' generation, on the lines of a new initiatory grade achieving social recognition.

This interpretation - the identification of the cassowary and the ipele with senior and junior generations respectively - has run through my entire analysis up to this point. The opposition senior/junior runs through ida as a basic theme; contrasting cassowary and molnatamwa, ahoragwana tamwa and tetagwana tamwa and kwanugwi and ipele. If there is a sociological interpretation of ida, this is surely it: the acting-out, on the ritual arena, of idealised role-complementarities between members of the senior and junior generations. Though I would stand by this basic interpretation, I believe that the problem is more complex than it appears at first sight. First of all, though it is unquestionably the case that the ipele is symbolically the 'junior cassowary' (the kwituduh body-paint design tells us as much) it is not the case that the ipele actor is sociologically a member of the junior generation. The molnatamwa,

it is true, are officially (and actually) a generation junior to the cassowaries, and the kwanugwi a generation senior to the ipele (classificatory mother's brothers). But no injunction makes the ipele and cassowaries members of different sociological generations: while it is normal for the ipele roles to be taken by men younger in years than players of the cassowary role, nothing prevents them being members of the same generation, which, indeed they most probably are, since both these are roles for mature men. Hence, in 'generational' terms, the structure of roles in ida is as follows (Fig. 48):

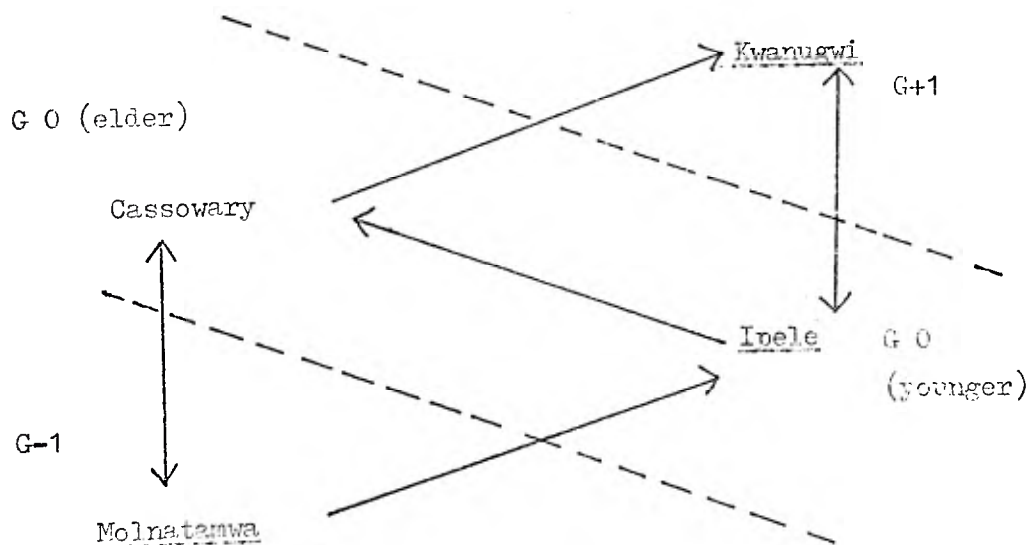


Fig 48 .

THE GENERATIONAL STRUCTURE OF IDA

There is a second difficulty; in a society such as Umeda, without a complex and thoroughgoing age-organisation, a 'generation' is an ambiguous concept. Outside the immediate circle of kinsfolk 'generational' status is a matter of ascription: chronological age and the existence of marriage ties (putatively between generation equals) are used as a basis for imputing generational status vis-a-vis ego. My informants were explicitly aware that according to the means of computation adopted the 'generation' of any socially distant person relative to ego might vary. Moreover, the crucial distinction is not solely between senior and junior generations but also between 'elder brothers' and 'younger brothers' within the same generation: the 'elder-brother' adopting a paternal stance towards the young brother. The generational structure of ego's group of reference is, in consequence 'oblique': senior members of ego's own generation being classified along with the senior generation, junior members of ego's own generation with the junior generation. Only in marriage are relations of true equality established (between brothers-in-law and cross-cousins): this is given ritual representation in the absolute equivalence of the two ritual moieties. Consequently, the generation-structure of ego's group is not an alternation of opposed paternal and filial generation categories, but a dichotomisation of the social world into 'senior' and 'junior' categories which cut across generation lines.

Taken together these facts imply that we can oppose

the cassowary to the ipele as members of opposed 'generations' only with certain important qualifications: to be sure, the attributes of each figure respectively are those of senior generation and junior generation - I have established this at length already and need not recapitulate the argument here. But this symbolic association with opposed generations does not mean that a fundamental social dichotomy separates them: on the contrary, they are members of the same generation - the current generation of mature males, suitable actors of the two most important ritual roles. All along I have contrasted cassowary and ipele as polar opposites, but now, having established the character of this opposition, I feel it is necessary to turn the argument on its head, by stressing the fundamental continuity, nay, identity of the two roles.

Everybody has seen the farce 'Charley's Aunt' in which the hero, having established himself as a neat young man in smart city clothes, disappears, as a consequence of some twist in the plot, into a closet, to reappear a moment later as a grande dame, in voluminous skirts, a fantastic hat, brandishing a lorgnette and speaking in a high-pitched, querulous voice. At risk, perhaps, of being accused of reading too much into the material, I am inclined to draw a comparison between this particular dramatic 'miracle' and the course of the ida ritual, in which the cassowaries' disappearance at the end of the first phase of the ritual is answered at the end of the ritual by the appearance of the ipele, who have remained in seclusion (like initiands) mean-



while. The transformation is just as complete, but the 'joke' - the fact that we know that Charley and Charley's aunt are identical people - can we say that that is the secret in both cases as well? (I recall here that the Umedas themselves called ida 'modes' a joke, a pretence ...). In a sense this is surely true: although different actors are involved in the roles, their common identity is established by the fact that it is, after all, only a pretence: these are just men, painted and masked and accoutred in a way to emphasise their difference, but fundamentally the same for all that. Ipele and cassowary, as stereotypes of certain 'styles' of social being are not individuals, but 'ideal types': they cannot be identified in toto with any particular man, or class of men. The social personality of the individual male ego draws its elements from both stereotypes; now inclining one way, now another. Neither stereotype, either that of the ultra-social ipele or the 'autonomous' cassowary is ever finally achieved, or finally repudiated: they represent limits, not norms. As ideals or limits they define the trajectory of the male life cycle, but the social personality of the individual male hovers between the two, and conforms to neither.

Hence, in interpreting the cassowary - ipele opposition we must think of them as reflecting two facets of the janus-like male personality, which faces both ways at once. We can think of them as members of the opposed generations, as 'elder' and 'younger' members of the same generation, as a single individual at different phases in the life cycle, or

as a single, janus-faced individual. What is important is the essential continuity of the two roles, which underlies their diversity, and sets up a kind of dialectical tension between them.

If this point is conceded (the unity, or continuity of the roles of ipele and cassowary) then the paradox mentioned above - the inverted sequence black  $\rightarrow$  red, and the inverted sequence of mask-types), becomes real once more: in ida we have an inversion of the normal sequence of events characterising social and organic processes: a localized time-reversal. To use the 'Charley's Aunt' comparison, the cassowary disappears in to the closet and reappears rejuvenated in the form of the ipele. Or rather, since no such far-fetched comparison could be quite accurate, the transformation takes place on stage: the figures who follow the cassowary and precede the ipele all show, in various ways, an 'approximation' towards the eventual ipele stereotype: the metamorphosis of the cassowary goes forward in public, and by regular stages.

At this point it is necessary to introduce a new theme - the symbolic representation of time. The relationships between the various ritual figures do not only take place in the context of a regular temporal sequence, the temporal sequence shown on the tabular diagram (Table 5) - but are themselves interrelated by an analytically distinct temporal continuum. The mask-types and body-paint styles give concrete expression to temporal relations which run counter to the actual 'duration' of the ritual, by making

references to organic processes which are external to the time context of the ritual performance itself. This can be diagrammatised as follows (Fig. 49):

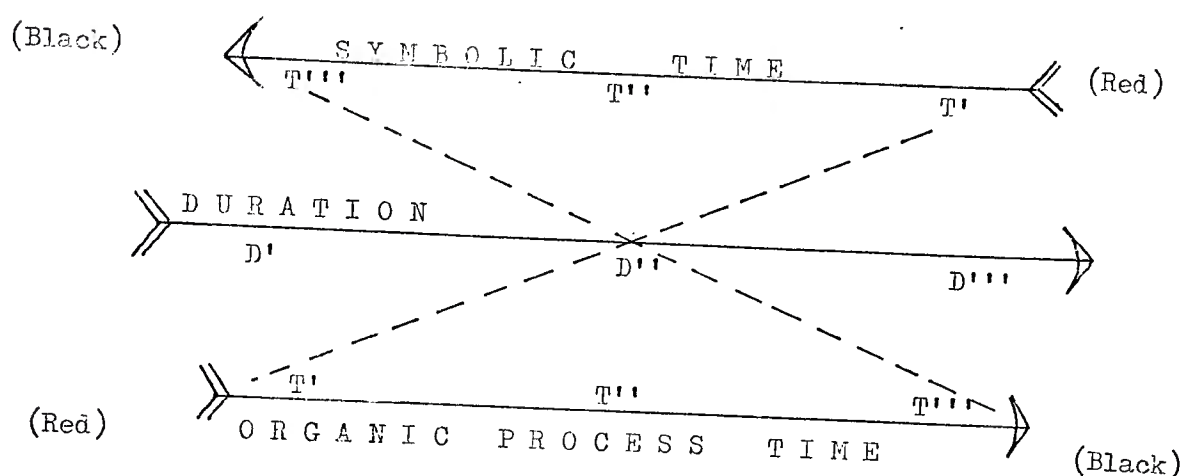


Fig 49 . THREE KINDS OF 'TIME'

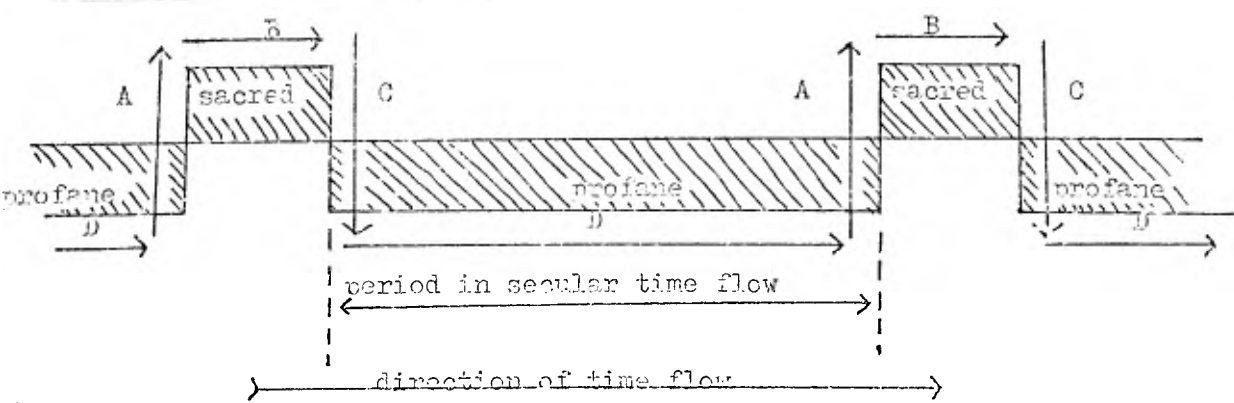
Three kinds of 'time' are here distinguished: the central arrow is 'duration' - the actual time in which the ritual is performed. The lower-most (dotted) arrow is 'process' time: the time continuum established by organic processes, e.g. the Red  $\rightarrow$  Black transition, or on a larger scale, the human life-cycle. The upper arrow is 'symbolic' time here shown as the inverse of both 'duration' and 'process' time. The inversion of symbolic time is achieved by taking the sequence of events in process time ( $T'$ ,  $T''$ ,  $T'''$ ) and reproducing them, symbolically, in inverse order ( $T'''$ ,  $T''$ ,  $T'$ ) relative to the absolute standard provided by 'duration'.

What is the meaning of this apparent 'inversion of time'?

An essay by Edmund Leach ('Time and False noses' the second of his two essays 'In the symbolic representation of Time' reprinted in 'Rethinking Anthropology : Leach 1961, p.124 sqq.) seems to me to provide an important clue. In this essay Leach comments upon the way in which ritual serves to demarcate time - to make time 'thinkable' - for people who lack a sophisticated notion of time as 'sheer succession of epochal duration' (Whitehead, quoted by Leach op.cit.) - or some other equally mysterious abstract formula. Leach says that, rather than see time as a continuum which goes on and on, many people think of time as going 'back and forth' a 'pendulum view of time' (ibid. 133).

Here is a longer quotation from Leach, with a diagram:

"For people who do not possess calendars ... the year's progress is marked by a succession of festivals. Each festival represents ... a temporary shift from the normal-profane order of existence into the Abnormal-Sacred order and back again. The total flow of time then has a pattern which might be represented by such a diagram as this:



(After Leach op. cit. Fig 17 p. 134.)

Fig 50 .



'Time' is here shown as four 'phases'

- (A) 'Socialization'
- (B) 'Marginal state'
- (C) 'Desacralisation'
- (D) 'Secular existence'

'Time' is staked out by periodic bouts of 'sacred time' marked by rites of sacralisation and de-sacralisation - seen by Leach in his essay on the pattern of Van Gennep's famous model of initiation rituals (cf. Leach : op.cit. 134-6).

Now it is very clear that ida falls very conveniently into Leach's category of periodic festivals which have the function of organising time, i.e. permitting the conceptualisation of time as oscillation between sacred and profane. But this is not Leach's main point. Leach goes on to argue that we 'create time' (his italics) by special behaviour which is opposed to normal behaviour by certain regular transformations: i.e. if behaviour pattern 'x' is appropriate for 'secular' time, then some behaviour which represents a 'negation of x' is appropriate for 'sacred' time. Leach opposes two alternative types of non-normal behaviour, which, he argues, characterise periods of 'sacred' time. These are i) revelry, masquerade and, in extreme cases, role-reversal, and ii) exaggerated formality, solemnity, ceremony (Fig. 51).

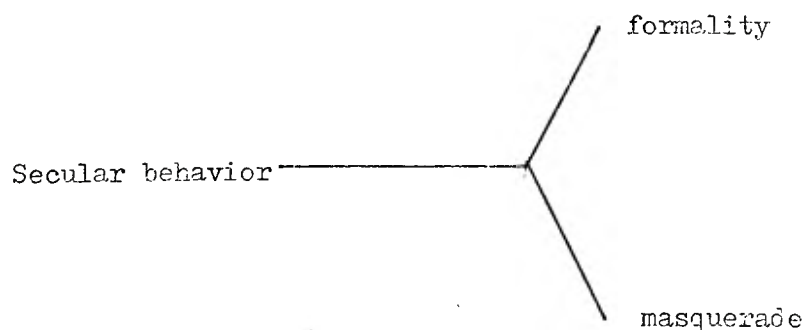


Fig. 51 NON-NORMAL BEHAVIOR.

Leach's argument is that 'formality' corresponds to 'rites of sacralisation' (i.e. the opening phase of periodic ritual) while 'masquerade' corresponds to rites of 'de-sacralisation' (i.e. the concluding phase of ritual). (He holds that role-reversal characterises the 'marginal' period between phases of sacralisation and de-sacralisation (ibid. p.136)).

Now Leach's argument manifestly cannot be applied to ida as it stands, though, to my mind, it provides a set of analytic ideas which can be very helpful. In ida the category 'masquerade' obviously applies, not to the concluding phase of the ritual, but to the opening phase, the night of the cassowaries.

Conversely, 'formality' applies, not to the opening phase of the ritual, as Leach's model implies, but to the ipele episodes at the end of the ritual. Where Leach's model is helpful, I think, is the suggestion he makes that the concluding phase of a ritual, designed to 'create time' - to subsume a continuous temporal flux to discontinuities established by periodic ritual - must have a structure which is the 'inverse', in some sense, of the opening phase. Thus, it does not really matter whether the sequence is:

|    |           |            |            |           |
|----|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
|    | normality | formality  | masquerade | normality |
| OR | normality | masquerade | formality  | normality |

so long as the underlying logical oppositions are preserved.

But this alone does not shed any light on the 'inversion' of time at ida. Here it is necessary to go back to Leach's idea of time as a sequence of oscillations back-and-forth,

back-and-forth, rather than 'on and on and on' - an idea which Leach elaborates more fully in his first essay ('Chronus and Chronos', *ibid.* 124-132).

I would like to suggest that during the ida ritual, the period of 'sacred' time in Leach's scheme, there is at least one sense in which time 'goes backwards', and that this 'inversion' of time corresponds to Leach's 'pendulum notion of time'. That is to say, where time goes 'forwards' in secular periods between the performance of rituals, (zig) during the ritual itself time is set back in its tracks (zag) so that the whole process is one of regular repetition (zig-zag-zig-zag etc.).

Seen in this light, the fundamental mechanism whereby the 'regeneration of the total society' is achieved - and I have argued at length that this regeneration is the basic project of ida - is the inversion of time. (I use the word 'time' in this context not, of course, as a translation of a native category equivalent to the English word, but as a shorthand for 'natural process' as it affects bio-social organisms). The opposition between 'masquerade' and 'formality' is used, in ida, as a means of expressing the periodic renewal of the society. Masquerade goes with absence of structure, 'communitas' in the Turnerian sense, and the sociological image of the cassowary, who threatens the boundaries between nature and culture. 'Formality' comes with the renewal of the structure by the ipele bowmen, specifically endowed with characteristically 'cultural' attributes, the re-statement of both the idealized comple-

mentarity between senior and junior generations (ipele/kwanugwi) and also of the complementary opposition between man and nature. The cassowary is metamorphosed into his nascent self in the figure of the ipele bowmen, only the kwitaduh stripes on the flanks of the etodna ipele hinting at the transition which has taken place over the course of the ritual. This is, indeed, in the most general terms, a victory over 'entropy' - in the sense in which that term has been used by social scientists.

Up to now I have spoken of time in terms of processes - as a series of transitions between 'before and after'. But there is another way in which 'time' is a socially-relevant categorycategory: for time is not only manifest as diachronic continuity, but also as synchronic dis-continuity. Time is not only the longitudinal axis of social or processual continuity, but is also the dimension 'older and younger' which opposes entities on a synchronic axis (Fig. 52):

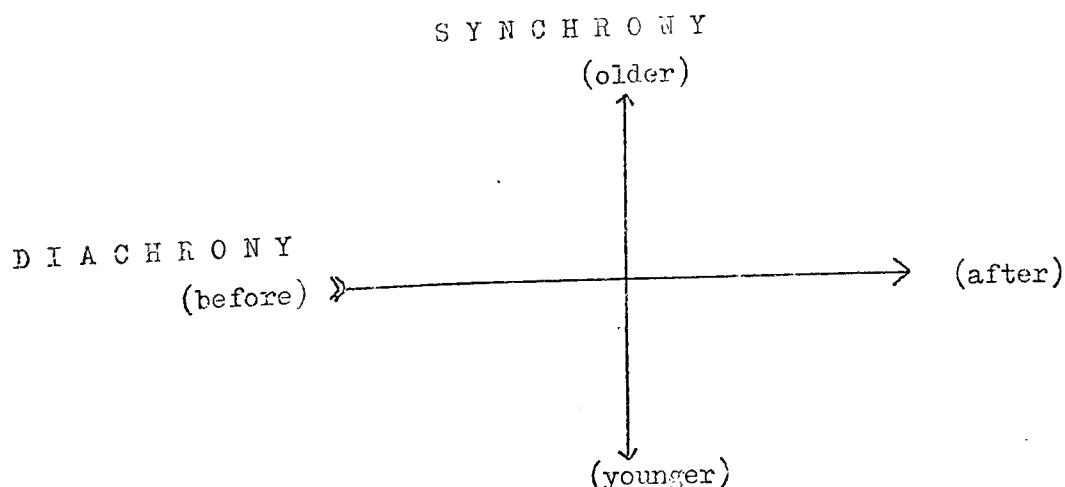


Fig 52 . SYNCHRONY AND DIACHRONY



Besides having a longitudinal structure of temporal transitions, ida also has a vertical structure of temporal oppositions i.e. senior/junior pairings (Fig. 53):

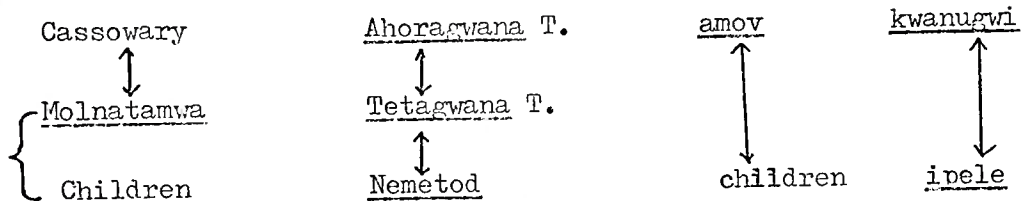


Fig 53 . SENIOR-JUNIOR PAIRINGS

If we integrate some of these senior/junior oppositions into the model a new picture emerges. Besides the main axis of the ritual - which, I have argued 'inverts time' two subsidiary axes, not in 'inverted' but, so to speak, 'orthodox' time link the molnatamwa and the ipele. The cassowaries and the kwanugwi thus (Fig. 54):

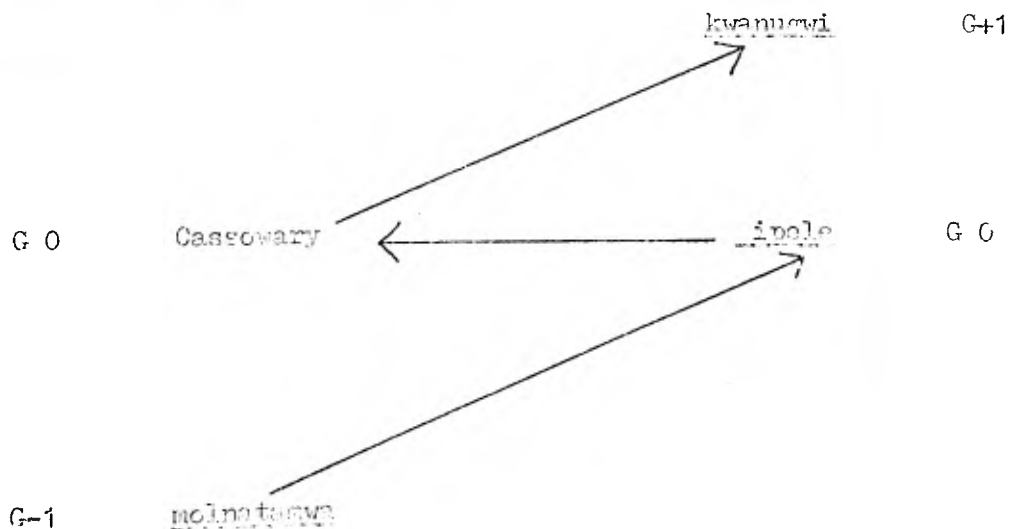


Fig 54. TEMPORAL OSCILLATION

Thus, not only is ida, in relation to 'secular' time, an oscillation of 'sacred' time which brings time back to its starting point, but it is also true that this zig-zag oscillation is represented in the structure in the ritual itself. The sequence molnatamwa → ipele → cassowary kwanugwi is, in fact the order in which, over the total life cycle of a male individual, the ritual roles are played. Thus, the 'short cycle' the inner temporal organisation of ida, relates to the 'long cycle' - to the life cycle of the individual. The relationships of the ritual figures define the diachronic axis of the life cycle, and at the same time give idealised expression to the synchronic relationships of adjacent generations.

There is another implication of the above diagram which may be mentioned here, namely, the continuity between the kwanugwi and the molnatamwa ( $G+1 = G-1$ ) or, if not with the molnatamwa themselves, then with the retinue of small boys by whom they are accompanied. The 'equivalence of alternating generations' is a standard theme in kinship theory. It is not a major theme in Umeda culture, but the basic institutional forms are present. In particular, one finds a reciprocal term (asi) in use between all members of alternate generations, who are all lumped together in one category, as opposed to a much more fragmented, and always non-reciprocal terminology in use between adjacent generations. (It is also very common practice for children to be named after their grandparents, while children may not bear the name of their parents). One also finds the generally unrestrained pattern

of behaviour between members of alternate generations which characterises societies in which they are regarded as 'equivalent'.

Apart from sociological evidence, certain details of the ritual do definitely point in this direction. Firstly, as I have pointed out already, the kwanugwi share with the ipele the feature of 'relative lack of sexual differentiations' which is manifested by wearing the peda rather than the pedasuh or the penis-binding of nab. In some instances the kwanugwi make their entries without even the concealment of a peda - a complete reversion to the pattern of behaviour of small boys, who also go naked.

The kwanugwi are indeed like children in other ways. Most notably, they are unique among the actors in ida in appearing un-masked and unpainted. In this, they are less like the nolnatamwa, who have just crossed the threshold of adult existence, than like the small boys in their retinue, too young, as yet, to participate in the masked dances. And the same continuity between the youngest and oldest actors can be seen in the arrows used by the kwanugwi which are, as described earlier, only dummies, plain shafts weighted with mud, otherwise only used by boys in target-practice. (I would add that the unarmed kwanugwi arrows have a sexual meaning as well, as contrasted with the 'repressed', but for that very reason, ultra-potent, ipele arrows).

There is thus a real measure of continuity between the most senior and the most junior roles in ida, separated by an intervening generation. Rather the same idea seems to

be present in the relation between the amov dancers and their entourage of children. The amov share with the kwanugwi and the molnatamwa the feature of relative lack of sexual differentiation implied by the peda in ritual contexts. The amov mask, as I hope the diagram of the 'transformations of mask-types' makes clear, stands midway between the ageli mask of the cassowaries, and the 'unmarked' (i.e. maskless) heads of the 'old men', the kwanugwi. This 'circularity' of the basic roles in ida can be shown in diagram form (Fig. 55):

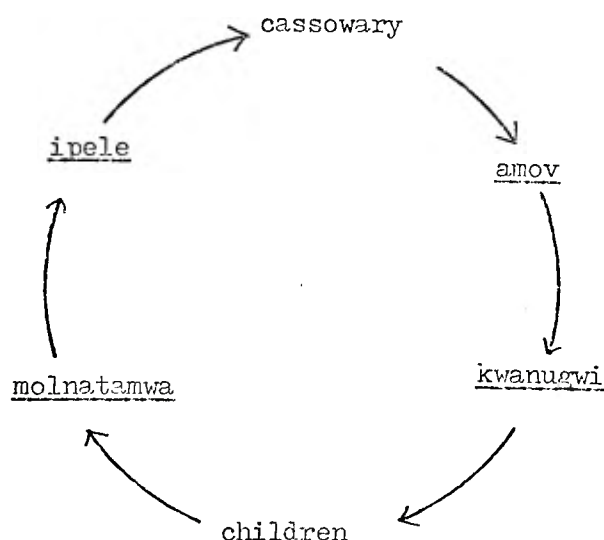


Fig 55.

CYCLE OF RITUAL ROLES AT IDA

I have one final remark to make about all this. I have been analysing a ritual at length, but I have said little about 'myth' and what I have said on this topic has been tangential to my argument. Yet myth and ritual are frequently categorised together, and at one time, if no longer, it was believed that no ritual made sense except in relation



to its corresponding myth and vice versa. Now it is evident that I have no myth to present which 'explains' ida, nor do I think that such a myth exists, though many of the 'themes' in ida do crop up separately in myths that I recorded, especially the Pul-tod myth included in the Appendix.

In the case of ida the relationship with mythology is rather different; ritual does not reproduce mythology, but seems to displace it. By this I mean that essentially the same cognitive functions are here fulfilled by means of a dramatic performance, and a sequence of 'transformations' affecting ritual figures, such as might, under the circumstances, give rise to a cycle of mythological lore. I would not wish to under-estimate the profound differences which ensue from this choice of a concrete, dramatic 'code' as opposed to an abstract mythological coding of the same basic preoccupations. Where myth breaks appearances down into their manifold refractions, continually elaborating new oppositions, ritual seems to synthesise appearances anew out of fragments. Where it is common to find myths or groups of myths which seem to elaborate certain themes indefinitely, never reaching a full close, ritual, on the whole, ends on a note of harmony, resolving the situation with a resounding cadence and an unanimous 'amen'. Myth proceeds by analysis, by separating and opposing; ritual by synthesis, taking elements, signs, substances, patterns of behaviour etc. from the context of mundane existence and welding them into a new and harmonious whole, whose unity is guaranteed by the ritual frame of reference. But if, in

this, ritual and myth seem to be, not transcriptions of one another, so much as 'opposites' of one another, the fact surely remains that, starting from different points and traversing in different directions they both seek the same object, namely the establishment of a fully intelligible social universe. That is to say, they both seek to mediate the contradictions of experience; myth by dialectic, ritual by bold and simple gestures, and by the deployment of multi-vocal symbols on which these contradictions are peremptorily annulled.

But in both cases it seems to me that the idea of 'mediation' is a key one, and it is on the idea of mediation that I want to focus in these, my concluding paragraphs. I would like to suggest that the ida ritual bears comparison with a myth (e.g. the Oedipus myth as analysed in Lévi-Strauss 1958, p.236) in being an attempt to resolve a contradiction which arises out of mundane social experience. The 'contradiction' in this case is between the two kinds of 'time' experience diagrammatically shown on page 550, i.e. diachrony, the 'time' sense we gain from the awareness that everything gets older, irreversible changes occur, and eventually death supervenes versus our other kind of 'time' experience 'synchronous' or discontinuous time which opposes entities as older/younger, senior/junior relative to the present. In sociological terms this contradiction exists between the social process, the fact that social life is change, and 'society' a sequence of events in time as they impinge upon an ego who is, himself, subject to the inexorable processes

which condemn him and his contemporaries continually to grow older, versus social structure, the manifest structural continuity of the society, seemingly independent of time: 'everything changes' BUT 'everything is the same'. Relative to the 'eternal present' there will always be senior and junior generations, small boys and old men; the same set of synchronic temporal oppositions (old/young, senior/junior, father/son etc.) continue to apply despite the passage of time.

I would argue that the essentially paradoxical nature of 'lived' time (time is always 'now' - but 'now' as I think about it, has already disappeared into the past) gives rise to many mythological and ritual repercussions. In particular, it seems to me that the idea of cyclic or repetitive time, far from being, as Leach argues, a religious fiction designed to make the prospect of death less terrifying (by always promising a subsequent 'rebirth' and a renewed lease of life) - is an attempt to resolve this ambiguity of time, which is both a continuous process and a synchronic opposition between old and young.

The idea of time as an oscillation or cycle, continually repeating itself, mediates between these two inextricably related but mutually contradictory experiences of time, i.e. between social process and social structure, diachrony and synchrony. In periodic ritual mediation is sought, and found, between the pressure of diachrony, processes which continually submit organisms to irresistible change, and the constraints of synchrony, the intelligible structure which survives all changes. This is achieved by a mutual

accommodation between the two: diachrony submits to synchrony by becoming an oscillation which never departs too far from the axis provided by the synchronous 'now': synchrony submits to diachrony in admitting the regular induction of fresh cohorts into the categories it provides: inductions that are generally marked by rites de passage.

But to speak more specifically of the 'mediation' of diachrony and synchrony in ida: how are these two aspects of time reconciled? Essentially this takes two forms. The diachronic axis of ida has already been analysed: the basic mechanism of the ritual is the inversion of the order of natural process, the substitution of a black red sequence for the red → black sequence which characterizes events in nature. Diachrony is reconciled with the abiding structure by being subjected to a periodic reversal, by being turned back on itself. Time is renewed, and with it, structure. This process is 'mediated' in the ritual by the progressive modifications or metamorphoses of the cassowary, it is of the essence that the intervening stages, as well as the initial and final stages, should be given representation. This inversion of time means that the situation represented at the conclusion of the ritual is the binary opposite of the situation represented at the beginning of the ritual. (Formality vs. masquerade in Leach's terms). I think that I have demonstrated the 'oppositeness' of the cassowaries and the ipele sufficiently.

What remains to be said concerns the mediation of inter-



generational, or 'synchronic' temporal oppositions in ida. These synchronic oppositions between senior and junior pairs are shown above (fig. 53). It is interesting to observe the way in which they are subject to modifications over the course of the ritual, which opens by positing the 'unmediated' black/red senior/junior opposition in the figures of the cassowaries and the kwanugwi. The subsequent course of the ritual is, as I have suggested, an attempt to 'mediate' this black/red opposition on a diachronic axis: but, at the same time the senior/junior oppositions remain in being, but change their nature. First of all, the black/red opposition is 'weakened': the aba dancers combine the ageli mask with polychrome body paint - with conspicuous elements of black, while in the case of the teh dancers, the black elements are still further reduced.

Then, in the tarwa phase of the ritual, the black/red opposition is restated, but this time in modified form: the contrast between the (black) ahoragwana tarwa and the (red) tetagwana tarwa is blurred by the fact that both wear identical masks, and moreover the generational opposition between the actors of these roles is present only as a tendency, not an explicit rule, as is the case where the eli and the molnatatwa are concerned. The black paint of the ahoragwana tarwa is relieved by light polychrome markings, and the 'red' of the tetagwana tarwa by design elements.

Finally, at the end of the ritual, the situation posited during the opening phase - a distinct opposition between adjacent generations and between black and red -

reappears once more, but in 'inverted' form; where, previously, the focus of the ritual was provided by the senior member of the senior/junior pairing (the cassowaries as against the molnatamwa), by the conclusion of the ritual, subsequent upon the mediation of the original black/red opposition, which has taken place during the intervening stages, the junior member of the ipele/kwanugwi pair take the centre of the stage: ida culminates with the red-painted bowmen (fig. 56).

1 OPPOSITION

2 MEDIATION

3 OPPOSITION

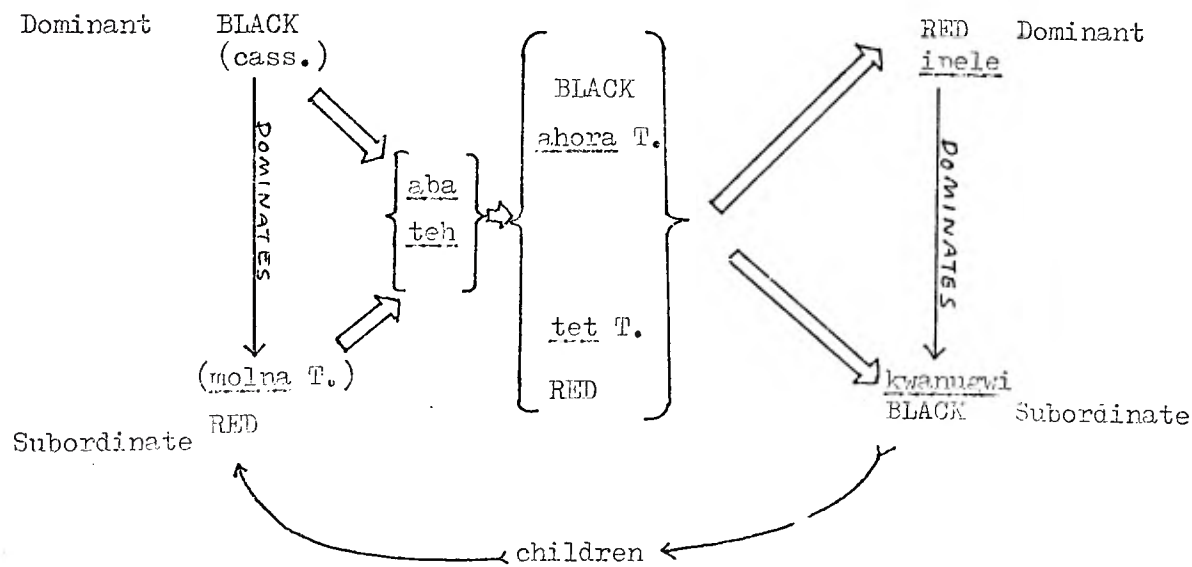


Fig. 56 THE DIALECTICAL STRUCTURE OF IDA

This pattern of events: 1) the positing of an opposition, 2) the mediation of the opposition, and 3) the re-emergence of the original opposition in 'weakened' and 'inverted' form, corresponds to a situation frequently encountered in the analysis of myths and series of myths. (Levi-Strauss 1958 : 246ff, 1967 : 15ff). It is characteristic to find that when a mythological opposition reappears after a 'dialectical' effort to resolve it, it does so in an inverted and 'weakened' guise. I would argue that it is this characteristic inversion of the terms accompanied by a weakening of the original opposition that is represented in the final ipele/kwanugwi pair as opposed to the original cassowary/molnatamwa pair. The ipele is the 'opposite' of the eli, the kwanugwi of the molnatamwa, but, at the same time, the oppositions are weakened - the ultra-black of the cassowary reappears as the unpainted skin of the old men (black to the ipele's red), but this is a weakening of black in the direction of red, the colour of unpainted (young) skin. Conversely, the all-red paint of the molnatamwa is echoed by the body paint style of the ipele, but in this instance it is modified in the direction of black by the black design elements which relieve the otherwise all-red colour scheme. These black design elements refer backwards in time to the black paint of the cassowary at the beginning of the ritual, and also forwards, since, next time round, the black stripes and circles will have spread, so to speak, so as to cover the whole body. At the next performance of ida the 'cassowary chick' will have become

the cassowary, ipele will be eli, red will have turned to black. And the 'black' of the unpainted kwanugwi will have reverted to the 'red' of the unpainted children, the redness of the neophyte molnatarwa. Thus the circularity perpetuates itself, the dialectic of black and red. The Heraclitean struggle of senior and junior generations, autonomy and repression, spontaneity and order, nature and culture, will never cease to be joined, only to resolve itself in such a way that renews itself indefinitely.



## APPENDIX I

## LEXICAL MOTIVATION IN UMEDA

1. Introduction

This appendix takes up certain themes which were deliberately excluded from Chapter 3 'Language and symbolism' because of their admittedly problematic character.

As described previously (Chapter 3 section 1) the theme that I propose to develop here is the possibility of intrinsic sound-meaning correlations in Umeda. That is, I am interested here in 'absolute' motivation (phonological motivation) in language, rather than, (as was the case in Chapter 3) in 'morphological' or 'semantic' motivation, i.e. 'relative' motivation. De Saussure (1969 : 31) it will be recalled, admits the significance and importance of 'relative' motivation, that is, the existence of systematic relationships within the fabric of language; but he discounted the importance of 'absolute' motivation (which he equated with crude onomatopoeia) that is, he discounted the existence of systematic relations between the fabric of language and the outside world; linguistic forms were always 'arbitrary' with respect to the outside world -- this is Saussure's famous principle of 'the arbitrary nature of the sign'. My discussion of these issues will run counter to the Saussurean bias in that I wish to suggest that the phonological make-up of certain classes of Umeda nouns reveals a degree of continuity between phonology and meaning; based, not on surface imitation

(onomatopoeia), but on a 'mapping' of semantic features onto particular articulatory movements or 'gestures', i.e. the exploitation of homology-relations between articulatory and semantic structures.

However, before discussing my own material, it is helpful to examine certain texts which will enable us to place the issue in a broader perspective. To begin with, here are two quotations from Merleau-Ponty's 'Phenomenology of Perception'. Here the author seems to go to the opposite extreme from the Saussurean point of view; where for de Saussure everything is arbitrary, and meaning primarily conceptual, for Merleau-Ponty meaning is immanent in the sign where it is found as a gesture; the 'delineation of an emotional essence' ... (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

' ... the meanings of words must finally be induced from the words themselves, or more exactly their conceptual meanings must be formed by a kind of deduction from a gestural meaning which is immanent in speech ...' (179). (Merleau-Ponty agrees that the 'conceptual and delimiting' meaning of words is established by arbitrary convention, but he goes on to say) ' ... it would no longer be true if we took in the emotional content of a word, what we have called its 'gestural' sense, which is all-important in poetry for example. It would then be found that the words, vowels, phonemes, are so many ways of 'singing' the world, and their function is to represent things, not, as naive onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence' (ibid: 186-7).

In the passage from which these quotations are drawn Merleau-Ponty is attempting to arrive at a conception of language which is neither the network of conditioned responses in terms of which the behaviourist sees language, nor yet the equally arbitrary system of signs, attached to concepts or mental images (signifieds) postulated by intellectualist theories of language, such as De Saussure's. In Saussure's theory, meaning is perfectly independent of its vehicle; thoughts, which somehow have an independent existence, are processed (coded onto an arbitrary string of phonological dots and dashes), and are then unscrambled at the listeners' end and are turned back into thoughts.

To this intellectualist view of language Merleau-Ponty opposes his own which stresses the expressive power of 'gesture' as the foundation of language. The meaning of a gesture, he argues, is inseparable from the gesture itself; if, for instance, I encounter someone who makes a gesture of anger, I am not thereby 'reminded' or 'put in mind of' the idea of anger -- on the contrary the anger and the gesture are one and the same. In the same way, the linguistic gesture delineates its own meaning. Merleau-Ponty tries to clarify this idea by making reference to another expressive system, namely music. The notes which go to make up a sonata comprise, unquestionably, a system of signs; but the sonata, or the musical meaning of the sonata, could never exist independently of the notes -- the meaning can only be present in the sounds which are its vehicle.

But this argument seems at first sight to suffer from

a fatal defect, for, while human gestures are generally regarded as essentially spontaneous, even universal, and seem to refer only to the immediate and tangible external reality, the context of situation in which the gesture is performed (anger, desire, sleepiness, present danger) speech, or verbal gesticulation is infinitely fragmented into a multiplicity of cultural systems, and can refer not only to the immediate context, but also to any number of what have been called 'sub-universes of meaning' (William James), that is, to world brought into being by language itself. According to Merleau-Ponty, this contrast between gesture (natural) and language (cultural) is less absolute than might appear. Consider the variety of aggressive, erotic, or emphatic gestures, each of which, while remaining rooted in bodily activity, refers simultaneously to the culturally constituted world in which it takes place. The gestural purposes to which the body may be put are not laid down in advance in the form of immutable instincts; instead, gesture takes over the meanings which lie dormant in all activity, and seeks to bring them to the attention of the other. Merleau-Ponty sees the expressive use of the body as a transcending of the body as a mere biological entity; at the same time, these meanings cannot be detached from the body which gives them expression, and regarded as separate entities -- they are immanent in behaviour itself.

Comparing language with gesture, Merleau-Ponty is led to the conclusion that there are no purely natural, and no purely cultural signs. Any expressive activity involves the mobilisation of this immanent 'gestural' meaning, and also



the taking up of a position vis-a-vis a previously constituted semantic system. He writes:

'Language is less the expression of a pre-existing thought, than taking up a position in a world of meanings' (ibid : 193).

This pre-existing world of meanings is a social phenomenon. In short, while seeming to concede the point that the linguistic sign is arrived at by cultural convention, Merleau-Ponty is arguing that its expressive power does not reside in the fact that it is the arbitrary vehicle of purely ideal significations. While it is intelligible only within the framework of a particular cultural experience, within that framework the meaning is an immanent property of the sign itself, just as the meaning of the gesture is an immanent property of the gesture. Outside language, systems such as this, wherein meaning is conveyed by means that are neither purely natural, or instinctual, nor yet purely arbitrary and conventional exist in abundance; music, mentioned previously, is one of them, systems of formalised dancing, or graphic expression are other obvious instances.

With this tantalising proposition, that linguistic meaning is, in some sense, immanent in the linguistic sign, we must leave Merleau-Ponty since, as a philosopher, he is not interested in particular cases, nor does he adduce anything in the way of empirical material to bolster his conception of the sign. He does not confront De Saussure head on though there is an anti-Saussurean trend in much that he says. But are there really, one asks, any constraints on

the formation of the linguistic sign, originating from the fact that they have immanent meaning? One need not look for a global system of linguistic symbolism; at such a level, involving a plurality of cultural systems, the sign is evidently arbitrary. If immanent meaning exists, it exists only from the standpoint of one committed to a particular cultural system, but for him, one imagines, it would thematise the entire phonological, and morphological system of the language.

In order to proceed further with this problem of immanent meaning we need to break the sign down into its various components, or rather, since the sign is essentially indivisible, at least distinguish the various points of view from which a sign can be examined. Pierce, the philosopher, proposed three ways in which a sign can be meaningful, which are not mutually exclusive with respect to any given sign. A sign may be an index, i.e. there is a material connection between this sign and its meaning, smoke 'means' fire, mare's tails 'mean' bad weather on the way and so on. Secondly, a sign may be an icon; by which is meant that the sign operates by means of some factual similarity between signifier and signified, in other words the sign is motivated by some iconic resemblance between the vehicle and the meaning: a picture resembles its subject, the word 'pingpong' or 'buzzer' imitates its meaning. Finally, a sign can operate as a symbol, by which is meant that the relation of signifier and signified is established by rule; it is not an intrinsic relation, but a learned convention.

History, unfortunately, has overtaken Pierce's definitions of terms. A 'symbol' is now generally taken to mean a motivated sign (i.e. an 'icon' in Pierce's terms). I use 'symbol' elsewhere in its modern sense, and when I speak of a symbol in the sense given to the term by Pierce, I shall mention him by name. I mention Pierce only because Roman Jakobson has taken Pierce's analysis of the sign as the point of departure for a recent essay whose conclusions are highly germane to the present discussion. (Jakobson's paper 'In search of the essence of Language' (1965) is unfortunately bereft of textual references to Pierce, and my attempts to identify the original passages in Pierce's voluminous writings to which he refers have failed. All the references here are to Jakobson, on whom I rely for Pierce's ideas as well).

Pierce's essential insight was the idea that these three kinds of meaning, the indexical, the iconic, and the (Piercean) symbolic, are not mutually exclusive. They do not exist as pure types, but are interacting components of the total meaning of the sign. Thus, ignoring the indexical, about which I shall have no more to say here, a sign is seen as an admixture of icon and (Piercean) symbol: as Pierce himself puts it 'a symbol may have an icon and/or an index incorporated into it' (quoted by Jakobson : op.cit. p.36). In his essay, Jakobson takes up these ideas in making a direct onslaught on De Saussure. Jakobson accuses his predecessor of disregarding certain patently iconic (i.e. motivated aspects of language. Following Pierce, Jakobson

divides the iconic into two species; firstly, the 'image' which copies the outward form of the object, achieving a contingent resemblance, versus the 'graph' or diagram, which seizes not on the outward aspect, but on the relation between elements (*ibid*) §. Two squares of different size do not represent the respective steel outputs of the USA and the USSR realistically, but they do succeed in conveying, most succinctly, the relative size-relationship involved. One might, going back for a moment to Merleau-Ponty, see an immanent meaning in the graph, which is certainly not arbitrary, but which has all the same to be thematised by cultural background knowledge -- in this case a knowledge of the background of economics. Such a diagram or graph is, in Pierce's words an 'icon of intelligible relations' (*ibid* : 27).

It is to the diagrammatic characteristics of language that Jakobson seeks to draw particular attention: features which he also describes as 'algebraic'. He bases his main case on grammatical rather than phonological features though not to the exclusion of the latter. He points out, for instance that the sentence 'veni vidi vici' conveys the sequence of Caesar's actions via the word-order. Similarly, as adjectives increase in degree, one often finds an increase in the number of phonemes (e.g. -us, -ior, -issimus in Latin). According to Jakobson such facts as these are sufficient to contradict De Saussure's assertion that 'in the sound structure of the signals there is nothing that would bear any relation to the value or meaning of the sign'. He adds that Saussure's concept of 'relative motivation' does



not account for the fact that these regularities extend far beyond the purely syntactic, being in fact part of the semantic system of the language.

Though Jakobson concentrates his attack on 'arbitrariness' at the syntactic level, he does not neglect the problematic question of phonological motivation; the problem of whether the single morpheme units, patterned at the syntactic level in a way which reflects extra-linguistic reality iconically, do not also show patterning at the phonological level of analysis. Jakobson (*ibid* : 30) quotes a number of instances of the operation of the diagrammatic tendency of language at even this level but seems disinclined to emphasise this aspect. He writes: 'on the plain lexical level the interplay of sound and meaning has a latent, virtual, character, whereas in syntax and morphology (both inflection and derivation) the intrinsic diagrammatic correspondence between the signans and the signatum is patent and obligatory' (35-36).

One is naturally a little suspicious of the phrase 'latent and virtual' -- assertions as to what may be 'latently and virtually' the case are too often hardly amenable to proof or disproof. In what follows I hope to be able to show that in the Umeda case it is possible to speak in more definite terms, by demonstrating that motivation at the lexical level is patently present, especially in the light of the symbolic system with which the Umeda language is associated.

Before turning to more strictly anthropological material --

in particular Leach's writings on language and kinship, perhaps I may briefly suggest a way in which the points of view of Merleau-Ponty can be combined. Both, it seems to me are attempting to formulate a conception of the linguistic sign as a complex, or multi-levelled entity, which can combine an 'iconic' function with a (Piercean) symbolic function; that is to say a conception of the linguistic sign which can be seen from one point of view as motivated, and simultaneously from another point of view, as un-motivated, an arbitrary (Saussurean) sign or a Piercean symbol. Merleau-Ponty's 'gestural' meaning corresponds to what Pierce and Jakobson would call the 'iconic' or 'indexical' meaning; his 'conceptual or delimiting meaning' to what they would call the (Piercean) symbolic: but Merleau-Ponty seems to go further than either in identifying the iconic aspect of the sign with power of gesture -- with the immanently meaningful quality of articulatory behaviour.

It is this insight that I shall be attempting to apply to some of the Umeda material. I would stress Merleau-Ponty's implicit identification of 'iconic' meaning with (articulatory) gesture (i.e. bodily movements of an expressive kind) because it points to an approach to the whole problem which is by-passed by Jakobson in his discussion with its primarily accoustic emphasis (it is no accident that Jakobson has radically changed the course of accoustic phonetics, without exercising comparable influence over the articulatory phonetics of Sweet, Jones and their successors). Jakobson seeks his 'iconic' principle in

language through an investigation directed at the sound patterns of speech; if he has little to say about phonological motivation at the lexical level it is perhaps because in terms of sheer sound it is very difficult to see how such an investigation can proceed much beyond the demonstration of overt or covert onomatopoeia or related accoustic devices. Here, perhaps, Jakobson is a prisoner of the very refinement of his accoustic theory; if, taking up the idea of the 'gesture' we concentrate attention, not on the sound produced, but on the articulatory movements involved in the production of the sound, we may find a readier means of grasping the iconic admixture of lexical items. Jakobson speaks of a graphic, diagrammatic principle in language; Merleau-Ponty speaks, likewise, of words which 'delineate' their meanings -- I suggest that such metaphors reveal that both writers are thinking in essentially kinetic terms. Yet it is difficult to translate this kinetic awareness which accompanies articulation into the language of accoustic (as opposed to articulatory) phonetics. It seems more convenient to record such observations of linguistic 'gestures' in directly physiological terms, rather than 'at one remove' in accoustic terms. At any rate, I myself have not used Jakobsonian 'distinctive feature' (accoustic) phonology in my analysis of Umeda, but have restricted myself to the simpler and more traditional articulatory phonetics which classifies sounds 'by point and manner of articulation'.

However, Jakobson is important for this discussion in another way as well, for it was his well-known article

'Why 'mama' and 'papa'?' ( 1960 ) which has inspired two recent contributions by Edmund Leach on Language and Kinship (1967; 1971) whose approach is in many ways very close to that which I propose to adopt here.

#### ii. Leach on Language and Kinship

Leach's two essays are dominated by the idea (derived from Jakobson) that definite constraints operate on the process whereby the child learns language; certain principles of intellectual and physiological 'economy' favour a definite patterning in the phonology of kinship vocabulary. Leach writes (1967)

' ... children learn to manipulate sound patterns so as to forge a language ... (this would be) 'inconceivable unless some close correlation (existed) between the structure of meaning and the structure of phonology'.

However, the impression given in Leach's first paper 'The Language of Kachin Kinship' (1967) -- despite the references to Jakobson, is not that the sounds (phonology) of Kachin kin terms are in themselves structured in relation to the meanings they subsume; instead, having simply postulated this correlation Leach contents himself with discussing problems of the connotation of Kachin Kin terms. (i.e. he discusses what I have elsewhere called 'semantic' and 'morphological' motivation, rather than 'phonological' motivation). Thus, to dwell for a moment on some examples presented by Leach, he demonstrates that we can learn a great deal about 'the structured paradigm of the society in which (the Kachin ego) lives' (ibid : 130) if we can appreciate the semantic motivation of wa: father = man =



bamboo = pig tooth (versus) nu: mother      home      original  
 soft core (of something). Or, similarly, the pair woi:  
 grandmother = monkey (versus) shu: grandchild = frog.

Leach makes many fascinating points in the course of his discussion, but, at the same time, one might re-phrase Jakobson's original question and ask 'Why Nu and Wa?' without finding any explicit answer in Leach's text. Leach shows nu and wa each dominate a cluster of symbolically related ideas (i.e. are instances of relative motivation in Saussure's sense) but he does not attempt to answer the related query as to why it should be that particular sound pattern (or gesture) which, in each case, is the bearer of that particular cluster of meanings. If I have a criticism of Leach's first essay (which I admire) it would be that he fails to distinguish adequately between the different kinds of 'motivation' (semantic, morphological, and phonological), and that he does not carry his argument far enough to demonstrate that Kachin kin terms are 'absolutely' and not merely 'relatively' motivated.

This criticism, however, does not apply to Leach's second essay in this field (More on 'mama' and 'papa', ASA 11 1971). Here Leach turns right away from questions of relative motivation (again, without making the distinction clear) and concentrates on phonological motivation: in particular the relation of phonology and effect in Sinhalese kinship vocabulary (no terms other than kin terms are discussed, unlike the Kachin article).

Much space in this second article (which is very dense and complex) is taken up with a sketch of Sinhalese phonology,

a sketch which evidently required considerable effort to produce (particularly, I should think, the distinctive feature analysis of Sinhalese consonants (p.86)) -- but whose contribution to the final result -- the anthropological pay-off -- is not entirely clear. I feel -- and I admit I may be quite wrong about this -- that a simpler classification of sounds in straightforward articulatory terms (labials, dentals, alveolars, velars, nasals, etc.) would have been much simpler to construct, and would have allowed Leach to make exactly the points he does make much more economically.

Leach does succeed in what he set out to do, which is to show, roughly, that a 'Martian' anthropologist might succeed in discerning (affective) categories of relationships in ego's kinship universe by sorting out the kinship terms according to such phonological criteria as amma (MoBr) mama (ego) ('diffuse nasal voiced bilabial consonant + low mixed lax vowel') versus thatha (Fa) ayiya (EBro) akka (Esis) ('unvoiced unaspirated consonants') and so on. (See Leach's Fig. 2, p.93). Despite its tentative (and often rather tortuous) approach which is imposed by the material, Leach's article opens up a wide field for anthropologists --

'What I am proposing is that different degrees of effect associated with particular relationship categories may, on occasion, be signalled by phonology; and further that, where this happens, the signals may be, at least to some extent of a species-specific cross-cultural, type' (ibid : 97).

I will not enter into details of Leach's argument here,

though those familiar with the outline of Leach's work will recognise a number of points of contact between his argument and mine -- particularly where the anomalous position of the K sounds (Kachin: hkyi: excrement hkri: un-marriageable cross-cousin ( ) cf. our section on ak, ok, ag, og below p. 593ff) are concerned. Likewise perhaps, the 'hard' s (or ts, kachin: tsa: unmarriageable cross-cousin ( ) matsa: curse, cf. our analysis of sa below section 623ff ).

To conclude, therefore, this brief discussion of Leach's pioneering efforts in a new and possibly important field. Leach's many successes in detail are compromised by the fact that he does not seem to have worked out an overall theoretical framework for discussing lexical motivation. In his first article (1967) he focusses on semantic and morphological motivation to the exclusion of phonological motivation, while in his second article he deals only with the latter, to the exclusion of the former. Nowhere does he confront De Saussure (and the main current of Saussurean linguistics) on its own ground. One suspects, incidentally, that Kachin is intrinsically more prone to interesting semantic associations than is Sinhalese -- at any rate Leach produces no Sinhalese examples to parallel the fascinating Kachin cases of semantic motivation contained in his earlier paper. If this is so it must necessarily cast doubt on Leach's 'universalistic' bias. I feel that apart from odd cases where there is some demonstrable statistical trend in favour of a particular linguistic pattern (as is the case with 'mama' and 'papa' -- then we must go on treating individual languages very much on their own merits as isolated examples,



and eschew arguments which imply that extensive cross-cultural comparability can be established on the basis of one or two cases. I think that when it comes to all forms of lexical motivation we must recognise that some languages are 'better' than others -- each language may 'specialise' in a particular kind of linguistic symbolism, be it semantic, morphological, or phonological, and it is impossible to tell, a priori, what kind of significant patterning, if any, we will discover.

Finally, it may be appropriate to mention, in the light of the considerable degree of convergence between some of Leach's results and my own, that my ideas on this topic were worked out in the field, so that Leach's 1967 paper was unavailable to me, and his 1971 paper not yet published. Leach's independent work on this problem has fortified me considerably in continuing to pursue the topic myself.

### iii. The Umeda material

#### Preliminary remarks on the language

As mentioned previously, no professional linguist has devoted his energies to the Umeda language. The report by Loving and Bass (1964) on the Amanab language family contains no specific data on these languages, restricting itself entirely to problems of classification. Thus, no material exists on Umeda or on any closely-related language. This is unfortunate, especially since I am hardly in a position to supply the deficiency, having had to concentrate on many other things besides language while I was in the field.

As far as grammar is concerned little need be said since the grammar of the language is not relevant to the argument



being put forward here. The crucial point, perhaps, is that root elements, both of nouns and verbs, are readily distinguishable, and do not change. The main grammatical 'weight' is borne by the verb, which takes various suffixes to indicate grammatical relations. (This is a common feature of New Guinea languages). Verbal suffixes indicate tense and infix -u- indicates whether the subject is singular or plural (number is not expressed in the noun except by the adjective avat 'plenty of' 'many'). Nouns take a variety of suffixes, -na indicating the possessive, and -m indicating that they are the object of the sentence. Another suffix ie indicates 'at' (locative), while -nohm means 'together with'. However, besides these obligatory and elementary modifications of root elements are many more whose function seems to be prosodic rather than significant. These I never classified or learned how to use.

Thus a simple Umeda sentence illustrating the points made above might be:

Pudatod Imodem iduavana 'The pundas went to Imonda'

The men of Punda (puda+tod) to Imonda (imoda+m) went (idav: go (root)+u (plural subject)+ana past perfect tense marker). The word order is standard, the subject coming first and the verb last.

Besides these suffixes, there are certain independent elements: a set of pronouns (including inclusive and exclusive first person plural) and prepositions such as awe, maivem expressing negation, and interrogatives hane, ane (who) ahwai (what) ahanie (where).

Ye bane (ye: you bane who i.e. who are you?) Ehev  
ahanie t'kwav? (ehev: they + ahanie: where+t' (prosodic  
 element) + kwav: exist i.e. where are they?) Ka'b ania  
maivem (Ka: I+ania maivem: don't know). All in all, my  
 experience was that, apart from the prosodic 'frills' --  
 a term I trust I will be forgiven for using -- Umeda grammar  
 was rather simple. Here, however, it is not grammar which  
 is at issue, but morphology, since the reader will appreciate  
 that my arguments from morpheme units (such as the arguments  
 put forward in Chapter 3) fall down unless I have identified  
 these units correctly. Here distinction must be made between  
 nouns and verbs. The roots of verbs were subject to change.  
 Thus the root tadv: eat becomes, in the imperative taro, idav:  
 go becomes ido: go! and so on. There are other changes  
 affecting verb roots. Nouns, on the other hand are stable;  
 though they can take suffixes, and can be used in compounds,  
 the roots of nouns do not change. This is important because  
 my arguments are primarily based on nouns, not on verbs,  
 nouns being much simpler to handle in this connection because  
 they break down readily into morpheme units.

There are some problems connected with the morphology of  
 Umeda nouns which must be briefly looked at. Umeda has a  
 great many monosyllabic noun roots (examples already  
 mentioned have been sa, na, ta, li, etc., many consisting of  
 the simplest possible CV and VC forms (VC examples ip, awk, at  
as etc.)). Not all nouns are monosyllabic by any means.

There are two important types of polysyllabic nouns:

- (1) Those which consist of compounds of one or more  
 independently occurring morpheme units (examples

ipude = ip+ude, wamol wa + mol, yapanwatabwi 'cassowaries' knee bone' ya+pa+na+wa+ta+ab+wi).

(ii) those which add non-morphemic root increments to root elements resulting thereby in a change in meaning, examples being: as (arecoid palm mentioned above), asa: garden, asi: HiFa/FaFa, udi: spirit, uda: bilum ude: dog; awyai: bandicoot, awye: bird of paradise, agwa: woman, agwai: wife, at: PaBro, ate: E Bro atie: above, etc.

(The existence of this latter type must be emphasised since it is a quite common phenomenon in the language, not restricted to the few examples given). There are many other nouns which cannot be fitted into either group (i.e. nouns containing extra syllables which do not seem to have any independent role -- though this may only be a reflection of my inadequate knowledge of the language).

There are many compound nouns which consist of compounded polysyllabic nouns, for instance avanai-ipud: ring finger (ava+nai+ipud) or nanepos 'crown of the sago-palm' (na+na+pos: nose) oktapusm 'pig-butcher' okte: pig +pusm 'cutting' (from pusitav 'to cut').

Though it would be interesting to reduce the picture of Umeda noun composition to some degree of order by giving rules for the combination of elements, I am afraid this task lies outside my competence, though I hope that this will not reflect too adversely on my subsequent argument. In general it may be said that the modifying element follows the main nominal element, though I do not think this is a hard and fast rule. Adjectives follow nouns, to which they are

attached: thus kugwe means 'big' 'a big pig' is one word oktekugwi, though kugwe can be used detached from any noun.

For the purposes of the argument, it is sufficient to emphasise that a large number of Umeda nouns, particularly the 'basic vocabulary' of nouns in common use (as opposed to the more specialised vocabulary of non-utilised plant and animal species, which largely went unrecorded by me) show this basic pattern being either monosyllabic or, if polysyllabic being susceptible of reduction to more elementary monosyllabic component units, which often re-appear in other, different, combinations.

The problem at issue being, to ascertain whether any discernible constraints operate to associate particular monosyllabic morpheme units with particular 'fields' of meaning.

#### iv. Phonological motivation (mo)

The reader will recall the lengthy analysis given in Chapter 3 of the word 'naimo' meaning 'caryota palm'. This was shown to be a morphologically and semantically motivated compound of the segments nai and mo, each of which has an independent role (section v). Here I want to concentrate on the segment mo, which, I shall argue, is phonologically motivated; i.e. as an articulatory 'gesture' it is intrinsically appropriate to the meaning it expresses. How could one go about proving this? Let us look, first of all, at the list of 'mo' words:



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <u>no</u>          | gullet, adam's apple   |
| <u>no-tod</u>      | daughter, female child   |
| <u>mol</u>         | girl, daughter   |
| <u>mol</u>         | vulva  |
| <u>mov</u>         | fruit ( <u>movwi</u> )   |
| <u>mov</u>         | vulva (polite)   |
| <u>amoi</u>        | vulva, small girl (polite)   |
| <u>amov</u>        | termite  |
| <u>naino</u>       | caryota palm   |
| <u>namos</u>       | sago-grubs   |
| <u>wamol</u>       | testicles (individual) vs. <u>tai</u> : genital<br>assemblage                |
| <u>molkakoi</u>    | tabooed foods of the young (lit: 'unripe <u>mol</u> ')                       |
| <u>miemo</u>       | perfume glands of female possum ( <u>mie</u> )                               |
| <u>mos,</u> )      | small, a small thing   |
| )                  |  |
| <u>mosiai(ke)</u>  |  |
| <u>mostera(ke)</u> | a small thing, young, (plant, animal)<br>( <u>-aike</u> = diminutive suffix) |

This list of no words can be broken down into various categories:

(a) ORIFICE

no: gullet (by extension, word, speech)

(b) SEXUAL (ORIFICE)

mol, mov, amoi: vulva

(c) SOCIAL CATEGORY

mol, notod: daughter, young girl

(d) BODY PART

wamov: testicle, miemo: perfume glands of possum

## (e) PART OF TREE

movwi: fruit (also tree sp. naimo: caryota)

## (f) NATURAL SPECIES

amov: termites, namos: sago-grubs

## (g) DIMENSION WORDS

mosteraike, mosiake: small, young (thing, plant, animal)

Mo, by itself, or with the modifying terminations -l, -v can bear all the meanings comprised by groups (a), (b), (c) and (e), whereas in the others mo is found in various compound words, particularly compounds of mov (fruit) and mos, a segment which seems to imply smallness. Groups (a) to (g) are, so to speak, seven distinct domains which share a mo element -- what do they have in common?

To grasp this I must refer back to a theme which has made many appearances already in the course of this thesis, namely, the basic schema of tadv-relations (eating, sexuality, aggression ...) the primary modality of ego/environment relations. In the gustatory mode, the mo words comprise both the orifice of eating (or rather, of swallowing -- the gullet) and also, very conspicuously, a natural entity (fruit) whose very raison d'être is to be swallowed, by men or by beasts. And, turning to the sexual mode of tadv-relations, a similar picture emerges: mo words including both the sexual orifice (the vulva) which is 'eaten' and the social category (of young girls) whose social role is, likewise, to be eaten (sexually).

But what, it may be objected, of wamol: testicle -- it seems odd that such a masculine object should be found among essentially feminine entities as girls, fruit, etc. This

difficulty is removed once it is understood that wamol refers not to the genital assemblage as a whole (tai) but specifically to the individual testicles, duplex, fruit-like appendages of the male -- which are likened to 'eyes' (nov or nowwi cf. mov, movwi: fruit).

The natural species in the mo group need explanation, too. Both species (termites and sago-grubs) are small and prolific (cf. the extensive discussion of termites in chapter V, section XVI). Sago-grubs (namos) though living, are in important respects more like fruit than like, say, animal game. Termites (amov) proliferating in rotten trees, are, as it were the 'fruit' of the dead tree. The smallness/youngness implications of the mos segment seem to link up naturally with the kinds of associations appertaining to mo words in the context of tadv-relations. The things eaten (girls, fruit) and the orifices (gullet, vulva) are alike small, or constricted. Small, young things are more edible than big, tough ones.

Now, how does the vocal gesture mo fit in with this picture? It is not possible to establish such a relation of intrinsic appropriateness with respect to a single segment only, since it must be seen against the overall phonetic/symbolic picture of the language; however, to take only the segment mo for the present, certain suggestive features may be pointed out.

The Umeda sound m is a voiced bilabial occlusive -- the lips are pressed together while the nasal passage remains open. The vowel o which follows differs minimally from the 'neutral vowel' position except in the labial feature

'roundedness'. Thus, like the m it is essentially a vocal gesture performed with the lips. Here, surely, is a clue, since the lips are the seat of certain very definite experiences -- in fact, precisely the sort of experiences one might associate with fruit, girls, and so forth? The nasals (m and n) are, of all speech sounds, the most likely to be associated with contexts of nutrition and oral gratification. Firstly there is the familiar point, made by Jakobson (1960) that diffuse nasals are spontaneously produced by suckling infants, and are perhaps reinforced by the mother, to whom such sounds may indicate that her child is being gratified. But nasals are not restricted to the context of suckling, in fact, the physiological basis of such nasals are a constant throughout life, since, while eating, one always breaths through the nose (one can also talk through one's nose: at dinner-table conversations odd nasals can be heard springing up on all sides ... 'myyes?' ... 'mreallymn ... mmm!'). Likewise one has the 'mnnnnnn' sound which is always associated with olfactory anticipation of pleasures to come (including sex).

Consider the actions involved in eating fruit: first the lips brush against the small, soft, round object, portions of whose 'flesh' (and the equivalent word to 'flesh' ni, is used in Umeda) are gently prised away with the teeth; these are then masticated until the fragments have become sufficiently small and sufficiently well-lubricated to slip through the constricted entry of the oesophagus, giving rise to a delicate convulsion in that region. Then consider the segment no, formed, first by a compression of the lips



accompanied by a simultaneous nasal resonance ('numm') followed by a vowel whose rounded lip-aperture matches the roundedness of the fruit itself, not to mention a certain roundedness which is equally appropriate to the objects of sexual gratification, and whose constrictedness recalls the constrictedness of the small apertures of the body.

Such an analysis must remain, necessarily, only tentative, but some prima facie evidence that phonological motivation is at work is, nonetheless, implied by the very consistency with which the mo segment appears in lexical contexts involving sexual/gustatory objects and orifices, since it suggests an intrinsic functional efficacy, however one might care to define it. The nasal m evokes an 'oral' context, while the labialised vowel sound o contrives to make the segment mo 'delineate its meaning' (to use Merleau-Ponty's phrase) both as object (sketching in a rounded form) and as orifice (a narrow aperture bounded by the lips).

We may perhaps lend some colour to this argument by considering another 'aperture' word mi, which uses the same consonant but (significantly) a 'narrower' vowel, namely i. Mi refers to a tightly constricted orifice. It is found as agami (aga: ear + mi) literally 'blocked-up ears' or idiomatically 'angry, in a passion, hysterical' etc.). Explaining this idiom (which is the same as the pidgin expression 'yau i-pas') my informant put his hands over his ears -- as if to shut out all restraining counsel -- making a pantomime of violent anger. Umedas would describe a man as 'deafened' (agami) by passions which we would describe

as 'blinding' him. What is of relevance here is the contrast between the relatively open round vowel of mo and the tight, narrow i in mi. This is a direct reflection, in articulatory terms of the 'blocking off' of the orifice -- by a maximal constriction of the vocal tract (I will return to this theme below). The most 'neural' word for any orifice is the non-committal me which is entirely general, meaning 'hole' (including in appropriate contexts, mouth, anus, or any aperture, in a tree, mountain etc.). Here, in the 'neutral' member of the 'orifice' set we have, appropriately, the most 'neutral' vowel (see Fig. 57 below).

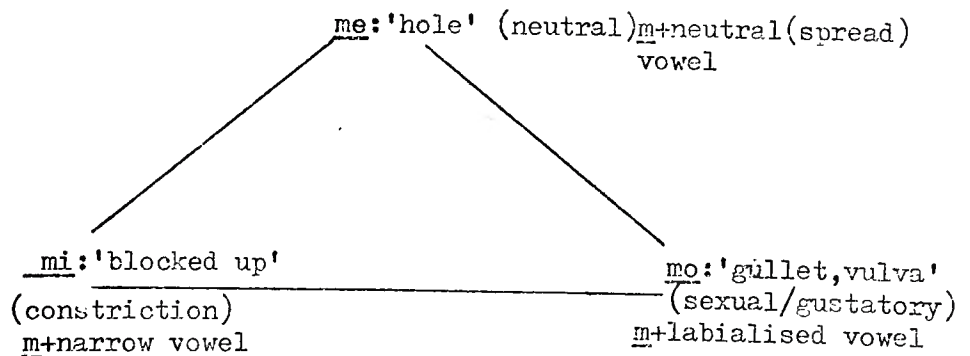


Fig. 57 'CONTRASTIVE' ANALYSIS OF 'MO'

v. Phonological motivation and the structure  
of the social field

I move on now to consider, from a phonological point of view, some of the issues that were raised by the ed (central) ag (lateral) opposition to which I devoted section vi of my chapter on 'Language and Symbolism'. I wish to discover whether the ed/ag opposition can be interpreted from the point of view put forward above.

|             | BI-LABIAL |          | ALVEOLAR |          | VELAR  |          |
|-------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|----------|
|             | voiced    | unvoiced | voiced   | unvoiced | voiced | unvoiced |
| CONTINUANTS | w         |          | l,r      |          | y      |          |
| FRICATIVES  | v         | f        |          | s        |        | h        |
| STOPS       | b(mb)     | p        | d        | t        | g(ŋ)   | k        |
| NASALS      | m         |          | n        |          |        |          |

Note.

I use the symbols 'f' and 'v' in place of 'ɸ' and 'β'. It should be noted, though, that these bilabial fricatives are different from the corresponding labio-dental fricatives of english.

Table 11 TABLE OF UMEDA CONSONANT SOUNDS.

But before doing so, I ought to repair a deficiency which may perhaps have already become conspicuous, namely, the provision of an overall view of the Umeda system of consonants and vowels, since these are, after all, the 'raw material' upon which I am attempting to build my argument.

It will be seen from Table 11 that Umeda consonants may be classified according to a tripartite scheme as 'bilabials', 'alveolars' (articulated on the ridge behind the teeth -- there are no dentals as such) and 'velars' articulated on the soft palate at the back of the mouth. I do not wish to assert that the point of articulation of each individual sound within these three classes is exactly the same -- a general grouping is all that I am seeking. Four conventional categorisations of speech-sounds intersect with the three groups thus described, namely continuants (otherwise known as semi-vowels), fricatives (approximants) stops (occlusives) and nasals. Nasals and continuants are all voiced, stops and fricatives exist in voiced and voiceless forms. Eighteen possible consonants are distinguished in this simple classification of which 15 are significant and are represented in my orthography.

The classification of vowels I have adopted is similarly rough-and-ready. I adopt the familiar triangular lay-out. Five vowels are distinguished: (1) i (close, front, spread); (2) e (half-close, central, spread); (3) a (open, central, un-rounded); (4) o (half-close, back, rounded); (5) u (close, back, rounded).



Table 12

|            | Front             | Central               | Back      |
|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Close      | <u>i</u>          |                       | <u>u</u>  |
| Half-close | <u>e</u> (spread) | <u>o</u>              | (rounded) |
| Open       |                   | <u>a</u> (un-rounded) |           |

To put matters most crudely, one might say that i and to a lesser extent e are opposed to u and o as 'front' to 'back' (i being, in addition, very 'close' or narrow) while a is opposed to all these as (maximally) 'open' to (relatively) 'close', and finally, that o and u are opposed to the other vowels as 'rounded' or 'labialised' to 'unrounded'.

These preliminaries over, I may return to the main theme of this section. In Chapter 3 I discussed a number of segments (na, mo, ti, aq, ed and so on) from the stand-point of semantic and morphological motivation, particularly, in relation to certain symbolic ideas incorporating the idea of 'organic structure'. Now I must take up the more problematic question as to whether these segments are, in some sense, iconically motivated as articulatory gestures appropriate to the generalised meanings with which they are associated. One has, somehow, to conceive of the articulatory field (the vocal apparatus and its activities) as possessing a pre-established structure, an array of oppositions and

discontinuities, onto which semantic discontinuities can be mapped in some systematic fashion; a microcosm capable of reflecting, in a very generalised way, the structure of the macrocosm.

It seems to me that a simple classification of consonants, such as that just given, does provide a helpful guide to the kinds of articulatory oppositions and discontinuities onto which we can attempt to map various kinds of generalised meaning.

In the previous section, I looked at mo, the segment associated with young girls and fruit, in isolation; now, having sketched in the total range of Umeda speech-sounds, I can look at the same segment in a 'contrastive' context. Let us take the other segments which were involved in the 'tree' model of society (Chapter 3 section ix) -- ti (husband == trunk) and ag (branch, stem = wife). One notes, first of all, that three separate points of articulation are involved. Mo, discussed previously, is a bilabial CV form (and I have suggested that this 'labialisation' is not a chance phenomenon since it may reflect the idea of oral gratification). Ti, on the other hand, is an alveolar CV form. The ti segment is minimally distinct from the voiced di in edi, man, but is maximally distinct from the velar g in ag(agwa : woman). The segment ag is opposed to both mo and ti in being a VC rather than a CV form, and in employing a velar consonant articulated at the back of the vocal tract. The opposition ti/ag is, therefore, suggestive; maximally contrastive articulatory patterns (alveolar stop + vowel versus vowel +

velar stop) coincide with maximally contrastive meanings. It is possible to oppose a group of 'central' masculine/ancestral segments and a group of 'feminine' 'peripheral' (with negative implications 'bad', 'sick' etc. on the basis of this general formula:

alveolar stop + V : V + velar stop :: male/central : female/peripheral  
fric

Here are some of the alveolar groups: (d, t, s, l, + V)

ti: tree, tiai: husband, edi: man -da: clan-name suffix e.g.

um-da sawa-da, pwi-da etc. (tuda : child).

ta: hair (see the list given in Chapter 5 section x, )

tane:hot, tali: genitals etc. yinta: bird tamwa : fish

li: digging stick (see list Chapter 5, section v)

e.g. eli : man -yli, -yle leaves etc.

sa: coconut, sap : magic (see below)

si sis: mountain, sai: thorn, spine

and, by contrast, the velar groups:

ag- agwa: woman (see list Chapter 3 section vi)

awk: kin category 'outsiders' (-agai) nsak: rubbish, dirt

Og: sog : bark (peripheral to ti : tree) suog : vaginal

secretions, sogwe : woven cane ornaments, toq : game,

meat, mogwa : other, another (cf. magawa : cross-cousin)

ogud : eels, water people (a name for the Walsa tribes).

ogurubwe : magic earth from bush.

ok: abok, abokakoi : bad (thing) kakoi, bad, unripe.

mokus : trick, deception. -Vkra suffix-for names of

wild creatures e.g. subo-kra : gouria pigeon,

anyie-kra : cockatoo etc. okte : pig

eh: ehe, asehe : pain, sickness, teh rotten, firewood,  
mwehe : poisonous yam species, molehe : menstruation  
ik: ikwia : distant, a long way

Given that this formula has some degree of plausibility -- I would not claim more than that for it -- then it becomes possible to construct an explanation in terms of 'gestural' meaning. Mere contrast, in the Saussurean sense, is inadequate, since it is necessary to explain not only the differences between words, but also the similarities. Looking at the ag group, marked by velar stops and fricatives, one notices a consistent theme of 'distanciation' (a barbarous term I cannot avoid) -- placing something at a distance, whether physically, or in terms of moral or emotional connotations, from the axis of ego. This contrasts with the bilabials (mo, me and ava to be discussed below) where the connotation is of oral gratification and intimacy. Jakobson noted that velars occur less frequently than other sounds in Murdock's sample of kin-terms and that they were late to develop in the child's speech (Jakobson 1960). The 'difficult' quality of velars is elaborated by Leach in his discussion of Sinhalese kin terms, where (emotionally) 'distant' relations tend to give rise to kin terms with velar consonants (LEach 1971 : 95). Velars involve a certain feeling of strain -- they are, in fact, spontaneously produced in situations of pain or disgust, as a by-product of tensing the muscles of the face and neck (aaargh! or eek! or ugh! are the conventional comic-strip spellings of this sort of spontaneous vocal gesture).



One can point up the contrast in a compressed way by looking at the words for the two basic roles played by women vis-a-vis a male ego, that is, the role of wife, and the role of mother (sister I will ignore). The profound category opposition between these two roles does not have to be emphasised. Wife is agwa : woman, or agwai. While the relation of ego to agwa is established only with difficulty -- negotiations, reciprocal exchanges, sexual conflicts, and is maintained only under constant threat of temperamental incompatibility or affinal interference, the relation of ego to ava mother is eminently unproblematic, being coterminous with the very beginnings of ego's social experience. No ambiguities cloud the relationship with the mother, whom Jakobson rightly calls 'la grande dispensatrice' (see Chapter 3 section vii for av- words).

Contrasting agwa with ava we find both the opposition of maximally contrastive consonants (velar and bilabial respectively) within a basically uniform vocalic context (a-wa/a-a) and also the operation of an 'iconic' principle, since the v bilabial of ava is found elsewhere in contexts of nutrition (cf. sava : taro, avul : sago staple, aba : sago flour) while the 'wife' term agwa or agwai is marked by the velar consonant with its feeling of 'distanciation'.

I will return to the bilabial group later, but first I ought to say some more about the alveolar groups (ti, ta, etc.) which are 'central' (edie) to the ag groups 'lateral-peripheral'. No straightforward explanation of the association of alveolar stops and 'centrality' seems to

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I will return to the bilabial group later, but first I ought to say some more about the alveolar groups (ti, ta, etc.) which are 'central' (edie) to the ag groups 'lateral-peripheral'. No straightforward explanation of the association of alveolar stops and 'centrality' seems to

stand out; one does note, however, that these sounds are produced in the 'central' part of the vocal tract, and that to produce them, the tongue is flexed and brought to a point (try saying li) forming thereby an analogue, perhaps, of the masculine/aggressive connotations of these 'central' words. The tongue is active, instrumental, percussive, while making these sounds, whereas in making a velar stop the blade of the tongue is retracted, passive (as it is for the bilabials as well). Perhaps this is significant.

This example suggests the idea of testing the hypothesis of phonological motivation by seeking concomitant variation between phonological and semantic fields. In my next example I shall try to show one, rather intriguing, form such variation might take, of which there are several examples in Umeda. This is 'syllabic inversion'. Here one is dealing not with the actual sounds so much as with the order in which they occur in the syllable. Thus, taking as a starting point a syllable of the CV (consonant + vowel) type, one inverts the order of the elements to produce a VC (vowel + consonant) pattern, and then looks out for concomitant variation in the meaning, or in this case inversion, so that the meaning of the CV form will be in some sense the inverse of the VC form.

My starting point is the Umeda first-person pronoun ka. (Morphologically this may be associated with ke : bone, the central axis of bodily structure). Ka refers to the ego-axis in its purest form, and it is, like the ta, li, ti,

segments listed above a CV syllable (though, un like them it uses a velar stop). Now, how might one invert the meaning of the first person pronoun? The opposite of ego is alter, who is referred to by the third person pronoun, he or she, that is, in Umeda, as eh. This pronoun eh, though it does not provide a clinching case of syllabic inversion does provide limited support for the theory in that first of all, it inverts the CV of ka into a VC (conforming thereby to the formula given above 'V + velar consonant/ lateral peripheral'). But there are also differences, the k of ka becoming a fricative h and the vowel changing from a (central) to e (front). I dare say this example is not very convincing and I will only lose what credence I retain by pressing this one too far. Now if there really were a syllabic inversion of ka it would be 'ak'. And while 'ak' does not exist in isolation as a word in the language, one can surely point, with reason, to the form awk, which differs from 'ak' only in that it inserts the continuant w before the k -- and which has a sense entirely consonant with the point of view being advanced here. Awk are members of the residual kinship category with whom ego traces no connection on either side, actual or residual, whom he fights, and whom he may marry. Relative to ego and his group, they are the category of total outsiders, those maximally distant, socially from ka.

Now this, I think, is a reasonably neat example of syllabic inversion with inversion of meaning. But I am left with the nagging presence of the semi-vowel w in awk, which



prevents awk from being a perfectly symmetrical inversion of ka. However, there is another instance of syllabic inversion in Umeda which can resolve this residual snag. This is the wa/aw inversion. The segment wa is found in a large number of lexical items where its presence seems to denote the idea of power, danger or force.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <u>wa(!)</u> | get out! look out! Mind the way!<br>(interjection). Aggressive verbal gesture.  |
| <u>wat</u>   | thunder ( <u>wa+at</u> ) on <u>at</u> FaBr (above : <u>atie</u><br>see Chapter 3 section     ).   |
| <u>sogwa</u> | bow ( <u>sog+wa</u> ) <u>Sog</u> : bark (bows made from<br>bark of the black palm).   |
| <u>wata</u>  | coconut fibre (see Chapter     Section     ).   |
| <u>tarwa</u> | fish (symbolic role of discussed in<br>Chapter     section     ).   |
| <u>wamig</u> | python <u>wa+mig</u> : root   |
| <u>agwa</u>  | woman (as opposed to neutral <u>ava</u> , <u>mol</u> , etc.)  |
| <u>wamol</u> | testicles ( <u>wa+mol</u> )   |
| <u>wati</u>  | strong, potent. (adj.) also a variety of<br>Areca of notable potency; and the phrase<br>' <u>pul wati!</u> ' is applied to any notably<br>strong areca. |
| <u>sawa</u>  | war-magic (plant) ( <u>sa+wa</u> )  |

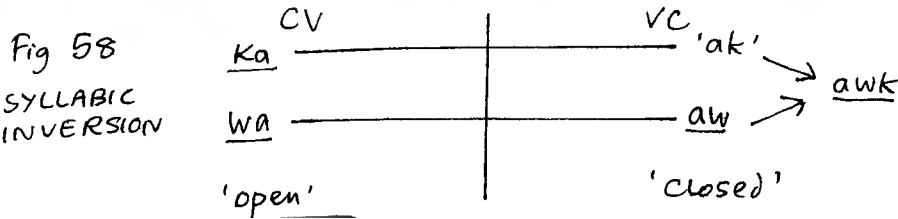
The opposite of this wa segment (of which further examples might be given) is aw, which also occurs in a number of words, seemingly with a regular implication, though not, this time, the 'release' of force (wa! : shoo!) but of an encompassing obstacle, a resistance ...

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <u>awda</u>   | a fence, a trap (an enclosure into which pigs are lured) also an ambush, encirclement, in warfare ( <u>aw+da</u> ) |
| <u>paw</u>    | a dam ( <u>popaw</u> ) or ritual fence   |
| <u>aws</u>    | preposition, 'there' <u>ehev awsidavana</u> : 'they went there'. <u>aws!</u> (pointing) 'that thing there'.        |
| <u>awf</u>    | the sky, clouds, empyrean  |
| <u>aw-sis</u> | the mountain shutting off Umeda territory to the north. The highest landmark.                                      |
| <u>awk</u>    | outsiders  |

Thus in these aw words we find consistently the idea of encompassing, whether an ambush, a fence, or the encompassing space, awf, the empyrean (painawf : the stars) while aw refers both to a forest tree and to the aw-sis the distant landmark. And of course, awk, the outsiders who shut off ego's social universe just as awf, the sky, and awsis the mountain, close off his landscape.

If this interpretation of aw is correct, then it becomes possible to see awk as the superimposition of two segments, each of which exist independently, and each of which is in a sense the mirror image of its syllabic inverse form (Fig. 58).

At risk of becoming excessively speculative, I would like to offer one additional remark concerning this case of 'syllabic inversion'. It is this: it seems to me that it is possible to interpret the structure of these syllables



(C V or V C) as being, in themselves, motivated. A C V syllable is spoken of, in linguistic terms as an 'open' syllable (the vowel being left open) as opposed to the VC form which is a 'closed' form, the syllable being closed off by the concluding consonant. Now it is notable that wa, corresponding to the notion of 'power' emanating outwards, as it were, employs the 'open' (CV) form, and ka, likewise, employs the 'open' form, whereas aw and awk employ the corresponding 'closed' form. This is curiously reminiscent of certain features of descriptions of the relationship between ego and the world that have been put forward by philosophers, particularly phenomenologists, such as Merleau-Ponty and Schutz, when discussing that favourite phenomenological concept, the 'life-world' or lebenswelt of Husserl. Just as ka uses the 'open' syllabic form, so it is precisely in terms of an 'opening onto the world' that these writers have sought to describe the subjective reality of the ego. And if the ego in the opening of the intentional field, a window overlooking a particular landscape, so objective reality is seen as something which encompasses and closes up the intentional field opened up by subjectivity -- a set of 'horizons' which close up the landscape ... And it is just this kind of encompassing or closure that is implied by awk, the outsiders who stand on the horizon of ego's social world. Can one say, therefore, that the open syllabic shape of ka and wa -- the uninhibited release of syllabic energy -- correspond to the opening of the field dominated by ego, while the inverse closed shapes, aw and ak, correspond to the closing up of this

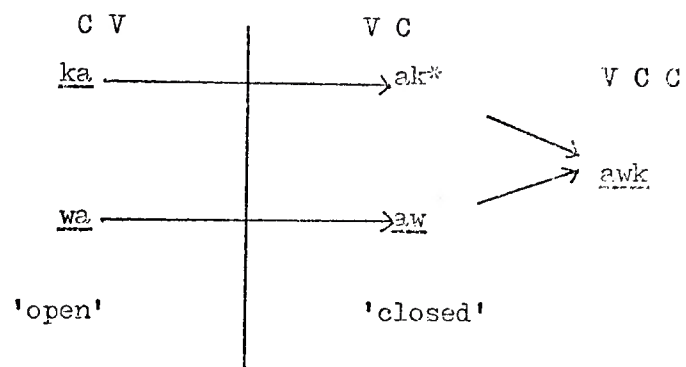


Fig. 58 SYLLABIC INVERSION (KA/AK, WA/AW)

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field, which is reflected in the way in which aw and ak (and awk) progressively narrow, and close off, the vocal tract. If the ka/awk inversion can truly be seen as a reflection of the structure of the social field, or the life-world, at the level of syllabic structure, then one might indeed say, with Merleau-Ponty:

'The spoken word is a gesture, its meaning, a world' ... (1962).

#### vi. The sibilant s

Another instance of 'syllabic inversion' is the sa/as inversion, though here there is no simple inversion of meaning. What is striking, however, is the consistent association of the sibilant s with the idea of magical power, mystical danger etc. Let us look at the sa list first:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <u>sa</u>  | coconut (on the symbolism of the coconut see Chapters 3,ix ). |
| <u>satod</u>   | ancestors   |
| <u>sa-agwa</u>   | malevolent tree-spirits                                       |
| <u>sap</u>   | ginger and by extension, all magic                            |
| <u>oktesap</u> , <u>kwisap</u> , <u>ehesah</u> ; <u>miesah</u> , <u>sawa</u> : | varieties of magical plants                                   |
| <u>basa</u>  | red cordilye (major magical plant) also illness-spirit        |
| <u>sapof</u>   | tobacco (magical uses)  |
| <u>sesa</u>  | cassowary bone dagger (sorcery weapon)                        |
| <u>sasas</u>   | immature coconut flowers (used in magic)                      |
| <u>sasa</u>  | Cycad fern (tabooed plant)                                    |
| <u>wesa</u>  | lighting ( <u>we</u> : vine)                                  |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <u>absa</u>    | territorial boundary (see Chapter section ).                     |
| <u>bsas</u>    | semen  |
| <u>nsak</u>    | rubbish, dirt  |
| sw- <u>swe</u> | fire   |
| <u>meswe</u>   | birth ( <u>meswenn</u> : taboo, sacred)                          |
| <u>swave</u>   | magic ( <u>swavetav</u> : to make magic)                         |
| <u>swah</u>    | sago sp. origin of namov seeds. (The only fertile sago variety). |
| su- <u>sub</u> | limbum (many magical uses. Tabooed as food)                      |
| <u>subul</u>   | earthworm (tabooed). <u>Subulagwa</u> : growth/illness spirits   |

(The sa/su opposition will be discussed below).

From these sa and sw- words we get very clearly the idea of magical or mystical power. Perhaps the prevalence of sibilants in this context derives from the tense, energetic articulatory quality of these sounds: their (acoustic) 'noise' component, and their association with whispered speech (psst!)

However, let us turn to the syllabic inversion of sa, which is as. A list of as words was provided in Chapter 3 section viii, in the course of a discussion of the negatively-valued kinship term asi : wife's father. The relevant members of the set are asi, as : the wild arecoud palm with red fruit, asa! garden (place of secrecy and seclusion) asehe : pain, illness, and as-edtod : sorcerer. Here, too, the sibilant s seems to carry a connotation of mystical danger. Yet, contrasting sa with as, one notices a different emphasis within this 'mystical' field of meaning.

Sa : coconut, though an important repository of mystical values, is a symbol of the 'central' values of Umeda society, the legitimating mystical agency of the ancestors (sa-tod) -- in this conforming, be it noted, to our interpretation of the CV syllabic pattern. In the case of as, this is reversed; compare (Fig. 59).

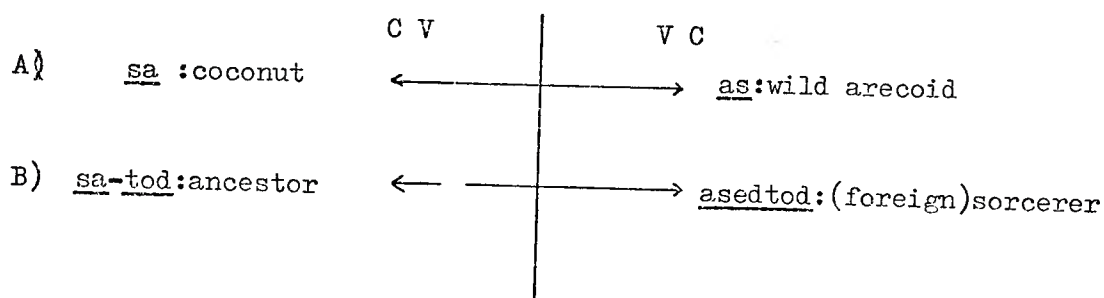


Fig 59 . THE SA/AS INVERSION.

The two lexemes in group a) are united in that they both refer to palm species, but the species in question, as I made clear in Chapter 3 where the symbolism of palms was discussed in some detail, of antithetical type. As, far from being a sacred symbol of the continuity of ancestral values, is almost an outcast among palms, wild, inedible and un-utilised for any purpose, emblematic of 'distant' taboo-laden relationships such as that with affines of the senior generation (who are avoided) or members of the second ascending generation. This symbolic opposition (among palm trees and the values they represent) seems to be faithfully mirrored inarticulatory terms in the sa/as inversion. A

similar opposition is manifest in the lexemes in group b). Ancestor and sorcerer are alike in being opposed to ordinary humanity as occult to mundane (hence, one thinks, the mystical 's' sound) but where ancestors gravitate to the 'central' pole in the sa/as opposition, sorcerers are at once occult and also peripheral to the axis on which ego lies (hence, V C).

vi. Nasal and bilabial consonants

The sound m has been discussed previously in relation to MO.

Nasals, as I suggested earlier, are associated with feeding experience; this is particularly the case with

n. One has

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <u>na</u>   | sago   |
| <u>na</u>   | MoBro (a relation of 'succour')                  |
| <u>nen</u>  | milk (or latex) (cf. <u>nen-agai</u> : Matrikin) |
| <u>nebe</u> | food (the general word)                          |
| <u>nug</u>  | smell, perfume                                   |
| <u>ni</u>   | meat, flesh                                      |

Bilabials

The voiced bilabials are closely-connected, though distinct, sounds. One often hears the dialectal variant mb for b. B is found in 'orifice' words:

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| <u>bol</u> | anus, vulva |
| <u>mol</u> | daughter    |

I have discussed the 'nutritive' connotations of the bilabial b and v in relation to the kin-term ava, whose similarity in articulatory terms to such words as aba : sago flour has been pointed out. In general the voiced bilabials



may also be more specifically associated with the idea of fullness, repletion, or maturity:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <u>ab</u> , <u>abwi</u> | ripe (ready to eat)  |
| <u>kabwi</u>            | big, fat ( <u>ke</u> : bone + <u>abwi</u> )                                  |
| <u>eba</u>              | fat  |
| <u>pab</u>              | erection, highwater ( <u>popab</u> )   |
| <u>pwio<b>b</b></u>     | spring ( <u>pwio</u> + <u>ob</u> )   |
| <u>wib</u>              | yam  |
| <u>kwib</u>             | sacral bone (source of bodily strength ( <u>ke</u> + <u>wib</u> ))           |
| <u>sub</u>              | limbum (symbol of rapid growth)  |
| <u>hub</u>              | pandanus (ditto)   |
| <u>pub</u>              | swollen, big ( <u>udapub</u> : woman's large bilum)                          |
| <u>pub</u>              | rattan, (Calamus) notable for rapid growth, like <u>sub</u> and <u>hub</u> ) |

The group appear to me susceptible of interpretation in 'gestural' terms. These forms (ab, eb, -ob, -ib, -ub) all consist of a vowel followed by the bilabial occlusive b. The articulatory mechanism of such sounds involves first, lip-closure, followed by the gradual 'inflation' of the vocal tract with resonating air -- the reader may make the experiment of pronouncing the sound 'bbb' without opening his lips at any stage -- it will be found that the cheeks become distended with air. The appropriateness of this articulatory gesture with the set of meanings listed above is manifest. The articulatory tract becomes a model of the swelling, growing, organism. Let us contrast the b sound, found in these contexts, with the 'tenser' voiceless bilabials p and f, where, in contrast to b and v, the vocal tract is not allowed to inflate with resonating air, but

instead remains tense, so pressure can build up to produce the 'explosive' p-sound, or the voiceless fricative f.

I will discuss only one segment in this connection, the important segment ip (discussed in relation to the ipele bowmen in Chapter 5, section xviii). The opposition of ip and ab is clear, where the latter has connotations of maturity, ripeness, the former ip, has connotations of immaturity, newness.

|              |                           |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| <u>ip</u>    | breadfruit                |
| <u>ipude</u> | new, young                |
| <u>ipele</u> | 'new man' (ritual bowman) |

In discussing the ipele bowmen, ritual representatives of the rising generation, I laid great stress on the 'restraint' under which they are placed. Restraint (or repression) being seen as a sine qua non of satisfactory maturation. Maturity once attained, however, (as in the case of the Cassowary dancers) the restraint is removed, and a period of 'efflorescence' supervenes. Here, we see the same basic idea reflected in articulatory terms. The segment ip with its 'constrained' narrow vowel (cf. my remarks on agani, above) plus the tense final consonant p rejects this idea of growth-processes; that is, growth is seen as a kind of pressure against a constraining form such that maximum constraint coincides with maximum immaturity. Compare

|                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>ipude</u> : immature | <u>abwi</u> : ripe |
|-------------------------|--------------------|

The narrow vowel and tense p of ip contrast with the open vowel and lax b of ab give 'iconic' representation, on the one hand, to the repression of the immature state (maximum

growth against maximum constraint) and on the other the unrestricted swelling of maturity, the removal of constraint.

vii. Vowels

This last example has introduced the theme of 'iconic' contrasts between vowel sounds. I have already remarked on the possibility that the labialised o in mo may be iconically motivated (orifices) and I have suggested that the narrowness of the i in such segments as ip and mi may be motivated as well. It is not necessary to recapitulate these arguments. My next examples concern a rather different symbolic 'dimension' namely the opposition high/low or up/down. Here the contrast seems to be between the 'open' mid-vowel a and the 'low' back-vowels o and u. Consider:

a, ai      pa(!) : up, (quasi-interjection)

**paiha** : penis

painauf : stars (ancestors' penes)

pab : erection, highwater

pana : shooting stars (panatamwa)

pat : roofbeam

toat : (high) shelf

toatie, atie     above, high

at : guardian (fa Bro) shoulders (see Chapter 3,  
section vii)

bah : head

ga coconut

- o, u      po : water, rain
- pokwie : down, poknea : subterranean
- sugwie : down
- sugut : bush (down, in relation to the habitation sites)
- ('sugutiem hakisav' : go down to the bush vs.
- 'kebeam hapuhav' : come up to the village).
- subul : earthworm subulagwa : subterranean spirits
- ude : dog, younger sister (cf. Chapter 3)
- pud : swamp
- mugea : leg, foot (vs. agea : arm, hand)
- sub : limbum (vs. sa : coconut)

These examples are insufficient to establish the point definitively, yet perhaps it is no accident that in terms of accoustic phonetics o and u are 'grave' 'diffuse' sounds as opposed to a which is 'compact' and 'acute' (Malmberg 1963). I find it very tempting to see an inherent suitability in the opposition pa! (upward movement) versus po : rain, water, ever downwards in motion (pokwie : down). Or, similarly, between pab : rising water and po (rain falling), or between the sky dwelling ancestors satod and the subterranean earthworm spirits subudagwa. Earlier remarks about the 'superiority' of certain classes of kin (at : Fa Br ate : E Bro aiya : Fa) versus the 'inferiority' of certain others ude : Y Sis ipud : son) are also apposite here.

Finally I would like to look at another vowel contrast, that between i and a which has partly been anticipated. While the vowel a in such words as wa : shoo! wat : thunder etc. (section v above) suggests the 'release' of force, the vowel i, being narrower, suggests force under restraint.



wi    wi : edible concurbit (symbol of growth : taboo to children)

wis : moon (seen as growing, monthly)

movwi : fruit (mov+wi)

kwib : sacral bone (source of growth)

pwi : pitpit (tall cane)

pwie : adj. tall

pwioh : spring, rock pool

These words, all marked by the segment wi seem to represent the release of force, not unconstrainedly like wa, but under restraint, the restraint associated with the process of maturation. Similarly one might contrast the disciplined 'verticality' of the segments ti, li, (trunk, sapling) constrained to grow up, with the undisciplined ta, (hair) whose undisciplined abundance is the hallmark of the 'efflorescent' (autonomous) style of social and sexual behaviour characteristic of maturity. In fact, it might be possible to say that the narrow front vowel i is expressive of nothing so much as the 'extrusion' of organic entities in the process of growth -- as if, to grow, they had to force their way through a narrow aperture or fissure ... consider ip or pwi : pit-pit (slender and tall, pwie) in this light. Or the springs (pwioh), forcing their way through fissures in the rock.

#### viii. Concluding remarks

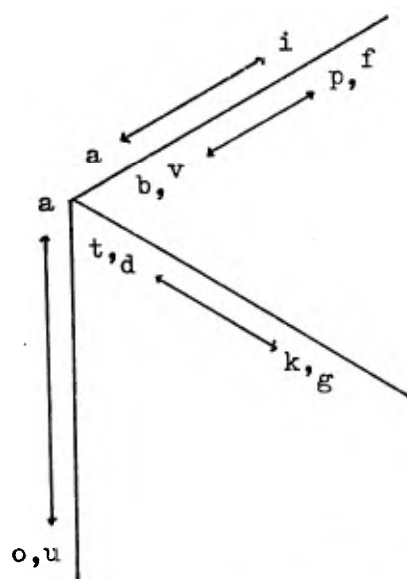
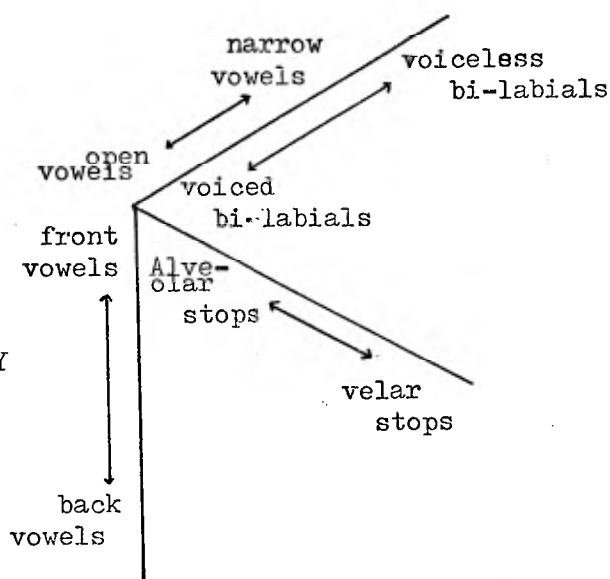
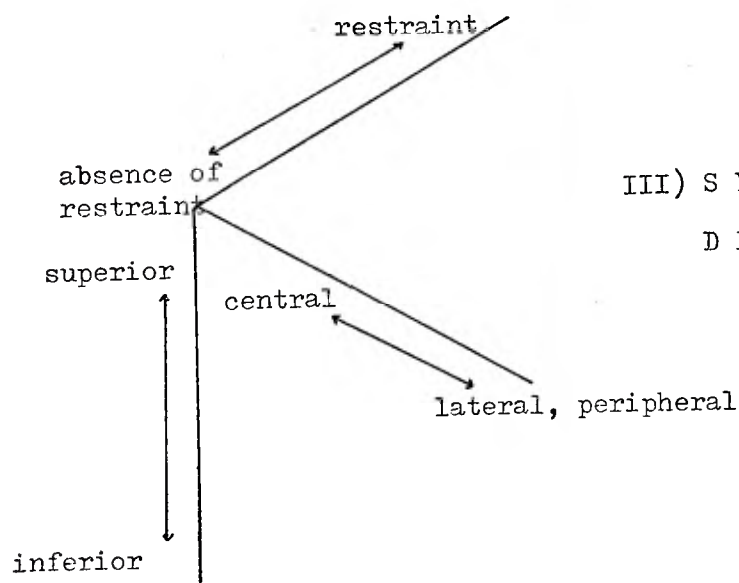
As might have been expected, only a fragmentary picture has emerged from the foregoing attempts to explore the possibilities of 'iconic' motivation in Umeda -- some analyses may have seemed almost plausible, others, I dare say, have achieved no credibility whatever. I would feel more depressed about the possible ill-success of my project

if I were unable to comfort myself with a motto of C. Wright Mills' who says, somewhere, that social scientists ought not to neglect the 'interesting' in seeking only the 'verifiable'. Verification, so far as the question of phonological motivation is concerned, is a long way off, I admit. But the problem is 'interesting' nonetheless -- at least, I find it so.

But before bringing this appendix to a close, perhaps I can impart some measure of coherence into the overall drift of my arguments by offering the following tentative generalised model of the 'iconic' structure of the articulatory field in Umeda. The following diagrams represent the superimposition, along three opposed axes, of the speech-sounds, articulatory movements, and underlying symbolic dimensions I have been discussing.

Concerning these diagrams I must stress that there are plenty of obvious exceptions, plenty of ambiguous cases, and cases in which the symbolic dimensions shown play no obvious part in the meaning of the segment or word containing the speech-sound in question. But I would claim that many of the most 'fundamental' words in the language (words for man, woman, kinship terms, words for spatial dimensions, tree-parts, body-parts and so on) are covered by the theory, if only partially in many instances. Given the necessity of such qualifications, what rationale can be discerned in the third diagram setting out the symbolic dimensions superior/inferior, central/lateral and restraint/absence of restraint in opposition to one another as the basic dimensions of the conceptual system? I would argue that all three

## I) S P E E C H   S O U N D S

II)  
A R T I C U L A T O R Y  
M O V E M E N T SIII) S Y M B O L I C  
D I M E N S I O N SFig. 60 . Phonological, Articulatory, and Symbolic dimensions.

relate back to an essential characteristic of the Umeda conceptual system, namely, its 'organic' basis; i.e. the fact that it is the outcome of a sedimented awareness of the nature of organic structures and processes; the structure of the body, its orientation in space, and the structure that it imposes on space; the structure of biological objects, trees particularly; and finally the 'organic' structure of social units, which, definable as an array of role relationships fanning out from the central ego (categorised as 'above' 'below' 'in-group' 'out-group') are the frame within which the individual drama (the developmental cycle 'repressed bachelor' → 'autonomous adult male') is played out. The dimensions included define the essential characteristics of organisms as structures-in-process, and are in consequence, I would argue, fundamental to any consideration of the Umeda conceptual system.

I would, undoubtedly, be less inclined to offer these rash assertions were verbal language all I had to go on. Fortunately this is not the case. In the ida fertility rituals Umeda culture has developed a different, non-verbal, language of ritual roles and ritual objects with which to dramatise what are, essentially, the same obsessions. In the ritual dancing of the cassowaries, the fish, and the red-painted bowren, the same dialogue of natural, bodily, and social structures is perpetuated, to find its apotheosis in the regeneration of all three.



## APPENDIX II

## THE PUL-TOD MYTH

Pul-tod found a Tet-fruit growing (a wild cucubbit, depicted below). He took it and wrapped it in sago-leaves and left it, while he went off to pound sago. Later, he heard the cries of a Kore bird (a bird whose cries indicate to hunters the presence of game, such as possums or monitor lizards, hidden in the trees). Pul-tod went to have a look. Instead of finding the Tet-fruit as he had left them, he found a woman, Tet-agwa.

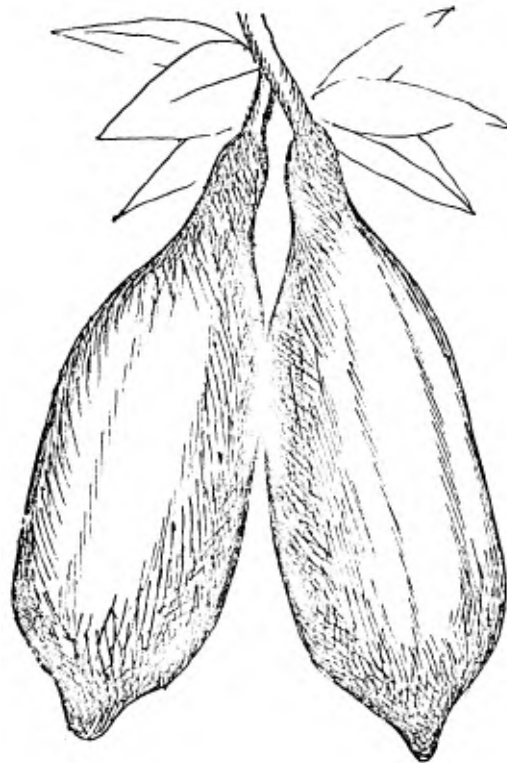


FIG 61

TET

They ate sago together, and afterwards they went to the house. There they took Areca, betel, and lime, and chewed together. The man sat outside the house (on the ground) and the woman sat inside the house. They lit a fire (evidently, inside the house).

Toag-tod, ('elder brother' of Pul-tod) came along, having followed the footsteps and the trail of betel-spit leading to the house. He said: 'Come, give me fire'.

Tet-agwa (inside the house) passed out a bundle of dried bark, of a kind which smoulders indefinitely and is used as a means of keeping fire. She tied up the bundle with a strand from her fibre skirt. But she said that she had tied up the fire with a vine, keeping her secret.

Toag-tod (divining that the fire is bound up with a piece of a womans' skirt) tied the strand round his penis. It gave him an erection. He said to Pul-tod: 'I have an erection ... come, let me see this wife of yours ... (seeing her for the first time) a beautiful woman indeed!'. He made a suggestion: 'I'll have her from the front (or have the front of her) and you can have her from the rear'.

Later, Pul-tod heard strange noises. 'What are you doing?' he asked.

Toag-tod was making rain-magic. (Traditional recourse of sexually frustrated men). Toag-tod cried out 'o-o-o) (the sound of toads croaking after rain. The ahoragwa (Toad-women) came up.

The first incidents of the myth are here repeated. Toag-tod offers to exchange a piece of rotten wood for Tet-agwa: the offer is refused).

Later, Pul-tod spoke to Toag-tod. 'Magawa, a pig has broken into the sago palm I am working; I will make a pig trap and see if I can catch it'. While Pul-tod was at home, Toag-tod, having taken the guise of a pig, got caught in the trap and was killed. Pul-tod went to have a look at his pig-trap. When he got inside the trap, the first thing he saw was Toag-tod's testicles. Pul-tod shot Toag-tod's testicles. He called out to his wife, telling her the pig was dead, and together they cut up the pig and carried it to the house. They cut it up small. Ahoragwa cooked the meat with stones. She saw Toag-tod's testicles. 'Why, here are magawa's testicles!' she exclaimed.

Toag-tod came up the road. (Query: where did he come from? Wasn't he supposed to be dead? Answer: his blood ran against a ponoe tree (tree with red, blood-like, gum) and against waba (plantain? leaves).

Ahoragwa showed Toag-tod his testicles. 'Ugh!' exclaimed Toag-tod 'I feel utterly nauseated! -- but Pul-tod didn't manage to finish me off altogether ...'.

Toag-tod told Pul-tod that there were plenty of pif nut ready for collection in the forest. Together they went to collect pif, leaving their wives behind, because of the danger of being attacked. Toag-tod transformed himself into a species of liana (pohaimedakra). Pul-tod, using the liana, climbed up into the pif tree.

Pul-tod cracked a branch, which broke away revealing a napodosunkr (species of marsupial) and an aubuttaike (another marsupial). He called down to Toag-tod to pass up his bow and arrows, so that he could kill the marsupials.

Toag-tod bound up the bow and the arrows and passed them up. Pul-tod unfastened his weapons and shot, first the napodosunkr, then the aubutaike. They fell to the earth, screaming.

A hwamig (giant tree-python) coiled itself round Pul-tod, and together they fell to the earth. The hwamig was Toag-tod.

On the ground, came animals of all kinds: pigs, bandicoots, marsupials, cassowaries, birds of paradise, pigeons etc., and together they finished Pul-tod off. But his blood ran against a Ponoe and a Waba, and later he revived.

Toag-tod returned to the house. Tet-agwa asked him whether Pul-tod had come back. 'Magawa is feigning a pis (septic abscess) and has gone off by himself' was Toag-tod's lying reply to this question.

Later, Pul-tod did return. He groaned, and asked to be laid out beside the fire, since he was very ill.

Pul-tod spoke to Toag-tod: 'I have seen a tree with many droppings of young cockatoos, parrots, birds of paradise, hornbill (etc. many species) roundabout -- and when I strike the base of the tree, the young birds look out at me. Tomorrow, let us go and get them'.

They went the next day. Together, they cut a length of rattan and slung it over a branch. Pul-tod climbed up, and seated himself on a branch. He drew down the baby chicks in the nests -- the young of cockatoo, bird of paradise, hornbill etc.

'That's enough, magawa' said Pul-tod, at the top of the



tree. 'I'll come down now'.

Toag-tod laughed back: 'Before, you shot me! You cut me up and cooked me with stones ... Now I'm going home and I'm going to 'eat' your wife ... with this!' (brandishing penis).

(Toag-tod left Pul-tod stranded in the tree).

'Has magawa come up yet?' asked Tet-agwa when Toag-tod got home.

'I decided to come first' replied he.

An agwodie snake was weaving a net-bag at the base of the tree in which Pul-tod was stranded. Pul-tod's tears dropped down from on high (w-w-w-ba ... w-w-w-ba!). She (the snake) looked up, and saw that a man was there, in the tree. The snake asked Pul-tod what he had been doing: 'I was throwing down young birds' he replied. 'You wait there' said the snake. She brought him cooked sago and roasted pitpit. 'Stay there, and I will go and talk to the other (animals)'.

Pigs, cassowaries, gouria pigeons etc., came and collected at the base of the tree. Two pigeons (lub) put on the oktek bones and the pedasuh gourds used in ritual dancing. 'Ga! ga! ga!' -- they tried to lift Pul-tod down. They were afraid -- they put him down again. Then the other birds tried, likewise, without success. Finally, two wadwa (small, dark-plumaged pigeons) decided to try. They burnt ewa bananas, and with the soot they blackened themselves. They put on pigbones and penis-gourds, as for dancing. They tried to lift Pul-tod up. They managed to get him up ('that's good'). They carried him to the earth ...

ga! ga! ga! went their dancing gourds.

Pul-tod cleaned and tidied himself up. The agwodie snake cut his hair and cooked it with hota (figus sp.?) leaves. Pul-tod and the animals made a meal of the hair and the hota-leaves, which they ate with sago. The animals told Pul-tod that from henceforth his food was to be tree-grubs (tinamos), fish, pit-pit, mushrooms and suchlike (i.e. that game animals, game-birds etc., were tabooed to him as food).

Eventually Pul-tod got home. 'Where have you been?' asked his wife.

'I stopped over with my mothers' brothers' he replied, lying.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pul-tod and Toag-tod made ready to go hunting. They brushed their dogs with magical ko leaves. Then they left for the bush.

Toag-tod took the shape of a pig. The dogs caught sight of him. The pigs' black bristles stood erect on its back. 'Don't shoot me, magawa!' cried the pig, and Pul-tod realised it was not a real pig at all, and held his fire. Later, Toag-tod came back up the path. 'I decided to take my time on the road' he said to Pul-tod, concealing his recent activities.

Later, the dogs started a real pig. Toag-tod and Pul-tod released their arrows simultaneously, and the pig was killed.

Toag-tod claimed the pig as his own kill; 'this pig is mine and Ahoragwa's' he said. 'It's not yours, it's mine'

Pul-tod retorted. 'My dog was the first to see it, so it belongs to me and Tet-agwa'. 'Not at all' said Toag-tod, 'it's still mine'. Toag-tod stole Pul-tod's pig. He picked up his dog and left.

(The informant glosses this incident as follows: Pul-tod's pig -- the one stolen by Toag-tod, was an okte subove, a 'red' pig, while Toag-tod's pig -- i.e. the one he manifested himself as, was an okte pediki, a 'black' pig).

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in camp, Tet-agwa took lime (auf). She stuffed the lime into Ahoragwa's body orifices. She stuffed it into one eye, then the other eye, then into Ahoragwa's vulva. Ahoragwa was killed by this. She bound up the dead Ahoragwa in her bark-blanket. The shouts of the returning hunters could be heard as they came up the road. (Yingra! yingra! -- the cry of successful pig-killers).

'Ahoragwa! Come here!' cried out Toag-tod. 'Here's your pig's belly, here's your pig's flanks!' (female portions). 'Hey, where are you! Get the fire ready!' He went into the house and saw her recumbent form. He took a stick and started to beat her. 'What's up with my wife?' he shouted. Toag-tod started piling stones on his wife (glu-glu-glu). He called out to Pul-tod: 'magawa - come here!' Pul-tod came and piled evada (white yams) on Ahoragwa's body. Pul-tod took a bow and arrow, and Toag-tod took up an axe. Toag-tod attacked Ahoragwa: 'Grrlra!' his axe rang out, striking the stones on her body. 'Twop!' (the sound of Pul-tod's arrow piercing the yams he had piled instead of

stones) 'grrlna' -- 'twoo' -- 'grrlna' 'twoo'. Toag-tod's axe broke. He fell down, unconscious.

Toag-tod wept for his dead wife. But he said to Pul-tod: 'Ahoragwa is your wife -- my wife is Tet-agwa'.

\* \* \* \* \*

Toag-tod went hunting, meaning to kill a man (i.e. Pul-tod). Instead he shot a wild banana plant (kus). He gave the war-cry of a successful homicide, and when he got home he blew the huf-trumpets to signal a kill. He said to Tet-agwa: 'Let me make love to you now'. 'No, Pul-tod's smell hangs about the place' replied Tet-agwa. Toag-tod went out again, again shooting not a man, but a wild banana. Tet-agwa put excrement in place of the cooked sago, and the dried meat, she covered the beds with excrement, and the road, and she filled the house with excrement, likewise. She climbed up a mada tree and hid.

Toag-tod came up the road, singing:

'I shot Ahoragwana's eye

'I shot Pul-tod's eye

'I shot Tet-agwa's eye

'I shot my own eye ...

'WA-UUUU! WA-UUUU!

Tet-agwa had stuck cassowary-bone daggers and pig-bone spoons in the ground. When Toag-tod repeated his previous demands ('let me sleep with you now') the bones replied 'Yes, you can come inside' ... Toag-tod entered the house. Once inside, he saw the excrement everywhere --



and no Tet-agwa. 'Yai! Shit! Shit! - Where's she gone?' Where's she gone?' He started out to look for her.

The earth shook. A great wind came up, bringing a storm, thunder and rain. The waters rose. Toag-tod went to his agnates, looking for Tet-agwa, and to his Mother's brother's, all to no avail. He wandered about, searching. Suddenly he heard the sound of betel-juice falling from on high (f-f-f-ba!) -- from the mada tree. He turned his eyes upwards -- and caught sight of Tet-agwa's vulva overhead. 'So you weren't so far afield after all!' he exclaimed. 'I belong to you' said Tet-agwa 'you can come up here'. Toag-tod took a length of rattan and slung it over the branch. He struggled up, bit by bit, but just at the last moment he lost his grip on the branch and fell to the ground (f-f-f-biw!).

'Ya! My (poor) neck! My backside, my shoulders!' he complained. 'Just you wait there -- I'm going to get the other (men)'.

The men made a frame about the base of the mada tree and started cutting it down. Finally it tilted sideways and fell with a great crash. But Tet-agwa escaped to a limbum palm growing by Siai water (one version says she made her escape by turning into a gouria pigeon).

The men went back to the village. They made magic as a result of which great storm arose. The waters welled up from the ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

NOTE

At this point, with Pul-tod presumed dead, and Tet-agwa in hiding, the first 'cycle' of the Pul-tod myth closes. The second text translated below introduces new characters and themes, particularly the two girls, Waye and Abwie. Unfortunately there is ambiguity, as between two versions of the myth I recorded as to whether the 'Father-figure' in subsequent episodes, i.e. the character who rebuilds Pul-tod from fragments is Toag-tod, as one version states, or None (alias Naimotod) as another version states. Perhaps it doesn't matter all that much. Myth-tellers tend to identify both these characters in terms of their mythic role simply as Awsitia-tod (awsitia-mo: 'myth') indifferently. Though when discussing the sociological opposition of edtodna and agwatodna the Toag-tod/Naimo-tod distinction is sharply drawn. In what follows, I translate a text in which None is given the role of Pul-tod's surrogate 'father', though it should be noted that other versions accredit Toag-tod himself in this role.

... The two children of None were sitting at home. They heard the distant sound of a limbum palm falling in the bush. None told Waye and Abwie to go and fetch the useful spathes from the palm, which they did. Tet-agwa had fallen to the ground. She got up, and put on a new skirt. 'I'll come with you', she said. 'Who are you?' the None-children asked. 'I'm Tet-agwa' she replied 'and who are you?' 'we are Waye and Abwie' they answered. They moved off together. Pul-tod's bones were still in Tet-agwa's net-bag.

When they got back home, the two children hid Tet-agwa.

'Father, look who we have brought back' they said, 'look there she is!' 'Well, bring her out to me' said their father. They brought her out.

'Well, well, well ... that's very nice!' (e-e-e- saap!) he said when he saw her.

None told his children and Tet-agwa to go and build a dam to catch fish. Tet-agwa left her net-bag behind. A peculiar smell arose from it and caught None's attention. 'What can that be?' he wondered. He searched the net-bags. First he looked inside Waye's, then Abwie's, and finally he looked inside Tet-agwa's net.bag. There he found Pul-tod's bones.

None took some hota leaves. He took the bones out of Tet-agwa's net bag and arranged them on the ground. He took a bamboo blade and scraped them clean. The adhering flesh he put with the hota leaves. He cooked the bones and blew the marrow out. He stretched the sinews and straightened out the backbone. First he fixed on the head, then he put the arms on one by one, and the legs, and the belly, and the jaw. He knocked the teeth into position (gi-gi-gi-gi ...), fixed on the nose, and put the eyes in one by one. He put the penis on, and the testicles, and the pubic hair, the beard, the fingernails, toenails, and ears, and head hair.

He blew into one ear, and then blew into the other ear. He spat betel juice onto Pul-tod's body, and onto his legs ...

KSWAA! KSWAA! AWYOO!

Pul-tod rose up making angry noises. 'You can't

behave like that' protested None -- 'I was the one that made you! I put you together myself'!

None broke Pul-tod's big toe, and he quietened down.

None put Pul-tod inside the house, and put the fire-tongs in there with him. Tet-agwa, Waye and Abwie came back from their fishing expedition. They lit a fire to heat the stones (to make sago jelly). Tet-agwa asked where the fire-tongs were, since she needed them to manipulate the hot stones. 'Go and look for them inside the house' said None to Tet-agwa, 'I left them in there'.

Once inside the dark house, Tet-agwa inadvertently touched Pul-tod. 'Who are you?' she exclaimed. 'I thought your bines were still in my net-bag!' None sat them all down outside the house: Tet-agwa was made to sit facing Pul-tod, Waye and Abwie on either side of him, slightly to the rear. (The implication being that Waye and Abwie are to be married to Pul-tod, while None and Tet-agwa are in a parental-cum-affinal relation to him).

None spoke to Pul-tod: 'Go and hunt game for me to eat'.

Pul-tod brought back a pig that he had killed. 'You have it, Tet-agwa, I don't want it' said None. The same happened when Pul-tod brought back a gouria pigeon ... 'You have it, Tet-agwa ...' And so on.

Finally, Pul-tod shot a small boy, a Sowanda called Bola (bol: anus/vulva). 'Tiii-e!' -- That's better! said None, who immediately started eating the body. He ate an arm, he ate the other arm, he ate the legs, the breast, the belly ... Pul-tod remonstrated with him for eating so



vocaciously. 'Cut it up first with a bamboo knife' (the normal butchering procedure). 'Oh, it's not too big' replied None 'It's alright to eat like this'. (i.e. without cutting the meat up properly).

The relatives of Bola came, calling out for the lost child.

Bola cried out from inside None's belly, and the Sowandas were able to trace him by the sound. 'I told you not to eat Bola whole' said Pul-tod. The Sowandas came nearer. A-UUU-A! A-UUU-A! .. their cries rang out. None took a shot at them. His arrows missed. The Sowandas gave chase. The Sowandas caught None and shot him with arrows. Bola spoke from inside None's belly 'I'm in here, in the middle'. The Sowandas got hold of a digging stick. They broke None's body open, and took Bola out.

\* \* \* \* \*

The family of None cut sago and pounded it while None himself went hunting. He shot a pig, but all he brought back was the foreleg. 'Father -- is this all there is?' asked the daughters. 'The rest has been taken already' he replied, falsely, 'my cross-cousins, my matrikin -- they have eaten it up already'. Dawn came, and once more he went hunting. He shot a pig -- but only brought back the rear leg, and once more he blamed his relatives for the prior consumption of the rest. They stayed there, pounding sago. At sundown, he once again went off hunting, but this time the two daughters followed him. They saw him shoot and kill

a pig, which he hid on a high platform (toatie). The daughters told their mother what they had seen. 'Wait' said the mother. (None's wife, that is to say; not Tet-agwa herself, but some other). At sundown the mother and her daughters went to a pig's wallowing place in the forest, where they covered themselves with mud. They crept up surreptitiously. They saw the man coming, but without his seeing them. (The mother put a pig's tusk ornament in her nose). When he came close they attacked him. Hra! hra! -- the mother grunted like an angry pig. They dismembered him. They smashed him up...

The man's blood ran over a waba plant and the trunk of a ponoe tree, and he revived. The mother meanwhile took the pig that he had hidden and cut it up and cooked it. They all washed the mud from off their bodies. The man (revived) came back to camp, complaining of a headache and painful joints. 'Oh, I thought you were dead', said the mother.

None spoke to his daughters: 'Come, let me pick the lice from your hair'. He searched for lice on the head of the younger daughter, then on the head of the elder, and finally he looked for lice in the hair of the mother herself. (He found traces of the mud in which they had wallowed behind their ears).

None proposed that they go to the forest to collect edible fruits. The two daughters asked to go too but their father said that there was too much danger of their being killed by the Walsa, and that they must stay behind. 'I will

go with your mother -- you stay here' he said. Next day, the two set off. The man told his wife to stay under the tree while he climbed into it to shake the fruit bearing branches. The man climbed up carrying a heavy stone. He dropped it on her from above, killing her. He climbed down. 'Right!' he said, 'you tried to behave as a yaws-tod (lit. 'anger-man'). (i.e. you thought you would kill me ...).

He came home again. 'Where is Mother?' asked the two children.

'She's staying with her own people' he replied, lying.

The two decided to go and look for her. 'You stay here' they said: ('now where can he have put her?').

They went to their mother's brothers' place. But she was not there, nor could they find out where she was. They walked about, secretly. Ga! Ga! They heard their father shaping a stone in the forest (perhaps -- to kill them, though this passage is un clear). They climbed up lianas and spied on him from above. They saw that their mother was dead.

At dawn, the two took up their net-bags and stole away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pul-tod was searching for water-lizards (taipo) by the stream. Suddenly he saw them: he was alarmed, and in his fright, he jumped into the net-bag of the younger sister. She carried him off to the house. She kept him in her net-bag.

The father asked: 'Whose child is that' (thinking that Pul-tod was a baby, babies being normally kept in net-bags).

'Oh, I found it in the boughs of a tree' she replied, lying.

'Who built that house for you? (asked the father:

'Who worked that sago for you?' (He began to suspect something).

Pul-tod was in the shape of a seven-year old child by this time.

The sisters decided to burn their father to death. While he was asleep, they too lighted brands and set fire to the house. They burnt him. His screams rang out. His testicles exploded with the heat. He died.

'Now we cook you' said the daughters 'you murdered our mother'.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pul-tod grew up. He felled a sago palm and pounded it. A bird above caught sight of a female possum and gave a warning cry. Pul-tod was alerted. He climbed up and shot the possum. The possum fell from the tree with the arrow in its side. Pul-tod found two baby possums, and he threw them down after their mother. One died, but the other, which was only wounded, he put into his net-bag and carried home. He could not find the mother possum.

The elder sister was away collecting tulip leaves, the younger was sitting at home. She took the baby possum.

She sang a lullaby to the baby possum:

'Your father hunts for pigs -

'Your father hunts for cassowaries ...'

(Sasasasasa ...' (the baby possum laughed).

Pul-tod heard this going on and divined that the younger



sister wanted him to be her man: but he said 'We are siblings, a brother-sister pair' (nesai).

'Tomorrow' said Pul-tod, 'I'm going to look for swopoteh-firewood'. Next day at dawn he started chopping up firewood. He sent the daughters to collect the firewood. Meanwhile he decorated himself; he put on head ornaments, bound his hair with ribbons and possum-furs, put on his chest bands and armbands, and perfumed his body. He started blowing the ritual huf trumpets. The sound carried into the forest. The younger sister, hearing it as she came up the road, dropped her load of firewood, and the elder sister did likewise. Pul-tod blew the huf (fe-fe-fe-fe ...) The two sisters tried to catch him, but he was too quick for them. They pursued him, in vain.

The elder said to the younger: 'What have you been doing?'

'I took the baby possum' replied the younger.

'This baby possum is the cause of the trouble' said the elder.

She took the baby possum and dashed it to death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Agwiba (female mythological heroine and leader of the all-female society) said: 'Tomorrow we will make the path' -- i.e. tomorrow the all-female village would hold a ritual, the path being the one which leads into the secret ritual enclosure.

'Let's go' said the elder to the younger.

'No, let's wait behind'said the younger.

The singing of the women could be heard at a distance

as they made the path. They finally finished. It was time to cook sago. The women went with Agwiba to fetch water. The two sisters came behind. They went down to the stream and looked into the water. They saw something red in the water. It was Pul-tod's reflection. They looked up and saw him sitting on a branch overhanging the stream. The elder asked him who he was. 'I'm Pul-tod -- who are you?' 'We are the sisters' they replied.

They put Pul-tod in a net-bag and carried him back to the village. They ate sago together with fish.

The women, under Agwiba's direction, got ready for the festival. Some had enough food stored up, and some had not. Agwiba led the procession of women, the sisters came up behind. They decorated themselves. They made personal ornaments, and put on ritual gear.

They danced. The younger sister needed to go to urinate. Agwiba licked up the urine and realised from its sweetness that the sisters had a man. She decided to wait.

When dawn broke she went to their house. She came up secretly. She collected fish in the stream and cooked sago, which she gave to Pul-tod. She told the two sisters 'Your vulvas are like rat's vulvas (i.e. too small). She went into the room where Pul-tod was. 'You can have me first of all' she said. He had all the women: the Kede women, the Umda women, the Efid women, the Sinai women, the Klalunda women, the Udaunda women, the Punda women, the Sowanda women. They pulled him up and they pulled him down. Pul-tod fainted away (or 'died').

Agwiba spoke to the sago palms: 'avul-you!' (glossed as yu gat kok bigpela?) (etc.). All of you can have me; first swah, then wih, then, avul, then nakebwe, then hus ... and when the sago is finished, I will take the dogs. I'm Agwiba, I'll throw you away like rubbish!'

Swah came up. 'You have me first' cried Agwiba (informant makes pantomime of Agwiba inciting swah to take her from the rear). 'YURRRRAIII!!' (Agwiba's cries of pleasure) swah is as big as a Mada (Kwila) tree ...

Swah said: 'Let's go hunting with the dogs'. They shot a pig, their cries rang out 'wu-u-u--a!' ('they've made a kill' said the women). The men came back. 'Where's the firewood -- why haven't you got any cooking leaves ... why haven't you got any lianas to tie up the cooking meat?' The men were cross at the laziness of the women and beat them. They slept.

Next day Swah said: 'Let's go hunting'. Once more, they shot a pig and brought it back. Once more, there was no firewood or leaves etc., to do the cooking with, and once more the men beat the women for their laziness.

The next time the men went hunting, Agwiba beat out a bark blanket. She finished the blanket and put it on. She tried to fly with it. She rose into the air (bwi-bwi-bwi went her bark-cloth wings). The women followed her example: some went high, though those who were heavy with child flew low.

The cries of Swah were heard, indicating that once more he had killed a pig. Swah came up first. But Agwibagwa was already aloft. The men tried to knock the women out of

the air by hitting them with their bows, but to no avail. The women had turned into flying foxes. 'Oh, what has become of our wives?' cried the men. They fired off their arrows, but they all missed. They put the pig they had shot aside and wailed.

Only male children were left behind: all the little girls had gone. Two old ladies turned into birds of paradise ...

The little boys were sent to get Areca from the bush. The men took up their hunting spears and came behind, secretly. The boys turned into tree-marsupials, and into rats. The men came and loosed their arrows at the trees, but the boys hid themselves, some in the branches of the trees, some in the ground. The men dug in the ground and cut the trees down -- but they just went elsewhere, and they were never found.

'Oh those children of ours' cried the men -

'Where are the children? ... Where are all the children ...?'



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