MEKEO



Epeli Hau'ofa

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MEKEO

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MEKEO

Inequality and ambivalence in a village society

EPELI HAU'OFA

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E.H.
Kensington, October 1977

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'No matter how thin I make them, there is always two sides'

Old American mountaineer on his pancakes.

INTRODUCTION

This work is a slightly revised version of the doctoral thesis I submitted to the Australian National University in mid-1975. It is based on field research conducted in Mekeo in three periods covering twenty-three months from December 1969 to April 1973.[1] I had intended to study channels of communication between rural villages and organs of the central Administration, from subdistrict to national levels. The choice of Mekeo was fortuitous; while reading a copy of the local newspaper in Port Moresby one day, I noticed a brief item about the construction of a road from the city to Bereina. The item mentioned Mekeo as a probable main source of food for the rapidly growing capital city. I decided on the spot to go there: it seemed to offer an ideal location for a study of improved communications. Having made inquiries and discovered from the Central District office that a government-owned house just outside Beipa'a village was vacant, I went there with my wife during the Christmas vacation in 1969, and lived in the house for the duration of our preliminary fieldwork. On our subsequent field-trips, after we had become well-known to the villagers, we were offered the rear half of a ceremonial house *(ufu)* to live in. Being strategically located in the middle of the village, our new accommodation afforded us a central spot from which to observe what was happening in the community. The people received us with hospitality, generosity and patience; and while at times they were uncertain of our intentions, they rarely failed to treat us with courtesy.

The first nine months in the field I devoted to learning the language, attempting to develop a 'feel' for the new environment, and gathering

1. My preliminary fieldtrip was nine weeks long from December 1969 to February 1970. During 1970 I paid three short visits to Mekeo. My major field research was carried out over a period of thirteen months from February 1971 to March 1972, and the final stretch lasted seven months from September 1972 to April 1973. The University of Papua New Guinea sponsored the preliminary fieldtrip, and the rest was funded by the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University.

general information supplied by several English-speaking villagers. When I felt that I had acquired a working knowledge of the language I applied it to collecting genealogies and taking a census of Beipa'a, both of which involved standardised sets of questions which I found relatively easy to manage. Henceforth I conducted my research in the vernacular. I also made it a point to collect material if not through direct observation then through as many people as were willing to assist. My wife, Barbara, helped immeasurably by working on the Sacred Heart Mission records and official documents both at the village and at Bereina. She also spent time with the women obtaining other material which supplemented mine. Although Beipa'a remained the fieldbase and the focal point of my research, I visited most other villages, including all the settlements of the Pioufa tribe (to which Beipa'a belongs), to gather comparative material. The result is that the data presented here are not all from Beipa'a, and the generalisations, unless otherwise stated, apply to Mekeo society as a whole rather than to a single village.

My preliminary fieldwork coincided with a period of festivities: Christmas and New Year celebrations, and some ceremonies in connection with mortuary rites, bride-price exchange and installation of new chiefs. On these occasions the well-organised Mekeo displayed in their behaviour the 'conscious model' of the structure of their society. Thus during this time I had ample opportunity to observe and be impressed by chiefs, sorcerers, functionaries and other individuals playing their assigned formal roles in the performance of their ceremonies. They enacted their ideal relationships so vividly on these occasions that I was able to have a fair grasp of the formal structure of the society by the time I left. This had a decisive impact upon my subsequent field research. Having a prior knowledge of the social structure in terms of the people's conscious model, I had later to work down from 'theory' into 'practice' rather than the other way around. Nevertheless, I was well aware that, as Leach (1954:15) put it, the structure 'which is symbolised in ritual is a system of socially approved "proper" relations between individuals and groups. These relations are not formally recognised at all times.'

During this period also a novel ethnographic world which seemed not to conform to the general picture of Melanesian society unrolled before my eyes. Instead of Big Men as leaders, here was a society headed by chiefs who had inherited their offices from their fathers

through primogeniture. Moreover, their accession to office was marked in each case by a formal installation ceremony. Instead of sorcerers being secretive and unseen members of enemy groups, Mekeo sorcerers were all too visible, and unhesitant about proclaiming not only that they were sorcerers, but also that they were good and responsible men who occupied hereditary offices second in rank only to chiefs. Their job, they said, was to protect the people and to punish them under the instructions of their chiefs. These and other things which we shall see in the following chapters so impressed me that I quietly shelved my initial project and embarked instead on a study of traditional social and cultural institutions.

Two other influences on my research and on the form of this study must be stated. First, I was in the field at the same time as Michele Stephen, who was then a doctoral student in Pacific History at the Australian National University. She focused her work on social change and continuity since the European advent. Her research, conducted from the perspective of a social historian, enabled me to concentrate with less trepidation on the synchronic analysis of Mekeo society. Stephen's work (1974) and mine should be considered complementary: one is avowedly diachronic in aim and the other is more synchronic in approach. Second, although there have been changes taking place, especially in the last twenty years, I was fortunate to have been in the field during the time when all adult men and women of thirty-five years and older in 1970 had been brought up in the socio-cultural environment of the 'old regime'. Much of their knowledge and their attitudes to life were moulded and set in the atmosphere of the 'old regime', before the changes of the 1940s and 1950s had commenced. This meant that in order to understand their society today I had to delve into the past, not so much the pre-colonial past, but the more recent one experienced by living adults. My analysis, then, covers a span of time from the 1920s to the early 1970s—this period of fifty years constitutes the 'ethnographic present' of the study.

In talking with people about their childhood and youthful years, and in checking their statements against whatever written record there is available, and against the people's own behaviour in daily life, I have arrived at the conclusion that although one can see many changes, both large and small, beneath the surface the traditional structures of relationships are largely intact. Even if we go as far back as the very early years of European advent, the description of village life in the

course of a day in Mekeo given by MacGregor in 1890 still holds true today. There are obvious differences in the mode of dress, in tools and so on, but the rhythm of daily life is still much the same. The descent group composition of villages described by Seligmann in 1910 has not altered much. Although ceremonies are on a smaller scale and less frequent than they were before the Second World War, they still retain their old forms. Although chiefs and sorcerers are less powerful than they were before the mid-1950s, and this is the expressed opinion of the people and of the long-resident Sacred Heart Missionaries, chiefs seem to me to exercise direct influence over their people in their daily life to a far greater extent than, for example, in a stratified Polynesian society such as Tonga, where contact between commoners and chiefs is nowhere as intensive as it is in Mekeo. Villagers are as mortally afraid of sorcery as they ever were, and there are sorcerers (mostly men in their sixties who built their reputations in their youth) who are feared by the people. Such sorcerers still publicly parade themselves looking as fearsome as they were said to be in the past. I was also fortunate in that the late middle-aged and elderly chiefs (one of whom is now dead and another retired) of the five wards of Beipa'a were traditionalist in their outlook. It is probable that with the passing of chiefs such as these, of old sorcerers and of other old people, the society will become more amenable to fundamental changes than it has been to date. But the men of the early 1970s were living in both the present and the past, enabling the visiting anthropologist to record and analyse a unique and probably passing society.

The central theme of this study is the ascribed inequality in Mekeo society. In Western Melanesia the two opposed and complementary principles of equality and inequality probably exist in all traditional social groups, and the difference lies in the degree of emphasis placed by each group on one or the other principle (cf. Bateson 1958).[2] The generally accepted picture of Melanesian societies is one of an egalitarian social order with leaders who are 'first among equals' (Sahlins 1963). Mekeo differs considerably in its greater emphasis on the prin-

2. Béteille (1969:365) wrote that in 'most hitherto existing societies inequalities between strata have not only existed in fact but have also been accepted as normal and legitimate . . . Thus, social inequality belongs not only to the domain of facts which can be represented on statistical tables; it belongs also to the domain of values and norms.' Keesing and Keesing (1971:222) discuss 'inequality as a principle of organisation.' In this study, then, I treat inequality in Mekeo in terms both of social facts and of an organising principle.

ciple of inequality in its most important organisational and structural relationships. We shall see this in such relationships as elder brother to younger brother, seniors to juniors, chiefs to ordinary people, married to unmarried, and wife-givers to wife-takers. The applications of the principle of inequality are closely associated with a preoccupation with the maintenance of surface order and the management of underlying tensions and conflicts which in part they generate. The problem posed by the social organisation concerns, in my view, the control of the visible surface and of the invisible depth, a circumstance which explains the peculiar roles of the chief and his sorcerer. This problem is both generative and expressive of the deep-seated ambivalence which lies at the heart of the culture, and of the Mekeo dualistic systems of epistemology, cosmology and ethics. Thus the proposed analysis of organisation and structural relationships is paralleled by or interwoven with an examination of symbolism. For example, the analysis of relationships elder brother to younger brother, or more broadly of senior to junior, will be interwoven with that of the notions of good and evil, controlled and uncontrolled powers, outside and inside, visible and invisible, and so on. Having stated very briefly the aim of the study, I shall leave it to be resumed in the concluding chapter after I have provided a detailed ethnography of Mekeo. Ultimately, the understanding of any major aspect of the society, be it chieftainship or sorcery, can be complete only when it is seen in its full social and cultural contexts.

The first chapter places people in the context of their environment, and reviews their cultural affinities, modes of livelihood, and colonial experience. Chapter 2 takes up the issue of oral traditions concerning the origin and dispersal of Mekeo from their ancestral villages to their present settlements. Although people believe that these traditions represent what actually happened, their value for this study lies in their reflection of contemporary social and political relations. Chapter 2 also indicates briefly historical changes (in tribal organisation and local grouping) wrought by activities of the colonial regime and the Catholic Church. Both these early chapters are mainly introductory—they serve to place people in their historical and contemporary contexts. They do not constitute an essential part of the argument although Chapter 2 defines certain key structural concepts.

Chapter 3 discusses the spatial arrangements of settlements, relating them to the social and symbolic systems. It also introduces the related

themes of the study: inequality, ambivalence and structural oppositions. Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship of elder brother to younger brother which forms the basis of the larger seniority system. Chapter 5 discusses the relationships between individuals and groups of different local and descent units, concentrating on their most important mutual ties, marriage and affinity. Here again, the principle for ordering these relationships is that of inequality seen in the ascribed dominance of wife-givers over wife-takers. Chapter 5 also examines the relative (unequal) statuses of the married and the unmarried. Chapter 6 examines two sets of dyadic relationships of equality, *ekefa'a* and *ufuapie*, which aim at countering asymmetrical relationships and which in fact reaffirm the principle of inequality. Chapter 7 deals with the problem of 'birth and position' as manifest in the structure of traditional authority. It also deals with the functional division of authority between the military and the civilian leadership, and with the relationships between these spheres of leadership and the problems of seniority and morality. I take this analysis further in Chapter 8 where I discuss the question of visible authority as represented by civilian chiefs, and invisible powers as represented by sorcerers. The symbolic expressions of ambivalence and of people's consciousness of the forces of good and evil in personality and the cosmos are also examined in the same chapter. The concluding Chapter 9 restates some of the issues raised in the study and relates them to the wider ethnography of Papua New Guinea societies and to one or two problems of general concern in social anthropology.

From what I have said above, it is obvious that this study concentrates largely on the traditional system. Other aspects of the society, such as the effects of urbanisation, migration, and the betelnut trade, I deal with only briefly. My initial aim was to study Mekeo connections with the larger and 'modern' world of contemporary Papua New Guinea. When I discovered, however, that the indigenous aspects of village life were so strong, and that as far as the villagers were concerned their dealings with the wider world were merely instrumental in their day-to-day existence which they perceive and live in the context of their traditional relationships, I felt compelled to focus my analysis on what the villagers themselves feel to be important and valuable. Moreover, Michele Stephen's work frees me to pursue without too much damage my revised line of interest. Had I taken a more historical approach and concentrated on changing conditions, there would have

been much duplication in our work, and the result would have been a cursory treatment of a very valuable body of ethnographic material. Finally, in the context of the Papua New Guinea ethnography, a description and analysis of the Mekeo traditional system should fill in an important gap in our knowledge of the indigenous systems in Melanesia.

Ultimately, my aim is to describe what the Mekeo are like as a people, and to elicit the logic of their social and cultural organisation. Although within the society each individual is unique and often behaves differently from other individuals, there are traits (apart from a shared language) which most, if not all, hold in common. It is the patterns in which people interweave these traits, in their beliefs as well as in their culturally-determined behaviour, which make them recognisably Mekeo, a distinctive group of human beings. These patterns are elements of the modal cultural personality which the people have projected onto their physical environment, their myths, the decoration of their bodies, their organisational ideas, and so on. The final paragraphs of the concluding chapter summarise what I, as an alien observer, think they are like. This will concur in some respects and differ in others with statements made by a Mekeo or, for that matter, by another anthropologist.

1. The setting

The environment

The low-lying flat land of Mekeo comprises part of the Kairuku Sub-district of the Central District of Papua New Guinea, with the tiny township of Bereina being the administrative centre. Established in the early 1960s on a strip of land along the disputed boundary between Mekeo and Roro-speaking tribes, Bereina lies about a hundred kilometres[1] by air north-west of Port Moresby, the national capital city, and fifteen kilometres south of Beipa'a, the most populous Mekeo village.

The people occupy practically the whole of a fertile fluvial plain washed by the meandering Angabunga (St Joseph) and Inawafunga (Ma'akunga) Rivers. Estimated decades ago by two colonial officials to be 150 square miles (about 40,000 hectares) in size (BNG 1889-90: 80; Humphries 1923:220), the plain has an altitude ranging between zero and thirty metres above sea-level (Mabbutt *et al.* 1965: 61-7). It is bounded on all sides by natural barriers: on the south-east by swamps, coastal hills and foothills; on the east and north-east by the Owen Stanley Range; on the north and north-west, beyond the Inawafunga River, by permanent and seasonal swamps; on the west and south-west by the coastal Waima Hills; and on the south, behind the beach on both sides of the Angabunga estuary, by a relatively wide strip of tidal flats covered with mangrove forests. The Roro-speaking villages of Babiko, Mou and Rapa stand on the northern edges of the tidal flats.

Mekeo live in fourteen compact villages, ranging in size from 132 to 1000 people in 1971, located mostly near the banks of the Angabunga River. Their four southernmost villages were previously closer to the river, until 1956-7 when the Angabunga changed its lower course and

1. All weights and measures given in this book including those derived from other sources, have been expressed in metric units.

emptied itself fifteen kilometres north-west of its former estuary at the head of Hall Sound. Discounting Inawabui, the southernmost villages are ten kilometres at the nearest point from the sea, and Beipa'a lies some twenty kilometres up the river.

The climate is influenced largely by two wind systems: the humid rain-bearing north-west monsoons from December to April, and the drier and slightly cooler south-east trade winds which prevail from June to October. The temperature is equably hot throughout the year, the monthly mean maximums between 29° and 32°C., and the monthly mean minimums between 20° and 22°C. (Bureau of Meteorology, Port Moresby). The months of June, July and August are the coolest and driest, and the period from November to February is the hottest as well as being the most oppressively humid. The annual rainfall for the plain as a whole is between 1000 and 1800 millimetres (Mabbutt *et al.* 1965: 56).

The vegetation is a mixture of mid-height grass, savannah, evergreen thickets and forests. In general, the main forest areas are at the edges of the plain, that is, along the Inawafunga River, the imperfectly and badly drained areas towards the northern end of the plain, and along the edges of the foothills to the east.

Only two small villages, Inawauni and Imounga, are situated on the poorly drained areas near the foothills. The rest are on the soils of the better drained areas with access to grass, bush and forest lands, all of which are economically important to the people. The bushlands comprise the main gardening areas. The grasslands provide daytime shelters for wild pigs and wallabies, which forage by night in the forest and retreat by day to the comparative safety of the grasslands not easily accessible to hunters. Grasslands also provide material for the roofs of houses; and since the Second World War they have been the sites for mechanised rice farming, and more recently, for beef cattle grazing. The forests are the main hunting areas which also supply timber, vines and canes for housing and fencing materials. Behind the villages there are many cut-off meanders, filled annually during the wet season with the overflow from the rivers and drying between June and October to leave many billabongs which dot the countryside. The wet season replenishes the fish supply in these cut-off meanders and when the water level falls the fish, mainly tilapia, provide an adequate source of protein for several months. There is little fishing done on the Angabunga itself.

Linguistic and cultural affinities

The coastline of the Central District is occupied largely by peoples whom Seligmann called the Western Papuo-Melanesians. Speaking closely related Austronesian languages, the Western Papuo-Melanesians constitute a broad cultural unit to which Mekeo belong. To the south-east of this group are the Massim peoples who also speak Austronesian languages. To the north-west are non-Austronesian speaking peoples of the Gulf District. The Goilala, Koiari and other mountain dwellers who, with the exception of the Kuni, speak a variety of non-Austronesian languages, occupy the mountains behind the narrow coastal strip of the Central District. Capell (1943) classified the Western Papuo-Melanesian groups into two linguistic categories: the Western and the Central. The former encompasses the languages of Mekeo and its immediate neighbours: Roro, Nara, Kabadi, Doura and Kuni (Capell 1943:11). The latter group comprises the languages of Motu, Sinaugoro, Keapara, Hula, Rubi, Aroma and Karo (Capell 1943:6). There is disagreement as to the membership composition of the two groups. Capell himself expressed doubt as to whether the Motu language properly belongs to the Western or the Central group but opted for the latter. Much earlier, Haddon (1900:439) placed the Nara, the Kabadi and the Doura languages in the Motu (and therefore the Central) group. Pawley (1969:2) substantially agreed with Haddon after an analysis of cognatic relationships among these languages. He noted that only two languages, Roro and Kuni, have relatively high correlation with Mekeo, but these two languages have even higher agreement with each other and with Motu, Nara, Kabadi and Doura than with Mekeo. 'The lexico-statistical evidence . . . indicates either that all other languages belong to a subgroup apart from Mekeo, or that Mekeo has undergone exceptionally rapid changes' (Pawley 1969:2). Pawley postulated a Proto-Central Papuan language which gave rise to two sub-groups, one from which only Mekeo has sprung and the other giving rise to other Western Papuo-Melanesian languages (1969:1). Haddon (1900:439) thought that the Mekeo language was basically Melanesian which was influenced by alien elements, and Seligmann (1909:320) stated that the divergence of Mekeo from the others may be attributed to the 'fusion of an incoming race with a Papuan stock'. The point I want to emphasise here is that on the issue of language as well as in other matters (as we shall see below) Mekeo seem to stand apart from their culturally related neighbours in the

evolution of their society. Although the Kuni speak an Austronesian language, they are physically and culturally a mountain folk related to the Mafulu and the Goilala (van Rijswijck 1967). The language of the people I call Kaopo, who occupy the swampy region immediately north and north-west of Mekeo, has not been investigated.[2] Although subsumed under Mekeo it is sufficiently different to be unintelligible to Mekeo-speakers. Until recently the Kaopo were officially known as Bush Mekeo but are presently identified by the less objectionable although equally misleading term North Mekeo. Since real Mekeo often refer to them as *kaopo au'i* ('swamp people'), I have adopted the term Kaopo in order to avoid confusion.

Another cultural trait which all Western Papuo-Melanesian groups share and which distinguishes them clearly from the peoples of the Gulf and the Massim is the predominance of geometrical patterns in their decorative art. Throughout the cultural area there is a preponderance of straight over curved lines, and a virtual absence of human or animal forms. The decorative art of the Gulf is dominated by the human face and form; and that of the Massim by bird scrolls, bird and crocodile motifs and human and animal representations (see Haddon 1894, 1900; Seligmann 1909, 1910). The Western Papuo-Melanesians have remained immune to these two lively and distinctive art styles of their neighbours.

Within the Western Papuo-Melanesian area generally, people attach great importance to certain central buildings. The *marea* or *ufu* of Mekeo, Roro and their immediate neighbours are ceremonial houses, the centres of social and ceremonial life of the villagers. The *dubu* of Motu, Koita and their eastern neighbours are open platforms used only (it seems) for ceremonial purposes. Ceremonial structures are characteristic not only of Western Papuo-Melanesia. The Gulf *eravo* were even more impressive. Similarly, although hereditary headship at the localised descent group level holds true of most if not all Western Papuo-Melanesians, it is by no means confined to them. Hereditary headship obtains among some Massim peoples (Malinowski 1922; Young 1971), some groups in the Gulf (Williams 1924; Maher 1961; Ryan 1974), and in the mountains among the Mafulu (Williamson 1912), the Kuni and probably even the Goilala (van Rijswijck 1967:5).

Finally, Seligmann noted that a feature common to all Western

2. Mark S. Mosko, an anthropologist, is currently working on this group.

Papuo-Melanesian tribes is the greater importance attached to the right than to the left (1910:27-8). As for example, the 'regular' chief of a Roro clan is known as the 'chief of the right' and his 'assistant' as the 'chief of the left'. Groups such as the Motu and the Koita divide their clans into two halves, one right and the other left. However, Mekeo differ from all these in that they express their dual divisions linguistically not in terms of right and left, but explicitly in terms of 'seniority' and 'juniority', a distinction of great moment to this study.

Horticulture

The low, inland floodplain environment of Mekeo determines the dominant mode of livelihood and the types of crops most suitable for cultivation. Banana, plantain, taro and sweet potato are the main staples, with locally cultivated rice providing an increasingly important proportion of the diet.[3] Sago is a luxury food for most except at Imounga where poor drainage limits the area of land suitable for cultivation. Areca and coconut palms grow well even as far inland as Rarai.

As among most other Melanesian gardeners practising swidden agriculture, the clearing of new garden areas is done by men; women do most of the preparation of the ground for cultivation, the actual planting and the weeding of the established gardens. Although people plant throughout the year, the main planting season begins in June and continues through the dry season. The preparation of new lands for gardening begins in June and July, which leaves ample time for the felled trees to dry before they are burnt. Gardeners use charred trunks and large branches as boundary markers for their individual plots *(ongopea)*. Reflecting the form and subdivision of their villages (Chapter 3), Mekeo gardens are generally rectangular with a pathway through the centre dividing the garden into two halves. On either side of the central pathway are the rectangular plots. At right angles to the central pathway are narrow tracks along the boundary of each plot for people to walk on instead of wandering through the cultivated ground. A garden may be a small one owned by a single domestic group in which case there is no need for a central pathway. On the other hand, it may be a large one shared by several domestic groups. Most domestic units have plots in other gardens not necessarily on

3. For a history of rice growing in Mekeo see Stephen 1974.



1 An established garden, 1971, with a wide garden path. Short term crops have all gone leaving only bananas and giant taro and young coconut trees.

their patrimonial or even ward lands. And since villagers use any tie, both kinship and non-kinship, to have a plot in a garden or to recruit others to share in their own gardens, it is not possible to predict precisely who will work with whom.

Whatever the number of domestic groups involved in the cultivation of a particular garden, and whatever their mutual relationship, each garden is 'owned' by a single man by whose name it is known. The owner is the man who initiated the establishment of the garden, normally one with an agnatic hereditary right to that piece of land. Those who have one or more plots are those who helped the owner to clear the bush or forest for the garden. The plot-holders have absolute rights to the produce of what they have planted. But if they are not the garden-owners they cannot plant permanent trees such as areca or coconut. The owner of a large garden gains a measure of prestige from being able to recruit many people to work with him to make a large garden. Moreover, if the owner has any obligations to meet, his

co-gardeners are expected to contribute foods from their plots. Most importantly, however, since individual claims to pieces of patrimonial land are staked by gardening on it, the larger the gardens an owner makes with the help of his relatives and friends, the larger are his individual claims to the land he and his brothers have inherited jointly from their father. His own sons, as joint heirs, will benefit directly from his industry. I return to this point in Chapters 4 and 5 for it has a direct bearing on the problem of seniority and juniority. The point I want to emphasise is that although the owner of a garden may have a right to only a small proportion of the produce of 'his' garden, that is, only to what the members of his own domestic group have cultivated, he nonetheless benefits in the long run from the size of his garden through his claim to a larger share of his sibling group's patrimonial lands. Finally, not all new gardens imply staking new claims—some of these are recultivations of old sites which serve to strengthen old claims.

Villagers mark the boundaries of their individual land claims with groves of areca or coconut trees. Sometimes they grow as boundary markers other permanent and useful plants such as bamboo or fruit trees. The owner of a garden plants his boundary markers so that when the crops have gone these permanent trees stand as evidence of continuing claim. Since, however, people make gardens close to one another, each planting his own markers, there is often confusion regarding exact boundaries, which can lead to bitter and irresolvable disputes. The original gardeners may know their exact boundaries, but after they have died and some of the markers have fallen, their descendants will tend to have conflicting views about them. I often witnessed boundary disputes among men, each using a different set of trees as markers. Mekeo say that at the root of disharmony among agnatic kinsmen are disputes over land. But because land is still plentiful and villagers are always able to secure plots in the gardens of their relatives and friends, the most common temporary solution for any disputed land is to desist from working on it rather than to risk physical or mystical violence.

After the workers have cleared a new area, they build a garden house *(ufu'ufu)* and a fence around the area to keep the domestic pigs out, if the site is close to the village. People erect their *ufu'ufu* adjacent to their gardens and surround them generally with small plots of sweet potatoes. When the main cleared area is ready for cultivation, towards

the end of the dry season, the gardeners plant banana, plantain, taro, corn, spring onions, beans, cucumbers, pineapple and watermelon together in their respective individually owned plots. They plant their bananas, plantain and taro in straight rows. The uncultivated pawpaw trees grow prolifically and the fruit goes mainly towards the feeding of pigs rather than towards human consumption. People grow sugar cane and occasionally tapioca along the boundaries of their plots, and at least three types of local green leaf vegetables, and some paper mulberry bushes for tapa cloth *(ipi)*.

Within one year all the seasonal crops have been harvested, leaving the impression one gets on a first visit to a garden that the people live entirely on banana and plantain. After about three seasons the owners leave their old gardens untended, although they continue to harvest banana and especially the hardy plantain for a few more seasons until the bush has taken over completely. In the meantime they will have several more plots elsewhere, since they establish new gardens every year.

One final point must be made before we leave the horticultural practices. The land is so fertile and the soft alluvial soil so easily worked that a man and his wife can produce much more than they require for subsistence, and with sufficient surplus to contribute to feasts and to exchange with coastal people for the products of the sea. With the addition of an unmarried daughter or two a man can afford to feed his male relatives, friends and supporters on his platform and so become influential. People have so taken their affluence for granted that when there was a prolonged rainy season in 1970-1 followed by an uncharacteristic drought in 1972, they felt deprived because they were reduced to eating only plantain, sweet potato and rice. Yet all of these were in abundant supply, while several parts of the country were experiencing actual famine.

Unlike gardeners in some other parts of the Pacific, Mekeo are not much concerned with vegetable foods when they deliberate on their feasts. There is generally a surfeit of them. Meat is always the main consideration; seven or eight village pigs are sufficient to fulfil most ceremonial requirements; and these are supplemented by many more wild pigs, wallabies and perhaps one or two cassowaries. Until the widespread use of shotguns in the 1960s wild meat was abundant; even today, wild pigs are still relatively plentiful.

Although Mekeo are renowned horticulturists it is not so much the

great gardener as the skilful hunter who is the culturally admired figure. This is evident in their myths, some of which are narrated and analysed in later chapters. In these stories there is no mention of men who are heroes by virtue of being great gardeners; rather the myths feature heroes who are great hunters—whether of game or of women. Because of the benign environment, gardening activity does not readily reveal marked differentiation in individual skill. This is not to say there are no good gardeners, but rather, that there are so many of them. More importantly, a man who is too conspicuously successful in gardening tends to arouse suspicion. His neighbours may see him as someone who amasses for himself an undue amount of land and thereby provokes dissension among his agnates. We shall encounter in Chapter 5 a successful gardener whose efforts have been closely scrutinised by his neighbours, who regularly accuse him of encroaching on their lands. Although the skilful hunter may be envied by his rivals, he is not regarded as such a villain as to be a cause of trouble among his relatives and friends. On the contrary, through his skill much meat is obtained for sharing with others or for donation to feasts and ceremonies.

Trade

We have seen above that the Mekeo plain is surrounded on all sides by different environmental zones occupied by different tribal groups. The beach on either side of the Angabunga estuary, the tidal flats, Hall Sound and Yule Island form the territory of the coastal Roro-speaking groups. The lands in this zone are infertile but the tidal flats and the sea abound with crab, crayfish, saltwater fish and shellfish. On the coastal hills south-east of Hall Sound live the Nara people who specialise in hunting the wallabies which are prolific in their hills covered with grass and eucalyptus. The mountains to the east and north-east belong to the Kuni and the Goilala. The swampy north and north-west is the territory of the Kaopo.

Markets are held on alternate weekends at the Irobo landing (on the bank of a creek on the tidal flats south-west of Rapa), and at Bereina township every week. To both of these markets Mekeo women take their agricultural products to exchange with the Roro-speaking women for the products of the coast and the sea. People from as far north as Rarai, and on the coast as far west as Kivori and as far east

as Hisiu, as well as Yule Island, attend these large markets. Mekeo consume the shellfish they obtain from the Roro, convert the empty shells into lime for betelnut chewing, and then trade the lime back to the Roro for more shellfish or for other marine products. Although the Roro have direct access to these shells they believe that they do not possess the proper techniques for making lime. Mekeo also say that Roro do not have the right kinds of bamboo for burning the shells. Jim Allen (1977) talks of a similar relationship between the mountain Koiari and the coastal Motu. Allen suggests that the Motu and the Koiari arrived at this arrangement in order to facilitate their trading relationship. It seems, however, that in the case of Mekeo and Roro, the former have somehow convinced the latter that they can only make inferior lime and had better leave it to the experts.

In the early years of the colonial era the trade between Mekeo and their neighbours involved a much greater variety of exchange items. In addition to foodstuffs including salt, the markets consisted of trade in pots, clay bowls, stone axes, flints, feathers and shell ornaments of all kinds. Haddon enumerated five market sites on which exchanges were held at regular intervals, usually every five days. He wrote (1900:277) that 'probably in no part of British New Guinea are markets so numerous as in Mekeo district'. These were the markets where Mekeo obtained pots, clay bowls, shell ornaments and dogs' teeth from the Roro. Some of these items the Roro had acquired from the Motu and from the Gulf, with which groups they had exchange relationships. In return Mekeo traded not only agricultural products but also cassowary bone forks and lime spatulas which they themsevles made, and some of the items which they had obtained from the mountain dwellers. With the Kuni and Goilala, Mekeo traded not only betelnut and coconut but also the shell ornaments they had received from the coast, in return for stone axes, flints, plumes and pandanus nuts. Being located strategically along a major waterway between the coast and the mountains, Mekeo acted as intermediaries through whom the products of the sea and the mountains passed both ways. When they held feasts they called on the Nara for smoked wallabies, on the Roro for fish and crabs, on the Waima for yams, and on the Kaopo for wild pigs and cassowaries. Thus major Mekeo ceremonials in the past (and also those of the neighbouring groups) were attended by people from the whole district, each contributing their own

specialised regional food products.

Betelnut[4] today provides Mekeo with their main source of cash income. Since the 1950s they have largely dominated the lucrative betelnut market in the rapidly growing city of Port Moresby. Until 1973, when the unsealed Hiritano Highway was completed, betelnut was transported by sea and air. No precise official record has been kept on the volume of this trade. From official estimates, however, Stephen (1974:323) noted that in 1958-9 two tonnes of betelnut and other products were flown weekly from Bereina to Port Moresby, and an estimated six tonnes went by sea. In 1963-4 the weekly air-freights increased to 2725 kilograms, and 500 tonnes was the estimate for the year. In 1967-8, 600 tonnes of betelnut were sold. As they still do today, the people themselves accompanied their produce to the city or consigned it to relatives already there. Ansett Airlines cargo records for 1972 showed a weekly average of 5505 kilograms lifted out of Bereina. This figure does not include the betelnut carried daily by Trans-Australia Airlines or by two two-seater planes owned by a European entrepreneur, each of which made six trips daily between Bereina and Port Moresby, carrying in trade-store goods and back-loading betelnut. Large amounts were transported by sea on launches and motor-powered double-canoes. Officials at Bereina estimated conservatively that the Mekeo betelnut trade was worth a million dollars a year.[5] Vendors sell five areca nuts together with five 'pepper' fruits for 20 cents. Working on the weight of an average-sized areca nut, I calculate that they average $1.35 for every kilogram, though fortunes vary. One man from Beipa'a went to Port Moresby with three flourbags of nuts when the market was very good. He returned within two weeks with $400. At the other extreme, another man went with a similar amount when the market was poor (through oversupply), carelessly spent whatever little money he earned and returned home empty-handed.

Unlike other and more approved cash crops such as coconut for copra, cocoa and coffee, all of which are grown on a small scale in Mekeo, the production of betelnut requires little labour. People plant areca trees in the traditional fashion, immediately behind the villages

4. By 'betelnut' I mean areca nuts and the 'pepper' fruits or stems which people chew together. The third ingredient in the betelnut mixture, lime, is sold separately.

5. All money figures in this book are in Australian currency, the currency used in Papua New Guinea until 1975.

and in the gardens. Once they grow above the height of weeds they need little attention; owners simply pick the nuts when ready and take them to Port Moresby for individual sale at Koki Market, on street corners and store-fronts throughout the city. Since the trees do not, like cocoa and coffee, withdraw large tracts of land from subsistence agriculture, and since they are planted as they have always been, they have virtually no effect on land problems or on the organisation of labour, except marginally when villagers go to town to sell their produce. The enterprise is so easy and so lucrative that by and large Mekeo have turned a deaf ear to the exhortations by officers of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries for them to participate in the cultivation of export cash crops. Mekeo say, for example, that after hard work in producing copra they get only 13 cents a kilogram for their crop. Moreover, to be anything like as profitable as betelnut, coffee and cocoa require a large amount of land and that more often than not involves people in unseemly land disputes with their relatives.

A few individuals in two villages, Aipiana and Beipa'a, were engaged in commercial rice farming, from which they reaped substantial profits through sale not to Port Moresby but to their own people, mainly through trade-stores in their villages and at Bereina. One of the two rice-growers in Beipa'a earned sufficient cash from his 1971 crop to purchase a new tractor with all its expensive accessories. The other grower had two tractors and a Holden stationwagon and was planning to buy a harvester for his own use and for hire to other growers.

The income from the betelnut trade has had some important effects on the society. Bride-price has become vastly inflated, with some parents demanding $1000 or more for their daughters. The result in Beipa'a has been that a large number of girls in their mid-twenties and older are still single and likely to remain so for the rest of their lives. An increasing number of young men, most of whom are working outside the village, have married women from other parts of the country; some gave as reason for their action the fact that they could not afford to marry their own Mekeo girls. Two men returned to the village in the early 1970s with their Highland wives, something which was unheard of only a few years before. The parish priest, Father Diaz, has tried unsuccessfully to persuade people to reduce the asking bride-price so that their daughters can marry. It appears that parents are subconsciously placing obstacles against their daughters getting married. Normally the loss of the labour of daughters (since women

leave their parents after marriage) would be compensated by the acquisition of women through the marriages of sons. But since most young men are away in urban centres (see Appendixes 2 and 3) the loss of daughters through marriage cannot be compensated easily. So parents want to keep their unmarried daughters to help them in their domestic production.

Income from the betelnut trade has also diversified the local consumption pattern. Tea and sugar are now indispensable to every meal in most villages. It is not uncommon for a domestic group in Beipa'a to consume a pound of sugar a day. People eat canned meats of all kinds in large quantities. In feasts canned beef, mutton, and mackerel have to a large extent replaced the smoked wallabies and fish of the bygone era, and have thereby reduced the involvement of people from neighbouring groups in Mekeo feasts. Nevertheless, this involvement has not disappeared completely. In 1971 many people from the coastal villages of Waima and Kivori went to a feast in Aipiana, contributing yams and some fish; and in the following year about a hundred mountain people attended a feast in Imounga, bringing with them pigs and pandanus nuts. Finally, the income from the betelnut trade has enabled the villagers to build European-type houses, replacing their impressive ones constructed entirely with local bush materials. Of the nine new houses erected in Beipa'a in 1970-3, five had corrugated roofing iron and flat metal or wooden walls.

A review of the colonial experience

A brief, general discussion of the experiences of the Mekeo under conditions of colonialism will help in the understanding of the nature of their society today. Such a discussion will also provide an insight into some of the reasons for the tenacious persistence of the indigenous institutions in spite of the experiences of the past ninety years. Although there have been changes in the details of actual social and political relationships, the basic structure of traditional society has survived. An obvious example of this is that although no tribal war has been waged since the early 1890s, war chiefs and war magicians still continue to hold office.

The early experiences of Mekeo with Europeans were friendly and peaceful. Partly because of their inland geographical location, they escaped the visitations of those unscrupulous traders, miners and settlers who had had such an unfortunate impact on coastal and island

peoples elsewhere during the second half of the nineteenth century. No Mekeo land has ever been alienated except a strip of disputed lands along the boundary between their territory and that of the Roro-speaking tribes. The government declared this strip crown land in 1903 in order to prevent armed hostilities. Bereina stands on part of this strip. The lands on which the Sacred Heart Missionaries built their stations have never been formally alienated. Father Diaz told me in conversation that the policy of the missionaries was and is that these lands must ultimately be in the control of Mekeo themselves.

Thus when William MacGregor visited Mekeo in 1890 to establish government control (BNG 1889-90), their experience with Europeans was confined largely to missionaries whose expressed desire, like that of the government, was to win the confidence of the people (Stephen 1974: ch. 2). MacGregor's efforts in his first two visits were supported wholeheartedly by Pioufa chiefs through whom he hoped to rule the area (Stephen 1974:69). By the turn of the present century, the region was already under firm government control with the willing acquiescence of the traditional leaders. This is important because in those early years the government did not try to supplant traditional authority; rather it co-opted and in a sense strengthened it.

If at this period Mekeo were generally fortunate in their initial encounters with the agents of the colonial administration, events favoured them further in that they were not evangelised by the zealous London Missionary Society which was operating in the coastal areas of the Central and the Gulf Districts, and which was determined to dismantle so many traditional cultural institutions it considered abhorrent to Christianity. Instead, they received the more tolerant Sacred Heart Missionaries from France, Belgium, Italy and Spain, who established their first station in Mekeo territory in 1890, the same year that the government station for the district was established between Beipa'a and Aipiana (Stephen 1974:71). It appears certain that this particular order of Catholic missionaries was more broadminded and tolerant that its Protestant counterpart. Thus, for example, unlike the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries who banned the traditional dances of the Motu (because they arouse sinful desires) and replaced them with Polynesian ones which they deemed inoffensive (Groves 1954), the Sacred Heart Missionaries did not interfere with the dances of Mekeo and Roro peoples, which were similar to those of Motu.[6]

6. Many of the LMS missionaries were from Polynesia, those small islands whose people are known for many things—but not for their broadmindedness and humility.

Like the early government officials, the missionaries worked in co-operation with the traditional leaders of the society. The lands on which their stations stand were provided for them by chiefs of the areas concerned. The priests depended on the chiefs, as they still do to a large extent in Beipa'a today. From the beginning of their efforts the missionaries preached against sorcery, but they neither interfered with nor publicly condemned the sorcerers themselves. This might well have been influenced by the missionaries' dependence on the goodwill of the chiefs whose authority depended on sorcerers. But whatever the underlying factors, it was a policy deliberately adopted by missionaries to avoid direct confrontation with sorcerers. This non-intervention policy contributed to the continuity into the present of the vital partnership between chiefs and sorcerers. The missionaries have, of course, interfered with, and contributed to the demise or modification of, certain harsh aspects of traditional life. Thus, for example, through their influence mourning periods have been reduced to about half their former length, while self-laceration and the practice of living on the ground during mourning have been abandoned entirely in the Pioufa villages. On the other hand, Beipa'a people say that Father Vitale, who lived among them for about half a century, attempted to ban mortuary ceremonies. He changed his decision, however, when church attendance dropped drastically. This was because an ever increasing number of people went into the bush for mourning seclusion and could not return to normal village life because there were no mortuary ceremonies to terminate their mourning periods.

The transference of the government station from Mekeo to Kairuku on Yule Island in 1906 was in many ways beneficial for the people, sparing them not only the direct presence of government officialdom in their midst, but also such possible disruptive effects as the alienation of land for office buildings, housing for officials, and commercial establishments. Moreover, such a centre could have had the effect of drawing surrounding people into some form of dependence upon it for their livelihood. As it happened, up to the outbreak of the Second World War Mekeo villages continued to exist in relative isolation, with the direct alien presence in their midst of only a group of benign missionaries. This did not mean that the long arm of the government could not reach the people. From about the second decade of the present century through to the 1930s, the government exploited them as carriers for official expeditions into the newly opened mountainous

Goilala country. It was an imposition which the people thoroughly resented, but they had to comply with the demands or face prison sentences. The government also compelled Mekeo (as well as other peoples of Papua) to pay a tax devised as an incentive for involving natives in cash-crop enterprises. This was followed by compulsory rice-growing on plantation scale, something which was completely foreign to Mekeo experience. Villagers deeply resented these impostions and the initial co-operative relationship established by MacGregor and his immediate successors turned sour. Stephen (1974) has analysed this period of 'servitude' in detail. It was at this time that the seeds of the present distrust of the government were sown. One of the expressions of the people's disaffection with their colonial experiences was the outbreak at Inawaia of a 'Vailala Madness'-type cult in 1941. Active participation in the cult was confined to the southernmost villages, and quickly suppressed by the government (Belshaw 1951; Stephen 1974:150-70). Before this outbreak there was, according to Stephen, a minor movement in 1929 at Inawi village which attracted no significant support; it too was effectively suppressed by the government. One might conjecture that the failure of the people to free themselves from alien impositions induced them to retreat into themselves, taking comfort in their own indigenous culture. Alternatives, such as social movements later to be made famous by Paliau of Manus and Yali of Madang, were barred to them by the repressive actions of the government. The cultural conservatism for which Mekeo are renowned in the region was strengthened, I would argue, by their experiences with the colonial government before the war. This was facilitated by their relative isolation, their fertile soils, their living in large communities relative to other parts of Papua New Guinea, their initial possession of a strong culture and a political system under the leadership of hereditary chiefs and powerful sorcerers. Any search for explanation of the tenacious persistence of the traditional Mekeo institutions must take these factors into consideration.

The period before the Second World War is of crucial significance for my study because all the leaders of Mekeo villages today were born and bred under the influences of a virile indigenous culture. Although there have been changes since then, the middle-aged and the elderly still maintain many traditions and assert a stubborn continuity with the past. Younger people, on the other hand, however well educated, have little say in the affairs of their villages, partly

because most of them live away from their homeland.

The Second World War and the subsequent reconstruction and developmental periods broke the isolation of the society. During the war most able-bodied men were conscripted into military service which took them to many parts of the country, seeing new places and meeting different peoples. After the excitement of these years the return to village life was a disappointment to many, who took the first opportunity to go to Port Moresby and other urban centres to take part in the reconstruction work. With the institution of developmental programs in later years, an increasing number of young men have been drawn away from their villages to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Within Mekeo itself the Administration instituted two important developmental projects. In 1948 the government once again launched a rice scheme in the area. It was an ambitious project involving tonnes of machinery and money running into millions of dollars. The people's initial enthusiasm and their high expectations were dashed when the scheme collapsed in 1956 for reasons beyond the scope of this study. It suffices to say that this event revitalised the old distrust of the government and also put an end to any further direct governmental involvement in Mekeo economic life. The other development was the promulgation in 1961 of a Local Government Council which has remained ineffective as a developmental body (cf. Stephen 1974:312ff.). The councillors themselves have assumed unofficially the role played by the village constables and village councillors of the past. In Beipa'a, the Council representatives are responsible for 'council work' every Tuesday when they marshal the villagers to clear the bush roads and to perform any necessary communal task. They also hold 'court' in which they (and the chiefs when grave charges are involved) act as conciliators, although they sometimes impose small fines. Villagers prefer to take their grievances to the 'council court' rather than to the legally constituted subdistrict court at Bereina. They hold the view that unless absolutely necessary all disputes should be settled without involving the government. Finally, the councillors constitute the channel of communication and the buffer between village and government (cf. Hau'ofa 1971). Officials at Bereina generally communicate with the villages through their council representatives. Whenever important messages from the government are received, the councillors in Beipa'a hold meetings with all the chiefs of the village and consult with them before they take action. This is not merely a matter of form, for the

councillors genuinely (and correctly) believe that nothing can be achieved in the village without the consent and support of the chiefs.

Villagers regard the government as a necessary institution for the maintenance of law and order in the region. Beyond this they resent any brazen attempt by officials to interfere with village life. This attitude was nicely expressed by an elderly Beipa'a man in 1971, when he heard that he was to be prosecuted at the subdistrict court following a surprise raid by a patrol officer and a policeman from Bereina to check on those who did not keep their pigs inside fences. The old man exclaimed indignantly: 'The ADC [Assistant District Commissioner] is chief only of Bereina and has no right to enter our village without the permission of our chiefs!'

Mekeo are a relatively prosperous people, living on fertile land and earning a fair cash income from a betelnut trade which involves little hard labour. Their men work as skilled artisans and labourers in every major centre of the country; and their children attend secondary and technical schools in Bereina, Port Moresby, Madang, Lae and Rabaul. The University of Papua New Guinea is producing Mekeo graduates in many fields including medicine and law. Mekeo are involved at most levels of administration and private enterprise. They have produced a few 'firsts' in the country. The first indigenous Catholic bishop,[7] the first graduate laywer,[8] and the first manufacturer on a large scale,[9] are men of Beipa'a origin. The first Papua New Guinea poet to publish in English[10] comes from Amoamo. This study, however, is not about the 'new men' of Mekeo but about those who have remained in their villages, where the traditional culture and social organisation are still very much alive in spite of the changes which have occurred since the 1890s.

7. Louis Vangeke, who received his clerical training in Madagascar in the 1930s, and speaks fluent French and Latin.

8. Joseph Aoae, who graduated from Queensland University in 1967 and is now the Secretary for Law.

9. Francis Ofu, the manager and sole proprietor of Allied Enterprise in Port Moresby.

10. Allan Natachee, some of whose poems and translations of Mekeo legends appeared in *Oceania* in 1951.

2. Old stories and new

The complete lack of written, archaeological and other corroborative scientific evidence makes it impossible to deal with the historical origin and formation of any Mekeo village except Jesubaibua.[1] The people, however, have a body of oral traditions about the settlement of their villages and the alignments of their local groups. It must be stated at the outset that the events in these traditions and their chronological sequence are what the villagers believe to have happened; they do not constitute objective history.[2] Nevertheless, it will be shown below that these traditions provide for the villagers explanations for the existence in their local communities of branches of clans of various tribes both Mekeo and non-Mekeo.[3] This chapter presents first an account of the people's origin and dispersal from their ancestral villages, and the formation of the modern Beipa'a community. This account, which rests entirely on oral traditions, is not directed at historical reconstruction; it is rather an attempt to describe Mekeo views of their contemporary social and political relations (cf. Beattie 1959:4). In Malinowskian

1. This village takes its name from a Roro word which means the 'peace of Jesus'. The name was bestowed by the Catholic missionaries who assisted in the establishment of the village. The last Mekeo settlement to have emerged, Jesubaibua, was founded in 1892 to accommodate a section of Inawaia village in order to forestall further open hostility within the parent village. The village is known locally as Ieku ('Jesus').

2. The limitations of oral traditions as historical evidence are well dealt with by Jan Vansina (1961). Because of the bias imposed on them by their political and social functions, the fact that they tend to be stereotyped, and the inevitable alterations due to their oral transmission, if they are to be of any historical value they must be supplemented with information provided by related disciplines.

3. By Mekeo clans I mean those descent groups which belong to either the Pioufa or the Ve'e, which are regarded as the true Mekeo tribes. These have common traditions of origin and migration, share the same language and occupy contiguous territories. There are other subclans (localised branches of dispersed clans) found in Mekeo villages which are not by descent members of the Pioufa and Ve'e tribes. Although members of these clans acknowledge their 'foreign' origins they have, through generations of residence among real Mekeo, been completely assimilated into the society. They regard themselves as Mekeo and are accepted as such by the Pioufa and Ve'e.

terms, oral traditions constitute a 'charter' for the society. Second, the chapter deals with the traditional relationships between Beipa'a and its neighbouring villages and suggests certain broad trends which followed the establishment of the agencies of the colonial administration and the Catholic Church in the area. The implications of these trends for the social and political organisation of the community will be indicated. But before proceeding with these I must state my divergence from Seligmann in my use of two key terms: *pangua* and *ikupu*.

Mekeo includes two tribes, Pioufa and Ve'e. The latter is divided into two territorial units, Northern and Southern Ve'e, separated by the intervening territory of the Pioufa. Mekeo villages and their populations are listed in Table 1 (see also Map 1). Seligmann (1910:327) wrote that each of the two tribes includes two *ngopu* groups. A *ngopu* consists of a number of *pangua* or clans claiming common patrilineal descent. 'Each village consists of portions of a varying number of *pangua* (clans or local groups), representatives of each of which are found in few or many villages according to the strength and amount of dispersion of particular clans' (Seligmann 1910:312). Within the localised branch of a clan are units called *ikupu* or 'family groups', branches of the *pangua*. A new *pangua* is formed when an *ikupu*, feeling sufficiently strong to claim its independence, cuts itself off from its parent group and assumes a new name (Seligmann 1910:336-8). This separation may be physical, as when the breakaway group moves to a new location, or the group may claim its autonomy without residential separation.

Most of my informants from the Pioufa tribe expressed complete ignorance of what a *ngopu* is, a clear indication of the fact that this tribal unit is no longer of significance among the Pioufa. The few, mostly elderly men, who know the term gave conflicting answers. Some said that *ngopu* refers to a village social and political unit which I have elsewhere termed an 'alliance' (1971:155); others said that it refers to the collectivity of all the branches of the same clan. This latter definition is close to that of Seligmann although less inclusive

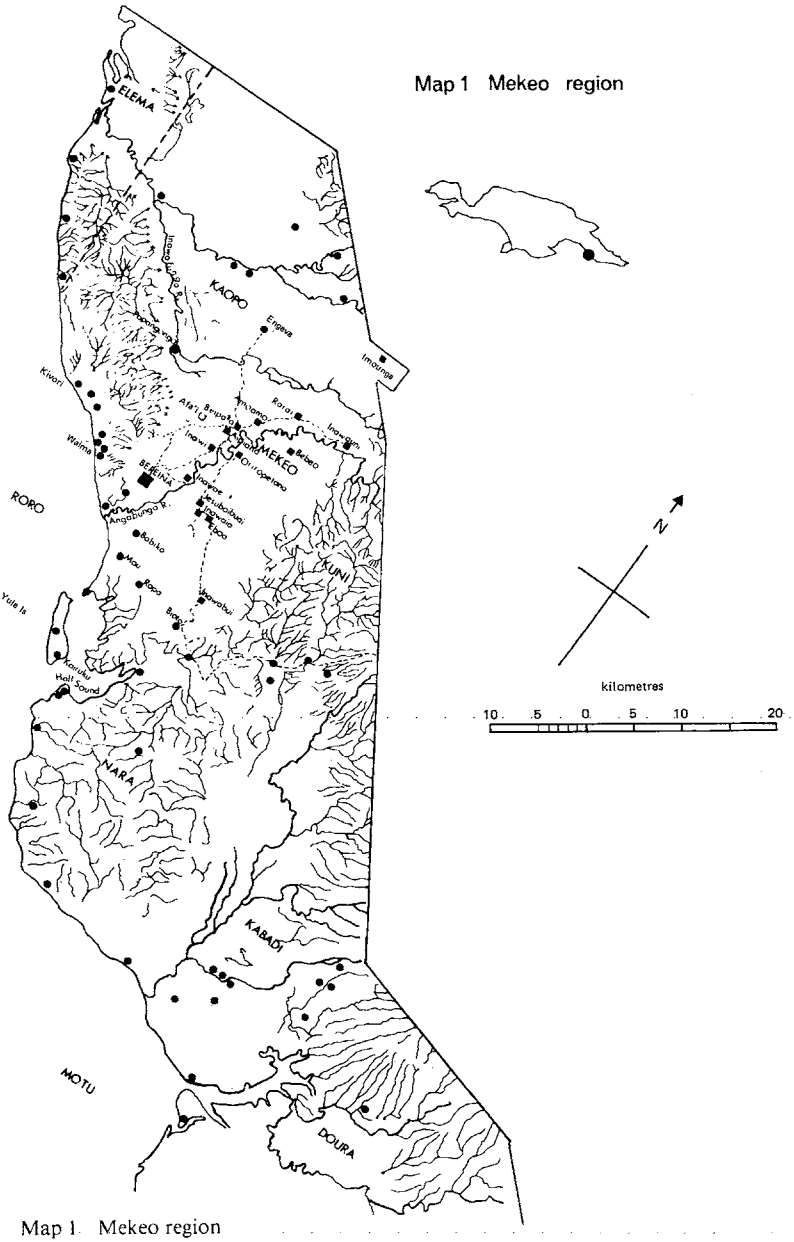
Among the Northern Ve'e there is no doubt that the *ngopu* as defined by Seligmann still exists and operates most conspicuously on ceremonial occasions. In late 1972 I went to a feast in the Northern Ve'e village of Imounga in which the whole population of the village was divided into two groups: those who assisted the feast-giving subclan and those who arrayed themselves with the official guests.

Table 1 The villages and population of Mekeo

Village	1897	1928-30	1935-6	1940-1	1955	1961	1968	1971
Pioufa								
Beipa'a	634	600	650	670	708	822	995	1000*
Aipiana	444	400	450	470	486	576	697	710
Amoamo	140	130	136	130	123	157	187	198
Oriropetana	190	200	195	214	193	288	242	289
Inawi	408	—	—	520	570	660	854	879
Inawae	89	70	—	85	72	102	128	137
Northern Ve'e								
Rarai	—	—	—	317	316	362	406	483
Bebeo	185	—	121	130	111	110	113	132
Inawauni	—	200	—	191	150	179	174	183
Imounga	—	—	—	44	103	123	117	140
Southern Ve'e								
Jesubaibua	178	—	230	240	274	316	340	385
Inawaia	315	—	350	390	403	503	632	716
Eboa	300	—	340	355	376	431	500	546
Inawabui	200	—	370	386	411	458	563	613
Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4142	4296	5087	5948	6411

Figures in the first column are from Seligmann 1910:313; those in the second, third and fourth columns are official estimates, and the rest are official census figures.

*My own population enumeration for Beipa'a in 1971 was 1145



Map 1 Mekeo region

Representatives of clans of other Northern Ve'e villages attended the feast and aligned themselves with one or the other group on the basis of their *ngopu* affiliation (the two *ngopu* being Kuapengi and Ngangai). The *ngopu* affiliations were, with one exception, exactly along the lines documented by Seligmann.[4] Early in the same year I attended a feast for the installation of a new chief of Ngangai (Northern Ve'e) subclan in Inawi (Pioufa) village. The feast was attended by the branches of the Ngangai *ngopu* from Northern Ve'e to oversee the preparations and the installation. The feast-giving chief told me that he could not install his successor without consultation with, and the actual presence of, the chiefs of the senior branches of the *ngopu*. In the light of the alignments of descent groups in these feasts, Belshaw's (1951:2) dismissal of the *ngopu* from the tribal organisation is premature. Unlike Motu ones, Mekeo descent groups would appear to be 'segmentary' rather than 'fragmentary' (cf. Groves 1963).

Of more relevance to the present chapter are Seligmann's statements that *pangua* refers to clans, and *ikupu* to 'family groups' or lineages within the localised branches of clans. The word *pangua*, as used by the people today, has only territorial connotations, and certainly does not apply to a social unit as such. Whether it ever meant 'clan' is a moot point; I am inclined to think that it did not. Mekeo use the term variously to mean a 'village', a 'settlement', a 'residential section' or 'ward' within a village, or even a 'country'. Its Austronesian cognates —*hanua* (Motu), *vanua* (Fiji), *fanua* (Kwaio of Malaita) and *fonua* (Tonga)—have general territorial connotations.

When people refer to clans and localised subclans they use the word *ikupu*; cognates of this term—*iduhu* (Motu) and *itsupu* (Roro)—have

4. The feast was provided by the Paisapangua subclan which is a branch of the Ngangai *ngopu*. The guest subclan was Kolomio of Imounga, a branch of the Kuapengi *ngopu*. Kolomio was helped by Ifupaina and Inaukiki II, both of the same village, and by Kuapengi of Rarai (a subclan which derived its name from that of the *ngopu*), Kolomio of Rarai, and Maunge (an immigrant subclan affiliated to Kuapengi *ngopu*) also of Rarai. These groups are members of Kuapengi *ngopu*. The feast-making group, Paisapangua, was supported by Ngangaipuaina, Ngangaifua and Ikoiko, all from Rarai; and by Afanga (an immigrant group affiliated to the Ngangai *ngopu*) and Inaukiki I, both of Imounga village. All these, except Inaukiki I which belongs to the Kuapengi *ngopu*, are branches of the Ngangai *ngopu*. I could not ascertain the groups from other Northern Ve'e villages (Inawauni and Bebeo) but I was informed that these groups aligned themselves on the same principle. Some of the guests were from the Pioufa village of Aipiana where a branch of the Kuapengi *ngopu* resides.

been translated by Seligmann (1910) as 'clans'. Lineages or 'family groups' (in Seligmann's usage) of a local branch of a clan are not necessarily referred to by the term *ikupu*—as Seligmann asserted—unless they have attained a certain degree of autonomy from the parent group. This autonomy is generally marked by their adoption of names different from those of the parent groups, by the formal recognition of their headmen as hereditary leaders, by their possession of an *ufu* (clan hall) of their own, and in some cases by marriage with members of other lineages of their own subclans. Other local groups have lineages the members of which do not regard themselves as constituting different *ikupu*. Mekeo use the English term 'family' to refer to such a grouping, or when pressed for local terms they use the words *oko* (type or kind), or *ninina* (line or row). There are local descent groups divided into major lineages distinguished explicitly in terms of seniority and juniority (see Chapter 7). If there are more than two major lineages the others are generally known by the hereditary functions of their leaders. Thus, for example, the Ongofo'ina subclan of Beipa'a has three major lineages: a senior, a junior and a sorcery lineage. In the remainder of this study I shall use the word *pangua* to mean 'village' or 'ward', and *ikupu* to refer to dispersed clans as well as to localised subclans (cf. Humphries 1923:223).

The dispersal from the ancestral villages

According to oral traditions the ancestors of the Pioufa and Ve'e people came from the sea in big canoes. At the time of their arrival the whole of what is now known as the Mekeo plain was under water, with the coastline following the foothills of the Owen Stanley Range. The original immigrants made their first settlement under the towering Tsiarima peak (Mt Yule).[5] In due course the sea receded, and the settlers moved down from the foothills onto the plain and eventually settled at the site of their ancestral villages, Isoisovina and Isoisovapu.[6]

5. Tsiarima has a mystical significance for Mekeo. In some of their spells they mention the mountain and call on their ancestral spirits (whose remains are believed to be buried under it) to come and assist them in their ventures. When harvesting, many people have the base of their uprooted crops pointing towards the mountain, believing that ancestral spirits will be pleased.

6. The sites of these villages and their lands are between the present villages of Oriropetana and Bebeo (Map 1). Most of the land of Isoisovapu and Isoisovina is grassland with scattered bushes and tall, scraggy pandanus trees.

Here they lived for many generations until they had exhausted the supply of pigs so that there were none for their feasts. It was then that the chiefs began to use the flesh of the thorn-backed lizards *(fuise)* as a substitute for pork. Not being accustomed to this meat, the people became angry and complained that their chiefs had deceived them. As a result they abandoned the villages and looked for new and richer territories.[7] They took with them the chiefs' sons whom they made chiefs of their new settlements. Thus the principal chiefs of Mekeo are the patrilineal descendants of these men and ultimately, of the chiefs of their ancestral villages.

A second version of the abandonment of the two ancestral villages asserts that it happened as the result of a quarrel over a laughing jackass. One day some men sitting in their *ufu* saw a jackass in a tree laughing and jerking its tail feathers. A lighthearted argument ensued among the men as to whether the bird was laughing through its mouth or its anus. This developed into a serious fight in which the whole population engaged. As a result, the people abandoned their villages to found new and more peaceful settlements elsewhere. This is a common story told to me on a number of occasions by different people to explain the disintegration of some of their former settlements. Seligmann (1910:315-16) also told it as the cause of the disappearance of a former Pioufa village, Afa'i.[8]

These two tales about the disintegration of the ancestral villages (there is at least a third; see Papua 1920-1:59-60) may be seen as projections into myths of some important aspects of Mekeo social and cultural life. For the purpose of this study the relevant elements of the first story are: the chiefs' deception of their people which led to their being deserted; and the removal of the chiefs' sons to become chiefs of the new settlements. Mekeo chiefs are the senior men of their descent groups and their relationships with their people are modelled on those between elder and younger brothers. In Chapter 4 I shall discuss the tensions inherent in Mekeo fraternal relationships, which are exacerbated by the ascribed dominance of elder brothers over their younger siblings. Here, I note only that it is an aspect of the

7. Michael Young told me personally that the identical rationale features in a myth about population dispersal in Goodenough Island in the Massim.

8. Martin Wilson (1975:15-16) told the same myth with regard to the dispersal of the Doura people. My wife was informed by Nigel Oram that the same story is found in other places along the Papuan coast.

ambivalence in fraternal relationships that younger brothers often blame their elders for things which go wrong within their sibling groups. The same holds true of the wider agnatic groupings in the relationships between senior and junior agnates. In the first story the chiefs (seniors) gave reptile meat instead of pork to their people (juniors) because the pig supply had been exhausted. The people rejected this despised flesh, accused their chiefs of deception and deserted them. We are not told whether the chiefs had deceived them deliberately, and it is perhaps irrelevant. What is clearly important is that people look to their seniors for their welfare and often blame them when things go wrong.

The other significant element in the story is the removal of the chiefs' sons by the breakaway groups. Mekeo distinguish between chiefs who trace the origin of their offices through direct genealogical lines back to the ancestral villages and those who do not. They believe that those whose chieftainships came by heredity from the ancestral villages received their commission directly from A'aisa, the deity whom they credit with the creation of their cultural and social organisation. These chiefly offices are sacrosanct and more prestigious than those which originated in the present settlements or elsewhere. I was once told by a group of men about their problem with their unpredictable and ineffectual chief. The men had considered deposing their chief and consulted two other chiefs of their village about the matter. The latter chiefs expressed sympathy with the men's sentiments but pointed out that they could do nothing because their unpopular leader's chieftainship had originated in Isoisovapu.

The important point in the second story is the disintegration of the ancestral villages as a consequence of a fight which followed a trivial argument over a laughing jackass (or kingfisher). When people tell this story they sometimes laugh heartily over the stupidity of their ancestors. They do not seem to appreciate the deeper significance of the story: that when relationships are tense it needs only a trivial occurrence to sever them. In Beipa'a I was sometimes distressed by people quarrelling over what seemed to me to be the most inconsequential matters. Being an outsider who was not party to the intimacy and complexity of their relationships, I could see only the final straws to the tensions which were rooted in such serious matters as land disputes and sorcery. One such incident, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, was the disruption of the relationship between two real

brothers who fought over the ownership of a comb. I would not have understood the depth of ill-feeling between them had they not taken their dispute to the 'council court' where they recounted the history of their unfortunate relationship. The pertinent point here is that the second version of the fall of the ancestral villages reflects the kind of issues which precipitate verbal or physical violence. For a people like Mekeo who strongly suppress their resentments, a seemingly trivial event which occurs at a critical moment is sufficient to bring about schism between close relatives.

A second interpretation of the jackass myth has been suggested to me in a letter by Ralph Bulmer, according to whom the point of the story is the insult people hurl at each other: 'You are not talking through your mouth, you are talking through your anus!' One could indeed easily start a fight by saying things of this nature to one's neighbours.

The settlement of Beipa'a

Some Mekeo men assert that when their ancestors began to expand into the land between the Angabunga and the Inawafunga Rivers, small groups from the north and north-west were already there. The Bereina and the Waima had also been moving in from the coast. The expansion into the region of these disparate groups led to many armed hostilities. The emigrants from Isoisovapu either massacred or absorbed the small Kaopo groups, and successfully stemmed the inland expansion of the coastal people. The stories of the settlement of Beipa'a will exemplify what has just been stated.

The village comprises five named *pangua* or wards:[9] Ongofo'ina, Inaufokoa, Inau'i, Fopafo'ina and Aloaivea, each deriving its name from its founding *ikupu* or subclan. Four of the founding subclans are branches of the clans of the Pioufa tribe; the exception, Inaufokoa, is an immigrant group originally from the foothills east of Mekeo territory in the neighbourhood of Lapeka, a Kuni-speaking people (Seligmann 1910:368). It appears that the Inaufokoa had emigrated first to the ancestral villages of the Mekeo from where they eventually dispersed to their present locations in at least four villages.

9. My use of the term 'ward' is broader than that of Hogbin and Wedgwood (1952-54). Some Mekeo wards consist of single subclans, but in Beipa'a 4 of the 5 wards have more than one subclan. The social composition of a multi-subclan (or multi-carpellary) ward is referred to in my 1971 article as an 'alliance'.

Beipa'a was founded by two Inaufokoa brothers who crossed the Angabunga from their home base at Isoisovapu to begin a new garden on the present site of the village. Because of the inconvenience of crossing the river daily (the Angabunga being a fast-flowing river subject to flooding for several months every year), the brothers decided to take their families and live permanently on their garden site. Later they were joined by a group of Inau'i clansmen who were also a break-away unit from Isoisovapu.

As the settlement grew it attracted another group of settlers, the Fopafo'ina, who had been living precariously in a series of settlements further up the river and not far from the village; they were engaged in land disputes and fights with the Northern Ve'e village of Rarai.

At about the same time the Ongofo'ina had established themselves near the Ma'akunga River about ten kilometres from Beipa'a and were expanding in all directions. This brought them into violent confrontations with the Waima and the Kaopo peoples, and also with the Inaufokoa into whose lands they had made inroads. Pressed by enemies on all sides, the Ongofo'ina settlement was in danger of annihilation. As a result, the settlers decided for the sake of security to join the bigger village. Accordingly, their chief and his sorcerer went to Beipa'a to make peace with the Inaufokoa. They arrived at the end of the village early one morning before the people were awake. After instructing his sorcerer to hide in the bush and watch the proceedings, the chief donned his official regalia and roused the village with sounds produced by his lime gourd and spatula (see Hau'ofa 1971). When the startled inhabitants discovered that it was a lone 'peace' chief paying them a visit, the Inaufokoa chief went out and escorted him to the *ufu*, where they negotiated the cessation of hostility. A peace ceremony sealed the eventual agreement, after which the Ongofo'ina entered Beipa'a where they have since resided.[10]

The last major group to be recruited was Aloaivea, which was ejected from Aipiana village after a series of disputes with its parent group. The chief of Aloaivea at the time was the sister's husband of

10. All my informants concurred with the details of this story except the junior chief of Ongofo'ina, who maintained that the Ongofo'ina had lived in Beipa'a before but had fled to their original settlement after they killed an Inaufokoa man. The story related above, he said, is about the Ongofo'ina second entry into Beipa'a.

the Ongofo'ina chief, who permitted the refugees to settle on a piece of land just outside the main settlement.[11]

These five subclans formed the nuclei of the five village wards. As the settlement grew, internal disputes precipitated the emigration of whole sections or smaller groups to other villages. The Ongofo'ina themselves, who had grown powerful and dominated the village, split into two sections which fought each other, resulting in the vanquished section's emigration to Inawi where its descendants, the Kipo Ongofo'ina, now live. Land disputes between Ongofo'ina and Inaufokoa caused many of the latter to emigrate to Eboa, Engeva and Aipiana. They could not resist the Ongofo'ina who deployed their powerful sorcerers to drive them off their lands. The Inaufokoa did not (and still do not) have their own resident hereditary sorcerers to protect them.

Those who left were replaced by other groups who had either been similarly pushed out from their own villages or had been in the area when the Pioufa first arrived. This is the explanation given by the villagers for the fact that all the wards of Beipa'a, with the single exception of Inaufokoa, are composed of more than one subclan (Table 2). The Ongofo'ina took into their wards small groups of Fou'ama, Meauni and Ungo clans, all of which are of non-Mekeo origin. The Fou'ama possessed strong specialist magical powers including the weather magic *(kinapui)*. At Beipa'a they quarrelled among themselves over women, precipitating the emigration of their chief to Amoamo where he and his group founded the present Iniuma subclan in that village. The Meauni also possessed magical powers, the most potent of which were love magic *(pakai)*, crocodile magic *(ufala)* and sorcery *(ungaunga)*. They too quarrelled among themselves over alleged adulterous relationships with each other's wives. As a result, the bulk of the Meauni left to settle in Aipiana. A few returned to the Kaopo village of Papangongo from where they had originally emigrated. Only the chief and his family remained at Beipa'a. The Ungo said that they were, with the Ipange, the original settlers in the region, but were numerically overwhelmed by the Pioufa who moved in and nearly wiped them out. The Pioufa say that these small groups were found wandering in the bush leading a semi-nomadic life and that

11. The acting chief of Aloaivea said that after the dispute his forefathers went and settled on unoccupied land, but other people in the village disagree, pointing out that the lands Aloaivea now holds formerly belonged to Ongofo'ina and Inaufokoa.

Table 2 The wards and subclans of Beipa'a

Wards	*Component subclans*
Ongofo'ina	Ongofo'ina, Fou'ama, Ungo, Meauni
Inaufokoa	Inaufokoa
Inau'i	Inau'i, Kolomio
Fopafo'ina	Fopafo'ina Fai'a, Lopia, Malaila, Iso, Kalau, Ipange*
Aloaivea	Aloaivea, Ipange, Apangoa

*This subclan has now been absorbed by the Lopia subclan.

they laid no claims to the land. The Ungo family which joined Ongofo'ina was led by a strong *faifai* magician; such a magician has powers to communicate with amphibious, invisible and malicious human-like beings who live in underwater villages.

The Inau'i took into their ward a refugee group, the Kolomio, a branch of the Northern Ve'e clan of the same name, which had split from its parent group at Rarai. The Inau'i appear not to have had any sorcerer of their own, and a leader of the Kolomio was a sorcerer.

The founding subclan of Fopafo'ina ward was Fopafo'ina Fai'a (henceforth referred to as Fai'a to conform with local usage) which is the premier war-magic subclan for the whole Pioufa tribe. Originally, the subclan had no civilian chief of its own. One day a Fai'a man, on a hunting trip in the forest, discovered a small group of people with their chief, camping under a big tree on top of which they had built a house. The hunter, who did not make his presence known, returned to the village and informed his clansmen of what he had seen. Thereupon the Fai'a went fully armed and surrounded the camp.

The leader of the besieged group emerged wearing his chiefly regalia for immunity (see Chapter 7) and talked with the Fai'a who invited him, with his people, to come to the village, live with them and become their chief. The Fai'a needed a civilian chief to perform their public ceremonies and to enable them to enter fully into the political and ceremonial life of the village (see Hau'ofa 1971). The chief agreed to the proposition, and his most senior descendants have since been the

hereditary chiefs of Fopafo'ina. The whole group is known simply as Lopia (chiefly) subclan. The land on which the original chief was discovered is called Ongafa'a (Great Boar) in honour of the 'historic' event when the hunter found the chief. The Kalau are of the same clan as Fou'ama with whom they migrated to Beipa'a. That the Kalau chose to live with the Fopafo'ina might have been because their leaders were also war magicians. Two other small groups, Iso and Ipange, also joined Fopafo'ina; but due to a drastic decline in numbers, the Ipange subclan has been absorbed by the Lopia. The Malaila went in with their chief who was also a powerful horticultural magician *(isani ungo)*; they also had a war magician of their own. Another version holds that the Malaila are a junior branch of the Fai'a subclan. It may be that this group, like the Ipange, is in the process of being absorbed by a larger one.

The Aloaivea brought in two other subclans, Apangoa and a branch of the Ipange clan. As mentioned above, the Ipange were, with the Ungo, a semi-nomadic group which had been in the area when the Pioufa arrived. The Aloaivea found a small Ipange unit 'wandering around in the bush' and persuaded it to come to the village. The two subclans later discovered the Apangoa, who were too suspicious to accept overtures to join their ward. The former, determined to bring the latter in, kidnapped a young Apangoa boy whom they killed and buried in the village. This device succeeded where verbal overtures had failed, for according to Mekeo custom a fresh grave should be guarded closely by the deceased's immediate relatives. By burying the murdered boy in their settlement, the Aloaivea forced the Apangoa to come to the village and sleep on the grave while the corpse was decomposing. Once in the village, they were treated with kindness and hospitality and consented to live there permanently.[12]

Inaufokoa is the only single-subclan ward in the village. The reason for this might have been that owing to the depredations of other subclans, especially Ongofo'ina, the Inaufokoa were left with very little land, scarcely sufficient for themselves let alone for sharing with newcomers.

From the foregoing narrative account of the settlement of Beipa'a a number of general observations can now be made.

12. This version was given to me by the acting chief of Aloaivea. An Apangoa man told me the same story but said that it was his group and Aloaivea that brought in the Ipange.

The founding and dominant subclans of the village wards insist that their forefathers emigrated from the ancestral settlements of Isoisovapu and Isoisovina. This is true of most if not all Mekeo villages. The affiliated subclans, on the other hand, are mostly of non-Mekeo origin. It is probable that the migrants from the ancestral villages moved into the region between the Angabunga and Inawafunga Rivers and subjugated the small groups of people who were already there. This would explain in part the present dominant positions of the founding subclans and their chiefs over the affiliated subclans and their leaders.

Most of the affiliated subclans of the wards had specialist magical powers. Villagers consider such powers to be of cardinal importance since they believe that no major activity can succeed without the deployment of the particular mystical powers associated with it (Chapter 8). It appears, then, that those groups which were taken into the wards by the founding subclans were ones with vital specialist skills in magic.

The account of the entry of the Ongofo'ina into Beipa'a reflects an important aspect of the society which will be discussed more fully

Table 3 The population of Beipa'a, 1971

Ward	Resident	Not resident	Total
Ongofo'ina	292	140	432
Fopafo'ina	155	121	276
Aloaivea	118	63	181
Inaufokoa	108	51	159
Inau'i	60	37	97
Total	733	412	1145

This table does not include outsiders who constitute the staff of the mission, the school, the hospital, and the agricultural extension station. Excluded also are fifteen school children from remote areas, mostly from the mountains, who were staying in the village during school term.

in Chapter 7. The story expresses the strongly held beliefs that the persons of civilian chiefs are inviolable and that it is a major responsibility of these chiefs to effect and maintain peace among their people.

Finally, the story of the origin of the Fopafo'ina chieftainship is probably an explanation for the fact that in Fopafo'ina it is not the subclan of the chief but that of the war magician, Fai'a, which is dominant in the ward. The assertion made in the story that Fai'a was the founding subclan may be seen as a rationalisation for the subclan's dominant position. The account also reflects an important aspect of Mekeo society, namely, that local groups depend on their chiefs for the performance of their ceremonies and for their formal relationships with other groups. Chiefless subclans are always in danger of being absorbed by those which have chiefs. There is not a single autonomous subclan that does not have a chief as its leader. Conversely, all local groups in Beipa'a which have no chiefs are affiliated with (or are clients of) the dominant subclans of their wards.

Change and continuity

The only relatively firm statement that can be made about the history of Mekeo villages before the onset of the colonial era is that by about 1840 (at least), the present structure and ward composition of Beipa'a and the other two major Pioufa villages, Aipiana and Inawi, was already established. I base this assertion on the genealogical collection by Father Egidi in the 1890s.[13] This collection records all details of genealogical relationships for Mekeo for three generations from and including the living adults in the 1890s. All marriages and live births are recorded and cross-checked for every village and subclan. Beyond the third generation, details are either incomplete or non-existent. This is due, I suggest, not so much to a lack of genealogical memory as to the Mekeo reluctance to divulge information about their ancestors beyond their grandparents' generation.

13. Father Egidi was an ethnologist and genealogist sent by the Church to collect the genealogies of the Roro, Mekeo and Kuni. He was Seligmann's main source of information for Mekeo. Father Coltre, who has been a missionary in the area since 1925 and who received part of his missionary training from Egidi in Rome, told me that early missionaries thought Egidi was quite fanatical about his genealogical work. He would, for example, leave Beipa'a on foot or on horseback to travel to the coast just to check a single detail.

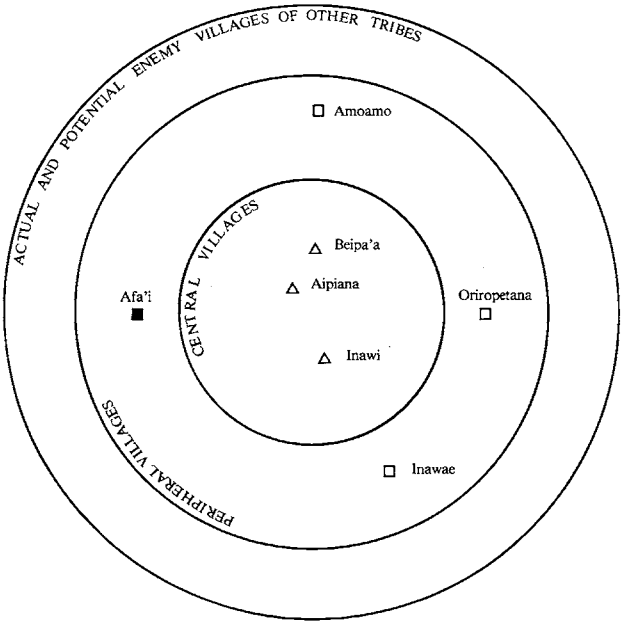


Fig. 1 Schema of location of central and peripheral Pioufa villages

Names of ancestors beyond this have been incorporated in secret magical spells and rites and are therefore not lightly or willingly spoken. They should not be mentioned outside the performance of spells and rituals unless it is for the purpose of teaching them to successors. People call these ancestors *auafa'a*, and believe that if they mention their names (as elements of potent mystical powers) outside proper contexts they will be punished with sickness or even death.[14] The point is that the fathers and grandfathers of people

14. There is an inconsistency in practice. Although the names of the dead fathers and grandfathers are incorporated in the spells, people do not hesitate to mention them casually and publicly. This may be because such people have died too recently to be forgotten by the majority of the adult villagers. Their names and the memories of them have not yet passed into the mysterious past. One exception has been the late most feared sorcerer of Eboa village, Aufo Afulo, who died in the early 1950s. People were so afraid of him that after his death few would dare utter his name lightly. Most people, especially Eboans, still refer to him as the 'old man'.

living in Beipa'a, Aipiana and Inawi in 1890 had lived in these villages in 1840. How long before this date the group structure of these villages had been in existence can at this time only be a matter for speculation. Given the unwillingness of Mekeo to reveal ancestral names beyond the grandparental generation, it is probable that the composition of the central Pioufa villages has remained stable since at least the turn of the nineteenth century.

This probability suggests a degree of overall internal structural stability and residential continuity long before the arrival of Europeans on the scene. It means that by 1840 the expansion into the Mekeo plain by the several tribes had been completed, and that the population of the plain was 'settled', with each group consolidating its hold on its territory and maintaining its boundaries. In the face of intertribal warfare, the long stability of the three main Pioufa villages was probably due to a large extent to their central locations, protected from outsiders by a ring of four small peripheral villages, Amoamo, Oriropetana, Inawae and Afa'i. The last mentioned village was abandoned early this century (Seligmann 1910:316), but has recently been gradually re-established on a different site. Old men in these small villages said that in the precolonial past, when Pioufa was a more unified tribe, the peripheral villages acted as frontline outposts defending the main body of the tribe, three quarters of which lived in the three central villages (see Figure 1 and Map 1).[15] The small size of the peripheral villages, people say, was due to the high mortality rate inflicted on them by enemy groups. Whether or not there was a deliberate, overall tribal defence plan in the location of its villages, the strategic locations of the peripheral settlements are in themselves very significant. The Kaopo flank of the central villages seems exposed, but the fact was that Kaopo tribes posed little threat since they were, and still are, small and scattered groups. Besides, the two closest Kaopo villages, Papangongo and Engeva, have considerable Pioufa elements in their midst and have been for a long time closely linked to the Pioufa, especially to Beipa'a. Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth century the Ongofo'ina had a small settlement headed by sorcerers on the bank of the Ma'akunga

15. The Northern Ve'e say the same about the relationship between Rarai, their main settlement, and the smaller settlements of Bebeo, Inawauni, and Imounga. There was a fourth, Inawabui Kaenga, which disappeared early this century.

Table 4 The populations of the central and peripheral villages of the Pioufa tribe, 1897

Central villages	Beipa'a	634
	Aipiana	444
	Inawi	408
Peripheral villages	Oriropetana	190
	Amoamo	140
	Inawae	89
	Afa'i	n.a.

Source: Seligmann 1910:313

or Inawafunga River, specifically to protect their lands from Papangongo and the Waima. It was abandoned soon after the establishment of the colonial control, that is when fighting was proscribed.

When William MacGregor first visited Mekeo in 1890 he found that the central Pioufa villages were calm whereas Amoamo, with some assistance from Beipa'a, was waging war against the Northern Ve'e village of Rarai (BNG 1889-90:78-9). After a later visit, in 1891, MacGregor also remarked that the Inawae had the smallest but fiercest fighting force in the area (BNG 1891-2:16), and that the chief of Oriropetana had expressed concern about his village's relationships with the large Southern Ve'e village of Inawaia and Eboa with which it had common borders. These reports provide some insight into the relative situation of central and peripheral Pioufa villages in the earliest years of colonial rule, and also give substance to what I have said about the defensive role of the peripheral ones. Thus, in 1890 the central Pioufa villages were calm, while the peripheral villages were either conducting warfare or were well prepared militarily for confronting enemy villages.

The position of the peripheral Pioufa villages was far from that of subservience to the central ones. The latter were dependent on them for their security and stability so could not afford to antagonise

them lest they emigrate elsewhere, leaving the central villages exposed to the enemies. The military interdependence between the peripheral and the central Pioufa villages was facilitated by their proximity to each other. Amoamo and Oriropetana, for example, are only about two and a half kilometres away from Beipa'a. Another factor which probably helped in maintaining an equitable balance between the central and the peripheral villages was that each of the small villages —except Afa'i about which I have no information—had mystical powers (or in one case, ceremonial position) superior to those of the central villages. The main chief of Oriropetana was, and still is, the most senior chief of all Pioufa. The present chief of that village once told me that in the past his forefathers received food tributes from distributions at feasts held in the villages of the entire tribe. Inawae had the third most senior sorcery lineage in the whole of Mekeo (the most senior sorcerers were from Bebeo, a small 'outpost' of Northern Ve'e). In Amoamo village lived the principal python magician in Pioufa. Python magic was and is a greatly feared power used for the protection of lands from intruders. In short, although the peripheral villages were small, some of their major chiefs, sorcerers and magicians ranked higher than the chiefs, sorcerers and magicians of the central villages.

Although warfare was chronic, it was not the case that every tribe fought every other tribe all the time. When MacGregor first visited Mekeo there was a general peace between Waima and Pioufa, as is evident in his report that the Waima gardens he saw were close to those of Aipiana (BNG 1889-90:88).[16] It also appears that at the time of MacGregor's visits the Pioufa and Southern Ve'e were at peace, for on a punitive expedition to Eboa he found some men from Aipiana and Amoamo in the village (BNG 1891-2:17). The wars fought by Mekeo at the onset of the colonial period were those among the Southern Ve'e villages themselves (BNG 1891-2:17) and between Amoamo and Rarai. This situation of limited war and equally limited peace allowed some marriages to be contracted across the tribal boundaries, establishing useful kinship links with potential enemy groups. More importantly, it allowed an uninterrupted flow of trade from the coast to the mountains and vice versa; for mountain, plain and coastal peoples

16. When there was war between two neighbouring groups, the people concerned would not make or maintain gardens in close proximity to those of their enemies.

were economically interdependent and this in itself must have provided considerable incentive for maintaining peace.

The establishment of colonial authority in the area brought to a climax the developments that had taken place beforehand. The settlement of the plain had been completed and there was a measure of stability in the internal structure of the large central Pioufa villages. The immediate effect of government intrusion was to strengthen the existing stability. On MacGregor's two visits in 1890, he received enthusiastic co-operation from the chiefs of the three central Pioufa villages to proscribe warfare and establish permanent peace in the area. With this co-operation, MacGregor negotiated and brought about the formal reconciliation between the Pioufa and the Northern Ve'e chiefs by their rubbing noses with each other (BNG 1889-90:76-91). The warring Southern Ve'e were more difficult to persuade and peace was not established until September of the following year, after a series of punitive raids on their villages by government patrols (BNG 1891-2:15-20).

The forcible cessation of tribal warfare necessarily undermined the military authority, and although military leadership still survives it exists largely in a ceremonial sense. Furthermore, the cessation of warfare and threats of war removed the institution that provided the only formal organisation for the whole Pioufa tribe, that is, the major military ceremonies and feasts. Apart from its territorial significance, the political importance of the tribe in the precolonial past lay in its military value: it was the largest territorial grouping for military co-operation and also the largest unit within which warfare was not supposed to be waged. There was no formal tribal-wide organisation besides that of the military. The largest group over which a Mekeo civilian chief had, and still has, primary authority is the ward. The military ceremonies involved large feasts which were for all the war chiefs of the tribe. These ceremonies maintained ties and obligations to be exploited when a group waging war needed assistance from others. The main civilian ceremonies, on the other hand, involved only a limited number of groups which constitute feasting and ceremonial dyads known as *ufuapie* (Chapter 6). With the abolition of warfare, military ceremonies ceased and with them the only tribal-wide ceremonial ties disappeared. The last military ceremony to be held in Beipa'a was in 1921 with the death of Foisao Aisama'a, the head

war magician of all Pioufa. The tribe as such still exists but it has virtually no political significance.

The difference in the scale of military and civilian ceremonies may be taken as an indication of the relative power and importance of the two organisations. One man, Kalama Kape, who belongs to a warrior lineage of Aipiana village, said that before the arrival of the Europeans war leaders were more important than civilian ones. He also pointed out that sorcerers, the backbone of civilian leadership, assumed much greater importance only after permanent peace was established. Mosko (1973) wrote that one factor for the rise to greater prominence of sorcerers in Roro (and this could equally be said of Mekeo) was the frequency of the occurrence of epidemics of introduced diseases in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The implication here is that people attributed these epidemics to the powers of sorcerers. A middle-aged Beipa'a chief told me that soon after the establishment of colonial authority in the area, his great-grandfather brought some sorcery stones from Waima and Lokou and distributed them to sorcerers in the area. His plan was to get the sorcerers so active that they would find themselves in trouble with the government. He nursed a special hatred against sorcerers because of the death of his only son and heir. As anticipated, the sorcerers got out of control and inflicted so much illness and death that they were all rounded up and put into gaol. The chief's story is of interest not so much for its 'truth' as for its reference to the fact that people attributed outbreaks of epidemics to the actions of sorcerers. Monckton, a Resident Magistrate who spent a short period in Mekeo at the time, noted that his predecessor had indeed raided and gaoled as many Mekeo sorcerers as he could catch (1920:201). Monckton himself also waged a personal battle against sorcerers.

The imprisonment of sorcerers convinced the population that they were indeed responsible for the epidemics. Thus while the power of military leaders was declining, some natural disasters helped to increase the power and prestige of sorcerers. If civilian leadership of chiefs and their sorcerers did rise to greater prominence after the cessation of warfare and during the era of epidemics it may explain the strength of the hold that sorcery now has on the society. Great sorcerers such as Aufo Afulo of Eboa, Kafo and Kuekue A'iso of Aipiana, Apini Pinongo and Vangu'u Loaisanga of Beipa'a, and Mangemange of Rarai, received their apprenticeship during this period. They and

others were the most powerful men in Mekeo, and some of them lived well into the 1950s. Their protegés are still alive today, old men in their sixties who are not as powerful as their mentors. The earlier generation of sorcerers has left an indelible mark on the society in the fear that people still have of sorcery. I deal with this problem in detail in Chapter 8.

The decline of the tribe as a political unit was paralleled by the growing importance of individual villages, especially the large central ones, as the main political arenas. Beipa'a turned in on itself and became increasingly self-sufficient in terms of, for example, ceremonies and marriage. Thus, in the *ufuapie* ceremonial exchanges most partnership ties with groups in other villages have been severed or suspended (Figure 7). In the sphere of marriage, Beipa'a men were more dependent on women from other villages for at least the last sixty years of the nineteenth century, whereas for the first sixty years of this century the situation reversed. For all marriages of Beipa'a men from about 1840 to 1899, 51 per cent of the women were from other villages and 49 per cent from within Beipa'a itself; for all marriages of Beipa'a men between 1900 and 1959, 36 per cent were with women from outside and 64 per cent were with women from within the village.[17] This reversal occurred early, in the period 1900-9, when the proportions of marriages within and outside the village were 62 per cent and 38 per cent respectively; for the preceding decade (1890-9) the figures are 55 per cent and 45 per cent respectively.[18] It is clear, then, that very soon after the European intrusion Beipa'a became much less dependent on other villages for marriage partners than it was in the nineteenth century. Since there was no significant change in the population size of the village up to the 1940s (Table 1), it suggests that people began to make more use of eligible partners within the village with whom alliances had formerly been politically less desirable. As marriage was arranged in the past, it was probably easy for men to change the direction of their search for their children's spouses to suit changes in political relationships.

17. The total number of marriages involved is 352 for the period 1840-99, and 381 for the period 1900-59. The 1840 year is an estimation based on the probable date of the marriage of the fathers or grandfathers of those who were adult in 1890. Most marriage dates for the 1900-59 period have been recorded precisely by the Catholic Mission.

18. The total number of marriages involved is seventy-four for each decade.

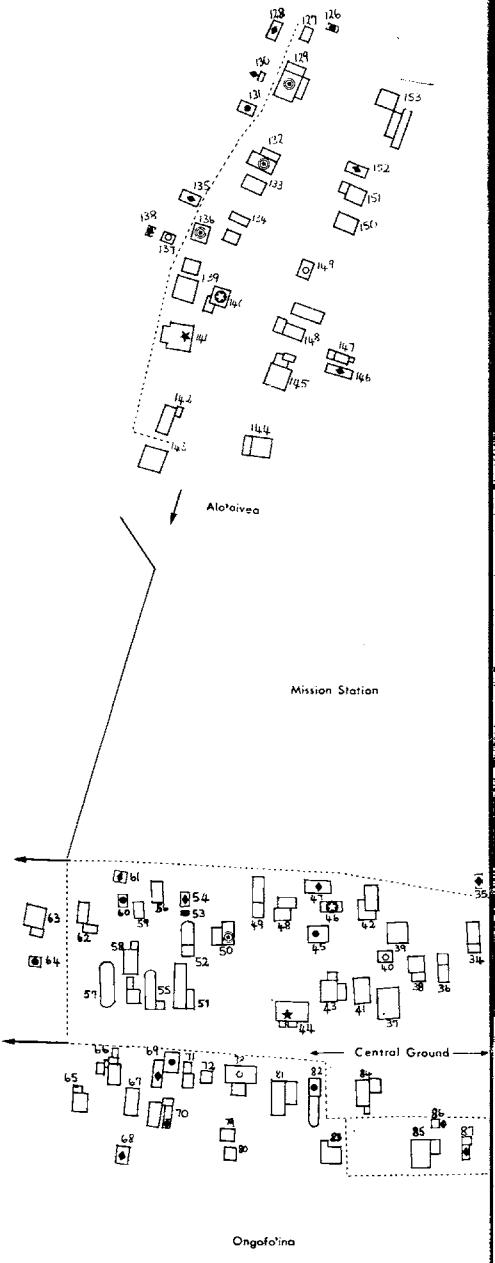
In summary, the cessation of warfare led to the disappearance of the indigenous military organisation and to the drastic decline of the tribe as a significant political unit. This change left the individual villages, especially the large central ones like Beipa'a, as the sole arenas of important political activities. Since marriage and affinity are of cardinal importance in the relationships of power, men looked more to their own communities for marriage partners for their sisters and daughters. The concentration of political and social relationships within individual communities also meant the rise of the powers of civilian chiefs and their sorcerers whose traditional areas of responsibility have been within their respective local communities. The outbreaks of epidemics from the late nineteenth century through to the early 1940s contributed to the strengthening of the power of sorcerers and civilian chiefs. As sorcerers are the custodians of Mekeo traditions, we can see in their hold over the society a powerful factor for cultural conservatism. And although part of this power has eroded with the death of the old sorcerers and chiefs, the people of Mekeo villages in the late 1960s and early 1970s still held tenaciously to their old beliefs and practices. This has enabled me to observe and record an indigenous system which has survived with a surprising degree of integrity while those of their neighbours from the Gulf District through most of the south-eastern coast of Papua have undergone processes of change at a much faster rate.

3. Reflections in space

The spatial arrangements of Mekeo villages, especially the large ones like Beipa'a, reflect not only some principal aspects of the social order but also the main concerns of the villagers about their relationships among themselves and with the external world. I propose in this chapter to construct a model of Mekeo conceptions of space and to relate the elements of it to features of their society and culture. This will serve to introduce themes such as seniority, ambivalence, structural oppositions and sorcery which will be developed in subsequent chapters. For this purpose I shall describe in detail the actual spatial arrangements of villages, relating the account to the problems of boundary maintenance, to social divisions in terms of local groupings and ranking, and to certain beliefs which influence people's behaviour and the ways they organise their movements and other activities. Although the model will be abstracted largely from the actual physical layout of Beipa'a, I have also drawn on oral traditions, on photographs taken by early visitors, on my knowledge of other Mekeo settlements and on the statements and behaviour of villagers pertaining to their conceptions of their surrounding environment. Many of the details of Beipa'a are described in Appendix 6 which includes a map of the village. The sketch of a hypothetical village given in Figure 2 is to illustrate my descriptive account.

The divisions of space

Beipa'a is the official name of two settlements separated by a distance of a hundred metres, the intermediate space being the site of the old parish station of the Sacred Heart Mission. Known throughout Mekeo as Ongofo'ina and Aloaivea, each settlement derives its name from its dominant component local group. The government, the church and the people themselves regard both settlements as constituting a single village. All Mekeo villages, except Beipa'a and Rarai, are single-settlement units.



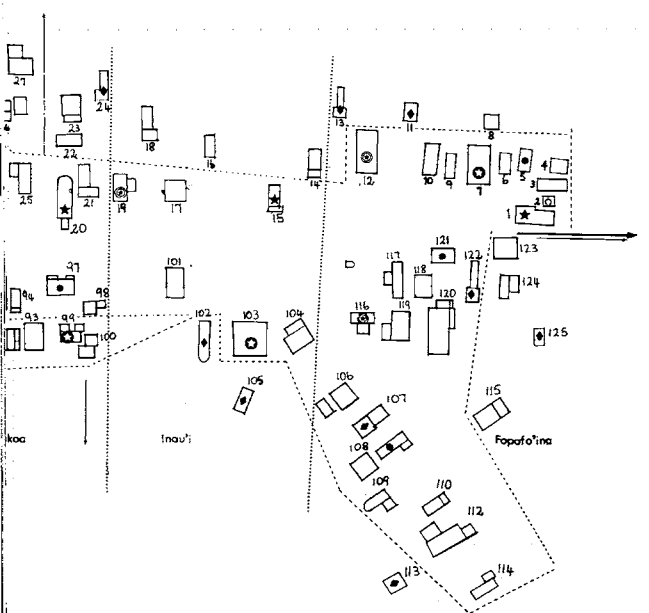
Map 2 Beipa'a village, 1971

MAP 2 BEIPA'A VILLAGE 1971

★ Ufu
House of Ward Chief
House of Lesser Chief
Platform
♦ Ngove
o Trade Store
Unnumbered ▬ Storage
Ward Boundary

Main Road
Clan Road
Back Street

metres
0 25 50 75 100



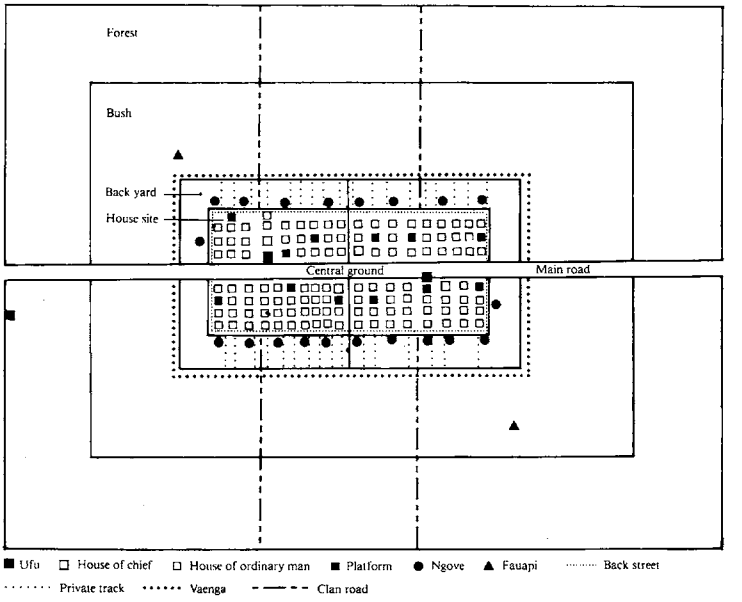


Fig. 2 A hypothetical Mekeo village

Like most other villages, the two settlements have a basic rectangular shape. At the northern end of the larger settlement several houses stand out on the side towards the river, modifying the general pattern. People say that the forefathers of those now resident on this part formerly lived at the end of the settlement, but had to move because their house sites were on low ground covered with water during the wet season. Of the fourteen existing Mekeo villages only three (Beipa'a, Inawi and Rarai) do not conform to the general rectangular pattern.

A wide open space, *ango inaenga*, which I shall call the 'central ground', runs the length of the settlements through the centre and constitutes the heart of the village (Figure 2 and Map 2).[1] From the central ground begins a series of zones or belts which extend to the very limits of all the village lands. The first belt, that of house sites, extends from either side of the central ground to the edge of the village. A narrow belt of bushland, at most about fifty metres, surrounds the village, except that part which the Catholic Mission station occupies. Known as the

1. The central ground is referred to in my 1971 article as the 'central thoroughfare'.



11 Part of Beipa's village (Alofopafo'ina), 1970. Note the wide central ground and non-traditional house designs.

maka or as I henceforth call it the 'backyard', it is the garbage disposal and latrine area where morally undesirable and harmful events also occur (Chapter 5). Beyond the backyard, two zones together stretch for varying distances up to five or so kilometres from the village. Known as *apungufafa* and *apungu*, these bushland zones form the main gardening area. Beyond the bushland is the final-zone, the *aufa'i* (forestland) which extends for three or more kilometres from the *apungu* to and beyond the Ma'akunga (Inawafunga) River where it merges with the lands of the Kaopo villages of Papangongo and Engeva.[2]

Mekeo call all the land from the village to the forest by the general term *ango*, and they designate the central ground *ango inaenga* which literally means the 'bowels of the land', or the 'womb of the land', or the 'beginning of the land'. (The term *inae* signifies 'pregnant' or 'to

2. Because of the proximity of some villages to each other, the pattern with bushland and forest is not uniform. Thus the space between Beipa'a and Aipiana allows only for *apungufafa*, and that between Beipa'a and Amoamo only for *apungu*. In small villages, especially in Northern Ve'e, the forestlands begin not far from the settlements, partly because of the ratio of land to population and partly because of poor drainage which determines areas suitable for cultivation. Whatever the case, the ultimate pattern is: settlement, bushland and forests.



III Houses in traditional designs at Eboa village, 1973.

conceive' and is derived from the root word *ina* which as a noun means 'mother' and as a verb means 'to begin', while *nga* is a possessive suffix.) Villagers hold all their public ceremonies on the central ground where, in the past, they also buried their dead.[3] When a villager died the burial took place on the central ground of his or her agnatic ward. The *ango inaenga* was and is the centre of the village and all its surrounding lands.

The wards of Beipa'a are discrete territorial units with their boundaries marked by mango or coconut trees. Within each ward the land is divided into residential strips, each of which belongs to a particular descent group. Some of these strips span the width of the village; others, belonging to descent groups which apparently were small in the early stages of the formation of the settlement, extend from the central ground to the edge of the village in one direction only. All

3. cf. MacGregor in BNG 1889-90:81, 91; Chalmers 1895:72. Note also that part of the innermost ring of the Trobriand village was the traditional graveyard (Malinowski 1929:8), and Fortune (1932:1) said that the centre of the Dobuan village was also the graveyard.

residential strips, however, border on both the central ground and the backyard behind. In other words, in traditional Mekeo society, each descent group had two disposal areas. One, the backyard, where people discarded domestic refuse and bodily wastes; the other, the central ground, where the group disposed of its dead ancestors and thereby symbolically returned them to the womb of the clan. Each residential strip, then, accommodated not only the living members of the group, but also the remains of their dead ancestors. This implies the continuity and solidarity between the living and the dead. The contrasts between the central ground (the centre) and the backyard (the periphery) will be discussed below.

Since the 1890s the government has forbidden the burial of the dead within the village for hygienic reasons. Instead, areas at the outskirts are specifically allocated for cemeteries. The result is that the villagers have now abandoned the traditional burial, although according to Catholic missionaries some other villages, especially the Southern Ve'e ones, still publicly bury their dead in these cemeteries at daytime and exhume them at night for lasting burial in the village. For fear of discovery, the reburial is not on the central ground but under the houses. Although Beipa'a people have discontinued the practice, part of their attitude towards the central ground cannot be adequately explained without an understanding of this particular aspect of their past. As for the backyard areas, their function has remained unchanged, despite some exhortation from the administration on the subject of latrines.

Buildings

Within the ward and its surrounding lands are residential and other kinds of buildings.

The e'a

The *e'a* are family houses for married men, all females, and prepubescent boys. Villagers construct most of their rectangular houses end on to the central ground; but chiefs build their dwellings parallel to it. These are the traditional relative positions of family houses. According to customary law no one other than a chief can have his house paralleling the central ground. In addition, only chiefs and other ranking hereditary leaders have the right to special roof designs which further distinguish their houses from those of ordinary people. The purpose of this is the easy identification of their houses by outsiders

travelling through the village, for it is the chiefs to whom they should look if they wish to rest or to do official business in the village. For the villagers themselves, the disposition of their chiefs' houses and the roof designs are marks of distinction which go with the status of the chiefly office. Beipa'a is the only village in Pioufa and Northern Ve'e which still adheres strictly to the rule concerning the relative positions of houses. Furthermore, although not all chiefs and other hereditary leaders have better houses than those of ordinary people, the largest and most impressive buildings in Beipa'a are theirs.

A second feature of the arrangement of houses is that senior men of subclans or of lineages build theirs in front of their descent group's residential strip, that is, nearest to the central ground. Younger brothers and other junior members erect their houses behind those of the senior men in accordance with the principle of seniority based on the order of birth. Alternatively, where space abounds, the predominant pattern is from right to left. If one faces these houses from the central ground, those of eldest brothers are first to the right; houses of subsequent brothers range on the left along a line and according to their birth order. The significance of these house positions (front or behind, right or left) for social ranking will be dealt with below.

Traditionally people constructed their houses on piles, as they still do; and the houses were oblong with apsidal ends. Most had roofs that extended to the floor, eliminating the need for walls. Houses were of two, or in some cases three, levels. People spent the daytime in the open, airy lower level, and slept in the enclosed upper quarter. The floors of ordinary people's houses were, and still are, made of split areca palm trunks. This flooring is relatively short-lived, frail, squeaky and closely corrugated, an uncomfortable sitting surface for those unaccustomed to it. Only chiefs and other hereditary leaders had floors of the firmer, wider and more durable timber called *ava* which they obtained from the thick palm, *imou*, also known as the black palm. Ordinary people say that they hesitate to use the *ava* boards in case they incur their chiefs' anger and are subjected to sorcery attacks.

The right to use the *ava* boards can be purchased, however, and although many people are hesitant, through fear or because they cannot afford the cost, an increasing number of people have taken advantage of the opportunity since the Second World War when ordinary people in Pioufa and Northern Ve'e villages began to con-

struct large houses. Finally, in the olden days floors were overlaid with thick tree-bark matting, the purpose of which was to prevent sorcerers attacking unwary sleepers with poison-tipped needles inserted through the spaces between floor boards. Villagers fenced their houses securely around the piles for the same protection.

According to some elderly people, including an octogenarian missionary, Sister Gabrielle, who has lived in the area since 1912, houses in the early years of this century were much smaller than those of today. One of the most knowledgeable men in Beipa'a asserted that ordinary people's houses were an arm-span in width, and that only chiefs had big houses because of their greater responsibility. But early photographs, which admittedly show only the houses in front, that is next to the central ground, seem to contradict these statements. Nevertheless, houses in Inawaia, one of the most conservative Mekeo villages, are much smaller than the more 'modern'-style houses in Pioufa.[4]

Post-war developments in Papua New Guinea have been reflected in changes in the style and size of houses in Pioufa and Northern Ve'e villages. Houses built since the late 1940s have been much larger, and the apsidal-ended buildings replaced with purely rectangular designs distinctly and deliberately derived from European models. These houses are still predominantly made of local materials, but since the mid-1960s, owing to the lucrative betelnut trade in Port Moresby, an increasing number of new houses have been constructed partly or wholly with imported European materials.

The ngove

Ngove are living quarters for bachelors and widowers, the two marginal categories of male in Mekeo society who cannot live in family houses. When a boy reaches puberty or after he has completed schooling (as is the current practice), he leaves the family house to live with other bachelors in a *ngove*, and he will not return to live in his parents' or any other family house until he is married. The aim of a bachelor's life should be to secure a wife, for the accomplishment of which he learns and practises various kinds of love magic *(pakai)*. People consider some of these magical powers to be so potent that if the prac-

4. About a quarter of the Inawaia village was razed by a fire in the mid-1960s. Instead of rebuilding their small houses, the Inawaia constructed large European-type houses.

titioner does not take care he may, despite himself, commit ilicit sexual intercourse with his close female relatives. To prevent this, bachelors must move out altogether from the family house.

On the death of his wife a widower must leave the family house which he has shared with her, never to re-enter it. Two reasons for this are relevant here. Firstly, the widower is deeply angry because he believes that someone has killed his wife through sorcery. This kind of anger is termed *ofuenge* (which also implies humiliation and disgrace) as opposed to ordinary anger, *nguakupu*. The emotional state of *ofuenge* fills a man with so much venom and with so strong a desire for revenge, particularly if this state arises from the death of a loved close relative, that he aims single-mindedly to take a life. He is, therefore, a dangerous man who cannot continue to live in the family house where he might bring harm and destruction to his own family. A recent widower, especially if he is young, is *ofuenge* and therefore moves into a *ngove* either on his own or with other widowers and bachelors. Because of this deep anger and desire for revenge, villagers suspect widowers of being in league with sorcerers, and have thus become fearful and suspicious of them. Secondly, after a period of mourning and when they have had their revenge or have calmed down, widowers resort to love magic in order to secure wives and they therefore become potentially as disruptive as bachelors. Men other than widowers and bachelors may live temporarily in *ngove*; any man who is *ofuenge*, for example, because of the death of his father, brother or son, moves into a *ngove* until he has satisfaction or has calmed down.

Ngove are also buildings in which men fast in prepration for magic. While fasting a man must detach himself from the normal life of the village, especially with regard to food and women, in order to achieve the state of power or 'heat' *(isapu)* necessary for the successful performance of his magic. Men also go to the *ngove* to trade secrets, to teach spells and to tell powerful and sacred stories which they consider harmful if uttered within the hearing range of women and children.

Because of this association of *ngove* with marginal persons and with magic, anger and danger, owners site them not inside the village among the family houses but at the edge in the backyard. Females cannot enter the *ngove.*

There were twenty-six *ngove* in Beipa'a in 1970, two of which collapsed in the following year, and four new ones were built in 1972 and

1973.[5] Of these, sixteen stand clearly at the edge of the village, though the rest are inside. There are two reasons why some people have located their *ngove* inside the village. First, the old Catholic Mission station occupies the backyard area of a quarter of the village, depriving the people living there of backyards for disposal purposes and for building *ngove*. Nevertheless, the five *ngove* in this part of the village are still at the back of the residential strips of the owning families. Second, in the 1960s the local government councillors applied pressure on widowers and other male mourners to have their *ngove* built inside the village to discourage them from engaging in anti-social behaviour. For example, one Fopafo'ina man built a *ngove* on his backyard where he mourned his elder brother who was shot dead in the mid-1960s. Villagers, however, successfully persuaded him to shift the *ngove* to its present location inside (Map 2, building no. 107) where he would not be able to practise dangerous magic so close to his own nuclear family. However, the old habits and anxieties have remained so strong that since 1970 all new *ngove* have been constructed in the backyard.

Most *ngove* are smaller than family houses. The large and strongly built ones belong to chiefs, sorcerers, other hereditary office holders and lineage heads. In fact the most impressive dwelling in Mekeo is a *ngove* which belongs to a powerful sorcerer in Aipiana village. Photographs of *ngove* taken at the turn of this century show structures standing on very tall piles, some six metres, and one at least nine metres, above the ground. Seligmann commented: 'It seemed that the *ngove* of this extreme height were built to frustrate the effects of sorcery' (1910:335; see also Williamson 1914:114).

The fauapi

Mekeo consider the *fauapi* to be their most dangerous buildings. The *fauapi* are retreats-cum-workshops of sorcerers who have to leave the village in order to practise. In them are stored the stones of power and other ingredients of sorcery, things regarded as too dangerous to be kept anywhere in the village. No one visits a *fauapi* without the express permission of sorcerers, and ordinary people have to fast before they

5. Stephen (1974) shows in her plan of Inawi village that there were only four *ngove* at Inawi in 1971. She gave as one reason for the small number of these buildings the absence of most bachelors from the villages (1974:48).



IV *Ufu* of Aloaivea ward, 1970.

can safely venture even into the fenced area around it. Because *fauapi* are so dangerous sorcerers build them out in the bushland just behind the backyard or even further into the bush. There are no *fauapi* in Beipa'a today because the local sorcerers are not in the active state (Chapter 8). According to the villagers, there were *fauapi* belonging to their sorcerers in the 1950s, and Belshaw (1951:5) reported seeing one under construction when he visited the village. Belshaw correctly described the function of such a building, although he wrongly called it *ngove*.

The i'au

I'au are roofed, unwalled platforms built (adjacent to the family houses of the owners) by influential individuals, lineage heads or chiefs as informal gathering places for their relatives and friends. Although used largely by men, there are no rules against women entering them and members of both sexes sometimes relax together on platforms much as they do on the verandahs or lower levels of family houses. One index of the influence of particular individuals, or of descent groups, is the number of men (agnates, matrilateral relatives,

affines and assorted friends) who gather on their platforms and the frequency of these gatherings. Further, the extent of factionalism within a ward is often reflected in men's gathering on the platforms of their leaders and avoiding the common gathering place, *ufu*, where they are likely to meet their rivals.

The ufu

As the most important buildings in the society, the *ufu* are the centres of the social and ceremonial life of the wards. Mekeo hold all their major ceremonies, feasts and the formal meetings of their wards inside or on the ground in front of their *ufu*. It is also here that they hold the final stage of mourning for their dead agnates before burial. Villagers refer to it as the 'chief's house'; and indeed, no *ufu* can exist without a chief as its 'owner' and caretaker. When travellers from distant places pass through the village they can, without hindrance, enter any *ufu* for rest, even to spend the night in it. There they expect, and are expected, to be fed by the owning chief and his people. On several occasions I saw travellers from the mountainous Goilala country on their way to the coast to catch boats to Port Moresby enter any *ufu* in the village without asking and even spend the night there. In the precolonial past the *ufu* also functioned as the sanctuary where fugitives were given refuge by the chief who owned it. Once a fugitive entered the *ufu* he could not be harmed. The centrality and sanctity of the *ufu* can be seen in its location: it generally stands partly on the central ground.

Apart from its symbolism, the location of the *ufu* is important during ceremonial occasions and meetings because it enables the gathering to observe what is going on in other parts of the village. A strong chief attracts his own male agnates and cognates and friends from other groups to his *ufu*, and in this sense the building is also the clubhouse for the ward. Other influential men may build their gathering places, the platforms, but no public ceremony or formal meeting of the ward may be held in them. Although a weak or unpopular chief generally finds his *ufu* deserted as far as informal gatherings are concerned, it remains the centre for all important formal occasions of the ward.

Streets, roads and tracks

Villagers conduct their movements inside and outside their settlement along a well-defined system of streets, roads and tracks. Observation



V Back street at Alofopafo'ina section of Reipa'a village, 1970. Note the *ngove* at the backyard (right).

of these movements, and the statements by the people about the types of paths they take for specific purposes, give some insight into the organisation of the society. Within the village the 'main street' is the central ground. Traditional rules expressly forbid bachelors and widowers from walking on it during daylight except on ceremonial and other festive occasions when it is open to everyone. The central ground is the safest route for use at night, a point to which I return below. Most normal passage through the village is by way of back streets, *e'a ungunga* (literally, 'back of houses'), surrounding the village between family houses and the backyard. People who are over thirty report that when in their bachelor days they wished to visit a house on the other side of the central ground from theirs, even if it was directly opposite, they went right around the village along the back streets to get there. When I first arrived in Mekeo a young bachelor used to show me around or to accompany me on my visits to other villages. Not knowing the reasons for his behaviour, I was for some time puzzled by his insistence that we took the back streets

instead of the wider central grounds which provided better overall views.

Occasionally, especially when there are alarms about sorcerers being seen in the backyard, walking along back streets at night, particularly at midnight, can be risky. Villagers become fearful at such times and might mistake a traveller behind their houses for a sorcerer and assault him. Thus if a person walks through the village at night, he should walk in the middle on the central ground (using a torch) where sorcerers would not dare to walk so openly. The best precaution, which most villagers take, is simply not to walk around alone when people have gone to sleep. Mostly, except on special occasions such as traditional dancing when people stay up very late, and at weekends when men gamble with playing cards, the whole village sleeps by ten o'clock.

Around the village, except where the mission station stands, and along the boundary between the backyard and the bush are tracks known as *vaenga.* Mekeo regard these as sorcerers' thoroughfares, and generally avoid walking alone on them at night. Anyone wishing to conceal his movements uses these encircling tracks. For example, a recently widowed man should not be seen walking in the open on the central ground or even along the back streets until he has performed certain ritual acts. Society, therefore, relegates him to the *vaenga* and other inconspicuous bush tracks. Bachelors reputedly use these routes to spy on their girlfriends or other women and to court or accost them when they venture into the backyard.

In addition to these streets and tracks in and around the village, there are access roads to and from the settlement. These fall into three categories: main roads *(keafa'a)*; clan roads *(keanga)*; and private tracks *(inengea).* The main roads connect the settlements to each other from the ends of the central grounds. Strangers enter villages along the main roads and not from the sides, unless they are in the company of members of the villages concerned or have permission to do so. Such permission can be revoked at any time. The connection of the main roads to the central ground, the safest and most open part of the village, symbolises safe passage. Outsiders who try to enter the village from the sides at night run the risk of being pursued with arms, especially when inhabitants have just been warned of sorcerers attempting to enter their settlement.

The clan roads radiate from the sides of the village, connecting each ward with its bush and forest lands. Used largely by members of the

owning ward, each clan road is named after its ward. People use the roads of other wards on sufferance; and passage depends on good relations between local groups or between individuals. The private tracks, *inengea*, are passages that lead out from the back of residential strips into the backyards; they are very private and used largely by members of particular family groups when they go out for their toilet. (Mekeo also call *inengea* bush tracks used by hunters and by people who wish to take short-cuts in the bush or forests.) Young boys often hide along the *vaenga* and wait to confront girls coming along the *inengea* of their backyards. Parents are very sensitive about this and will abuse, assault or pursue any bachelor or young widower found loitering on or near these private tracks. At night people go out armed with machetes, prepared to attack anyone they find loitering in their backyards.

Boundaries

The question of boundaries concerns the integrity and defence of territories. Boundaries define particular areas claimed by groups and by individuals, and are therefore of great importance to the community. As far as the immediate surroundings of the village are concerned, boundaries encompass territories of varying magnitude, from those of a village as a whole to those of residential strips and house sites.

To begin with the most inclusive boundary; the external limit of the settlements as such is not so much the inner as the outer limits of the backyard. Since the forcible cessation of warfare, the main concern of village defence has been to prevent invasion by sorcerers and their assistants, by outside thieves, and by a category of indiscriminately malicious people known as *aupainao* or ambushers. In the recent past a good deal of the defence of the village rested in the hands of local sorcerers and widowers who lived in *ngove* in the backyard. When local sorcerers received intelligence information that outside sorcerers and their assistants were heading towards the village, they sent word to widowers to be alert and see that none broke through the backyard. In this sense the backyard is an intermediate zone which separates the main part of the village from the outside world. But since sickness and death occur in the village notwithstanding the supposed defence, people tend to suspect widowers and local sorcerers of being in collusion with outside malevolent agents. The local sorcerers and widowers may even be suspected of being the invaders themselves. This contri-

butes to their ambiguous position, and ultimately to their marginality. People did not entrust the defence of their village entirely to occupants of *ngove:* they themselves took precautionary measures. Several times during my fieldwork periods the local government councillors went along the central ground warning the people that sorcerers had been seen heading towards the village or had been detected already in the backyard, and that the villagers should attack them with weapons if they could in order to defend themselves and to drive the sorcerers away. The councillors also warned people that if they walked about in the village at night they should go in company and should use torches so that other villagers would not mistake them for sorcerers. Noticing my habit of returning home late at night, my friends advised me that if anyone challenged me from their houses at night I should stop and shine the torch into my face for identification. I should never run, they cautioned, because people would then take me for a sorcerer and attack.

As mentioned above, the main roads, *keafa'a*, connect Mekeo villages at the ends of the central ground, and strangers and other outsiders on visits do not enter from the sides.[6] Now the ends of some villages are occupied by sorcerer and warrior groups, as if for the purpose of cautioning outsiders not to act in a hostile manner towards the village. The north-eastern end of the main settlement of Beipa'a, which faces the former enemy villages of the Northern Ve'e tribe, is the residential section of the warrior group which is the premier war magic subclan (Fai'a) of the Pioufa tribe. The south-western end, which points in the general direction of the other main Pioufa villages of Aipiana and Inawi, is the homeground of the main sorcery group of Ongofo'ina. The currently defunct sorcery group of Aloaivea (the family of Apini A'oae) occupies that end of their settlement which faces Ongofo'ina. The same holds true of Aipiana about a third of a kilometre away. The inside end of that village belongs to a sorcerer family of the Meauni subclan, and the outside extremity which points

6. Because of the way that the new public (government) roads have been routed, the entrance into two villages, Aipiana and Rarai, has been modified, that is from the side. However, even here, the traditional entrance rule still holds so that people have a choice of entering the village from the side or from the ends. Once I was led into Rarai by a man who took me not along the shorter public route but along a slightly longer one that took us to the end of the village from which we entered. He said that that was the correct route to Rarai.

to lands of former enemy villages of the Bereina and Waima tribes is the territory of the once powerful warrior group, Iso, whose leader helped MacGregor to establish British authority in Mekeo. Although I am not certain about Inawi, some people told me that the end of the village facing Aipiana and Beipa'a is the territory of a sorcery family. This kind of arrangement is important because in the precolonial past people fought external enemies in the open with spears, while they dealt with their internal rivals and opponents through sorcery because open warfare was proscribed within the tribe. Thus in the defence arrangement of their territories, Mekeo used the secret weapon of sorcery against friendly fellow-tribal villages, and confronted other and potentially enemy tribes with warfare. The principle seems to be this: kill your foes with spears, but if you have to eliminate your relatives and friends, do it discreetly with mystical weapons.

Within the inclusive limits of the village as a whole are ward boundaries which demarcate the residential territories of the various local groups. Villagers emphasise harmonious coexistence. This in no way means an absence of competition and conflict; but people try consciously to limit conflict to verbal exchanges, albeit frequent ones. One important way of achieving this is to prevent quarrelling parties from crossing each other's boundaries. It is thus significant that in the Ongofo'ina settlement, boundaries between the wards are adjacent to residential strips of civilian chiefs, the traditional peacemakers. Houses of some, although not all, chiefs are located on every boundary. And should a threat of violation of boundary conventions by disputing parties of different wards arise, the chiefs should be at hand to keep tempers down. When people of various wards gather at a place and an argument or a quarrel breaks out, one often hears members of the host ward telling others: *'Komo, oi inae emi iva laa'i'*, which means 'Be quiet, you have no say here'.

Within each ward are internal boundaries of residential strips and of house sites. The accepted view is that ward members are brothers and should not quarrel; but since it is within the ward that social obligations and relations are at their most intense and competition for scarce resources, especially land, is keenest, people quarrel frequently, particularly the women. As long as accusations are not very grave and as long as no one enters an opponent's territory, villagers do not regard such quarrels *(lo'u)* as serious. The physical fights that I saw were between women, and these occurred invariably when an excited

woman went under her opponent's house or tried to climb up its ladder. As long as disputants shouted at each other from their own houses there was no physical violence. In fact, such quarrels, usually conducted with gusto and great eloquence, provide entertainment for the neighbourhood. People cease talking and advise their noisy children to be quiet so that they will not miss any lurid detail of their neighbours' personal lives revealed in such colourful language.

Among classificatory agnatic brothers, the reasonable person who has complaints should not rant and rave *(anganga)* but should air his grievance quietly with dignity. Commonly, at about half-past-four or five o'clock in the morning while the village is still, people are woken up by the sound of a calm voice. Standing on the front of his family's residential strip, and prompted from behind by his supporters, the complainant presents his case with reasoned argument. When he finishes he stands there and waits for a reply. The person or spokesman for the group addressed then emerges and, standing within his boundary, delivers his reply in the same manner. A debate ensues, sometimes calmly, and sometimes deteriorating into a shouting match; but always, throughout my period of fieldwork, the men strictly observed the boundary conventions.[7] Occasionally a man was overcome with emotions and rushed about shouting and gesticulating, but he kept within his own ground or on neutral territory and his supporters saw to it that he did not overstep the boundary. As mentioned above, actual physical violence in Beipa'a occurred mostly among women and always when they violated the boundary conventions. On such occasions the husbands and sons of the women concerned confined themselves to their own houses or platforms and kept quiet until the fights were stopped by mediators.

Parents inculcate the sense of territoriality into their children from a very early age. As soon as children start to walk their elder relatives instruct them to play close to their houses or to those of close relatives, not to wander off unaccompanied, and not to go to certain spots within the village, especially places which belong to sorcerers and other powerful magicians. By about the age of four children already know precisely the safe territory: either that of their residential strips when pursued by other children, or their own house sites when chased by

7. People hold debates of this kind at times other than at dawn. They conduct them at night after about eight o'clock when villagers have eaten and children are quieter.

their fathers' brothers' children. It is not uncommon to see a child run home crying at the top of his voice, and as soon as he crosses his home boundary stop, turn around and abuse his pursuers. They in turn normally stop at a safe distance, muttering darkly and throwing things, before retreating. Occasionally, when the child's parents are not at home, his pursuers cross the boundary and hit him, then run away as fast as they can, but this invasion is limited to younger children.

Finally, we should consider the strength of boundaries. The degree of impregnability of a particular territory, be it a house, a residential strip, a village or bushland, depends to a large extent on its owner's reputation for mystical powers, especially sorcery. The village of Eboa is generally out of bounds for most unrelated outsiders; and those Pioufa and other villagers I talked to said that it is the village to avoid. People fear Eboa because it has the reputation for habouring the strongest and most dangerous sorcerers in Mekeo. Once I went on a truck to this village with a large group of Beipa'a men, led by a number of chiefs. As we approached it the hitherto laughing and talkative men became quiet and looked apprehensive. Although our hosts treated us with magnificent hospitality, the men never really relaxed and on returning home several of them said that as soon as we entered Eboa they felt the overpowering presence of sorcery. Within Beipa'a the boundaries of magicians, sorcerers and chiefs are normally stronger than those of others. The territory of one particular lineage seemed to be immune to theft because members have the reputation for possessing the very dangerous protective magic, *okafu* (python). It also has other protective magical powers. Not only is the village property of this lineage relatively safe from theft, but so also are its areca palms, coconuts and gardens in the bush.[8]

Space and Mekeo culture

The foregoing descriptive account of spatial arrangements concentrated on an aspect of what E.T. Hall calls 'fixed feature space', or 'macro-space' in Michael Watson's terminology. Hall wrote (1966:97) that 'fixed feature space is one of the ways of organising the activities of individuals and groups. It includes material manifestations as well

8. A member of this group is married to the sister of a friend of mine. The latter told me that he does not visit his brother-in-law's place because he is afraid of the 'bad' powers his in-laws have.

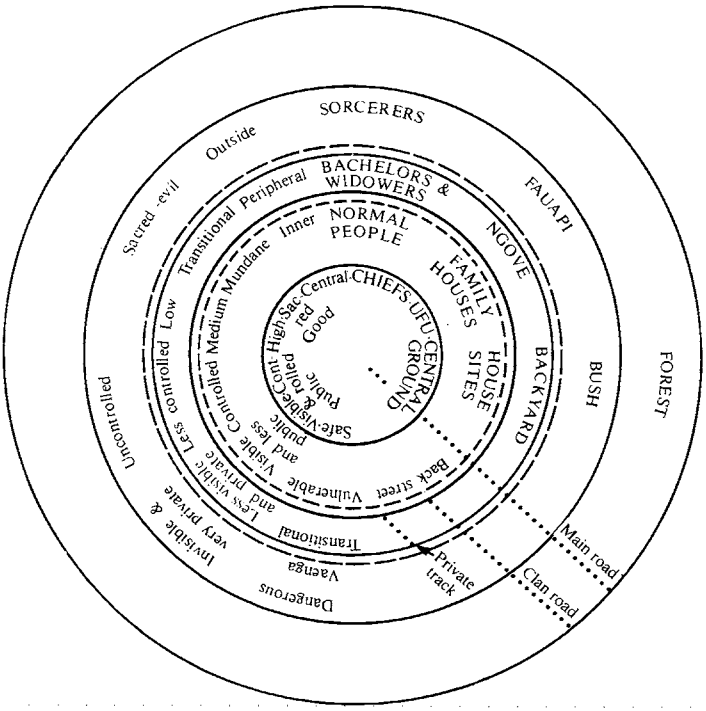


Fig. 3 A model of space and society

as the hidden, internalised designs that govern behaviour as man moves about on this earth. Buildings are one expression of fixed feature patterns, but buildings are also grouped together in characteristic ways as well as being divided internally according to culturally determined designs. The layout of villages, towns, cities, and the intervening countryside is not haphazard but follows a plan which changes with time and culture.' Lévi-Strauss (1963:137) saw in the internal organisation of a Trobriand village as described by Malinowski (1929) a complex system of structural 'oppositions between sacred and profane, raw and cooked, celibacy and marriage, male and female, central and peripheral'. In discussing the same Trobriand material Keesing and Keesing (1971:208) noted that the 'Trobriand Islanders... usefully illustrate the structure of local communities in a tribal society

and the way this can articulate with the social and cosmological order of a people'. The authors (1971:212) also gave an illustrated description of how the Kwaio of Malaita have 'mapped onto' the layout of their tiny settlements their ideas about sacredness and pollution.

As has been suggested in the description of village layout and people's movement within it, the progression of distinct zones from the central ground to bushland expresses several continua which are basic to Mekeo social, symbolic and cosmological orders. The Mekeo model of space is presented diagramatically in Figure 3. The various continua, moving outward from the central ground, may be defined as:

central	inner	peripheral	outside
sacred-good	mundane	transitional	sacred-evil
high	medium	low	
controlled	controlled	less controlled	uncontrolled
visible and public	visible and less public	less visible and more private	invisible and very private
safe	vulnerable	transitional	dangerous

The first continuum is the basic one to which all the others connect individually. When we relate these continua to the spatial arrangements of the villages, especially the large ones, we can see that the people have organised their buildings, their paths of movement and their boundaries in accordance with certain cultural and cosmological principles.

Sacred-good to sacred-evil

A non-Mekeo counterpart of this first continuum is the Christian one: from the Kingdom of God through the World of Man to the Devil's Domain. Both God and Devil are sacred beings, one good and the other evil. We have noted that the central ground, 'the womb of the land', is the centre of all the village lands, the religious and ceremonial area, and was formerly the burial ground. It constitutes the sacred-good part of the land. The house sites mark the beginning of the mundane, secular world where normal everyday events take place; no public ritual or ceremony is held here. The backyard is an even more mundane area where people consign domestic refuse and human excreta. It is also the transitional or blurred marginal zone between the inner and the outer worlds, between the village and the bush, culture and nature, good and evil.

Concerning the buildings, the *ufu* is the most important construction and its importance is expressed in its position, forefront among the buildings and partly on the central ground. It is a sacred house: Chalmers, the pioneering London Missionary Society missionary, characterised its equivalents, the *marea* in Roro and the *eravo* in the Gulf District, as 'temples' (1887). The sanctity of the central ground and the *ufu* became evident to me on two occasions. At a ceremony at Imounga village, celebrating the opening of a new *ufu* and the installation of new chiefs, the pigs for the feast were first tied to the posts under the *ufu* and then taken to the central ground directly in front. There, a young chief slaughtered them ceremonially. It occurred to me during the occasion that the ritual slaughter is a sacrificial offering: the blood of the animals seeps through the ground to the remains of agnatic ancestors buried there. The other event concerned the installation in 1970 of Bishop Vangeke as a chief. For this purpose the people of Beipa'a erected a special temporary *ufu* entirely in the middle of their village central ground.

Slightly behind the *ufu* range the family houses, where normal people live, procreate and die. They are the mundane, secular buildings. The backyard position of the *ngove* symbolises its marginality as a building. The *ngove* is mundane in that it is a sleeping and eating place for bachelors and widowers, but it also harbours people who are suspected of anti-social behaviour. The *fauapi* is the sacred-evil building, and its outside location expresses its diametrical difference from the *ufu*.

The positions of streets and tracks in and around the village can also be placed along the same continuum. People do not normally use the central ground as a street in the daytime and marginal categories of men are expressly banned from it in daylight except on festive occasions. Most daily passage (a mundane activity) is by way of back streets behind family houses and near the edge of the village. Outcasts (especially new widowers and activated sorcerers) and those bent on morally reprehensible deeds use the *vaenga* appropriately located along the outer limits of the backyards. Public announcements by chiefs and councillors, and the special procession, *pealai e pea*, by chiefs on their way to a big ceremonial, are conducted along the central ground. Those who wish to conceal their intentions walk secretly along the *vaenga*.

High to low, front to back, and right to left

The second continuum is the social ranking line. As noted, the positions of buildings from the central ground to the backyard indicate ranking of heads of domestic groups. Mekeo society stresses the importance of seniority by birth, particularly for men. The eldest born, *fa'aniau aunga*, is the senior male of his family, and if he is the eldest son of an eldest son and so forth, then he is the head of a lineage; and by a series of similar genealogical extensions the head chief of a subclan is the subclan's most senior male. Within each lineage or family group the eldest brother's house is in front, closest to the central ground; younger siblings build their houses either behind or to the left of their eldest brother's and strictly in accordance with their order of birth. Chiefs, the highest ranking men in the society, are associated with the central ground and the *ufu*; the ordinary married men live behind on the house sites; and the marginal people occupy the backyard.

There is also ranking in terms of marital status: men with wives live inside the village and enjoy full civil rights; those without wives reside in the backyard in *ngove* and do not enjoy privileges accruing to the married. The lowest ranking male in the society is the permanent bachelor *(ongo):* a man of no consequence, he lives in the *ngove* until he dies. Buildings, streets and tracks can also be ranked: the *ufu*, as the most important building, stands in the centre; the family houses and platforms generally stand behind the *ufu*, indicating their lower ranking; and the *ngove* are at the back.

In spite of this ranking of people, the picture is reversed in terms of *de facto* power, as we shall see in later chapters. For the moment it suffices to note that the outside and the periphery are associated with powers more potent than those found inside the village, and those, like practising sorcerers, who have to live outside possess greater powers than people inside, including even the chiefs. Although the *ufu* is the central and the most important building, the sorcerers' retreats contain mystical powers with greater potency. Similarly, juniors often challenge and even dominate their seniors.

Controlled to uncontrolled

The main part of the the village is the domain of the chief whose greatest area of control is the central ground and the *ufu*. Once inside the *ufu*, for example, people's behaviour is ideally under strict control of their chiefs. They should not quarrel, behave offensively towards

their chiefs, or inflict injuries on others. On several occasions I saw ordinary men paying money to chiefs immediately after they had quarrelled inside *ufu*; and three times between 1969 and 1973 Beipa'a individuals paid a pig each for fighting others or for insulting chiefs in the *ufu*. In these instances the chiefs banned the offenders from the building until they had paid the heavy fine. Nevertheless, a quarrel in the *ufu* usually gladdens people for they know that they will have good meat to eat at the expense of the offenders. Two events which occurred while I was in the field illustrate this point. There is a man in Beipa'a well known for his hot temper. One day he scolded two chiefs during a meeting. His fellow-wardsmen told me gleefully that they went in turn to the offender, commiserated with him, but hinted indirectly that he had to do something, like looking for a pig, soon. Under this subtle pressure, the offender killed a pig, cooked it, and sent the meat to the *ufu*. Not long after this the same fellow shouted again at the same two chiefs plus a third in the same *ufu*. The pressure was again applied to him and he cooked some food, including meat, which his wife took to the *ufu* together with three plucked chickens. His wardsmen gloated that he is bound to offend again.

Within the village people's movements and behaviour can be controlled relatively easily by chiefs and by each other; movements along the *vaenga* and the bush cannot be controlled with similar ease. Occupants of the *ngove* in the transitional area are less constrained than those inside the village, and sorcerers in the active state (Chapter 8) who live outside in the bush move practically unhampered by any form of control from within.

This lack of control explains in part the general disapproval of people living permanently in the bush. Villagers often suspect the man who lives outside of practising sorcery and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Several men told me that they had planned to shift residence and live on their garden lands in order to be free from the constrictions and tensions of village life. But so far they have not taken the step. Other people discourage such moves not only for the reason given above, but also because living alone or in a small group in the bush entails the risk of becoming an easy victim of sorcery attacks. Thus we can see that the area outside the control of chiefs and fellow-villagers is one of both freedom and danger; and Mekeo, by and large, have foregone the option of freedom outside for the security offered by their communities. Most of the few families who have mustered suf-

ficient courage to move out permanently from their villages have shifted not into the isolation of the bush but to the sides of the much frequented main roads, especially the ones leading to the township of Bereina. Nowadays, of course, emigration into urban areas has opened up a new alternative for escape, but my concern is with those who are resident in their traditional communities. Moreover, to emigrate to the towns is to move right out of the traditional society, which means that emigrants are too far away to have any meaningful impact on the everyday life of their villages.

Finally, a custom relating to the domestication of pigs expresses vividly the association of inside with control. If a domestic pig tends to wander long distances into the bush and for lengthy periods, or if a wild piglet is brought into the village to be tamed, the owner goes to the *ufu* (centre) and obtains some scrapings from the central post, *lopia opoongo*, which he mixes with food and feeds to the pig. That pig, Mekeo believe, will forever cease wandering and become totally village-bound. It will be tame and harmless, the exact opposite of the ferocious, free-ranging wild boar.

Visible and public to invisible and private

The central ground and the *ufu* are the most visible places where all major public activities are held. One of the reasons why people do not normally walk along the central ground in the daytime is that it is too public; by such action they feel uncomfortably exposed to public scrutiny and to potentially derogatory comments. Instead, they normally use the back streets where they feel less conspicuous. The *inengea* and the *vaenga* are much less visible routes and more private than the back streets; the *inengea* are tracks for going to the toilet which is very personal and private, and those who wish to conceal their movement tread the *vaenga*. The *ufu* is the most visible and public building which anyone, even complete strangers, can enter. Family houses are private but the verandahs or the open lower levels of these dwellings, like the platforms, are exposed to public view. Because of their backyard location, *ngove* are less visible than the family houses. The most private buildings of all are the *fauapi* which stand out of sight in the bush. The centre, then, is associated with the visible and the public; the periphery, the backyard, with less visibility and more privacy; and the outside (the bush) with invisibility and secrecy. The centre is the domain of the chief who represents visible public authority, and the

bush surrounding the village is the domain of the practising sorcerer who represents unseen and dangerous mystical powers.

Safe to dangerous

The central ground is the safest part of the village; the belt of house sites, where the most vulnerable members of the society (women and children) live, is both safe and risky. Being in the transitional zone, the backyard is even more hazardous, for it is where sorcerers break into the village, where young girls may lose their honour and where people are most exposed to attacks while they squat and defaecate. The regions beyond the backyard constitute the external and the unknown world. These are areas where active sorcerers and their henchmen live and roam in search of victims, and where a variety of dangerous spirits can be encountered.

As a street, the central ground is the safest route to take at night; the back street is safe in the daytime but can be dangerous after dark; and the *vaenga* is the most dangerous track where sorcerers, ambushers, thieves and seducers of girls and women lurk.

The *ufu* is the safest place, where men who are suspicious of one another can converse and can share food with little fear of being poisoned or molested in any other way. It is also where travelling strangers rest and where fugitives can find sanctuary. Family houses are both safe and weak spots where normal and relatively powerless people reside. Dangerous magical elements are not stored in them, and since they harbour the most vulnerable members of the society, suspect and potentially dangerous males cannot live in them. Family houses are favourite targets for mystical attacks. In the past people designed them as fortifications against prowling sorcerers. Even today, when a person is sick inside the family house his or her relatives stay up all night, sitting under the house to guard it against sorcerers or their assistants who, they believe, are waiting in the dark for an opportunity to deliver the final blow. *Ngove* are potentially dangerous buildings because of their association with widowers, with those who are *ofuenge*, with sorcerers in semi-active states, and with the sexually threatening bachelors. And because of their location in the backyard their owners, in the past, constructed them on very high piles of up to ten metres to protect the occupants from sorcerers. *Fauapi* are the most dangerous buildings of all.

The foregoing analysis shows that spatial arrangements in Mekeo

settlements are not haphazard but follow a culturally determined plan which neatly projects onto space the people's conceptions of themselves, their society and their relationships with the world beyond the boundaries of their villages. Mekeo have expressed through the arrangement of their surrounding environment their ideas about order in society, and their collective experiences of the uncertainties of human existence. In his book *Structural Anthropology* Lévi-Strauss decried the lack of anthropological interest in correlating the 'spatial configurations with the formal properties of other aspects of social life' (1963: 291). He found the situation regrettable 'since in many parts of the world there is an obvious relationship between the social structure and the spatial structure of settlements, villages or camps' (1963:290). But as he noted, while there are many societies where such relationships are very difficult to perceive, among others they are evident although not clearly defined, and 'in a third group spatial configuration seems to be almost a projective representation of the social structure' (1963:292). My analysis of Mekeo spatial arrangement shows a close relationship between space and certain crucial aspects of social structure and social relations. The rest of this study concentrates largely on these aspects, which the present chapter has introduced by way of their 'objective and crystallised external projections'. In the final chapter I shall resume the discussion of space, relating it to Mary Douglas's notions of boundaries and of the human body as an image of society.

4. Love and hate between brothers

There is a myth which relates the origin of the often destructive disputes between kinsmen that have long plagued Mekeo society. The story refers to the origin of *pikupa*, one of the most commonly used abusive words which participants in quarrels hurl at each other. *Pikupa* means both envy and jealousy; it also refers to actions which are culturally defined as manifestations of either envy or jealousy. *Pikupa*, so Mekeo believe, underlies most secret attacks through destructive magic.

The particular myth I refer to has been related to me a number of times, and the circumstances under which one such narration occurred reveal a significant aspect of the social life of the people. I was talking casually with a Beipa'a chief late one afternoon when the conversation drifted to the main subject of talk in the village at the time: a series of verbal confrontations in a dispute that had been going on for a number of years between two agnatically related family groups. The leaders of the opposing sides were not only agnatic classificatory brothers, they were also closely tied by virtue of their mothers being real sisters. This intimate matrilateral connection made them 'real' brothers in the eyes of everyone including themselves. During my conversation with the chief he stressed this fact, saying that brothers, particularly real ones, should not quarrel, and if they do they should try to settle it quickly and amicably. Then in a grave tone he confided that this particular *pikupa* happened a long time ago between A'aisa, the old deity, and his younger brother, Isapini. The clear implication of the chief's statement is that people cannot help having *pikupa* among themselves, especially among close kinsmen, because of the bad example set by their deity. The chief then told me the story which follows.

A'aisa and his younger brother

A'aisa and Isapini lived in their respective homes on two neighbouring hills. Each had an only son: A'aisa named his after his younger brother, and Isapini named his son A'aisa.

One day Isapini visited his brother and on his arrival A'aisa was sitting on his platform in the form of a very small child. On seeing him Isapini thought that the child was his nephew, his namesake. He spoke to him thus, 'Child, where are your parents?' A'aisa replied, 'They went to the garden.' 'Go and tell them that I'm here,' Isapini demanded. A'aisa's face betrayed nothing of the seething anger he felt because of his younger brother's failure to recognise him. *Pikupa* thus came into existence. A'aisa entered his house and carefully wrapped his insignia of chieftainship which he took to the garden where he told his wife about Isapini's visit. He then donned his regalia (a boar's tusk necklace, a special string bag and a special lime gourd) and led his wife back to the settlement; he did not, however, change his child-like form. When Isapini saw them coming he realised that he had made a mistake by not recognising his elder brother in the first place, and felt badly about it. A'aisa behaved as if nothing had gone wrong and although he was still seething he played the perfect host and feted his brother for the duration of his stay.

On the day of Isapini's departure, A'aisa told his people to catch the special pig that he had raised which he presented to his brother as a parting gift. He told his wife to lead the carriers and escort Isapini home, to return immediately at the conclusion of the mission, and especially not to stay away overnight. On arrival home Isapini invited the escort, including A'aisa's wife, to rest and spend the night as his guests, and then return on the following morning. The invitation was accepted, and Isapini fed his guests that evening before they retired. On the following morning he feasted them again, and instructed his people to catch the special pig that he had raised. It so happened that this pig was, in every characteristic, exactly the same as the one that A'aisa had given him on the previous day. It even had the same name. He presented this pig to A'aisa's wife as a return gift for his brother.

When his wife arrived home, A'aisa greeted her angrily and abused her for disobeying his instructions. He went as far as accusing her of sleeping with Isapini. He was so upset that he would not listen to his wife's protestation of innocence and fidelity. When he saw the pig that Isapini he sent him, A'aisa delcared that his younger brother had not only slept with his wife but had also rejected his gift by returning the very pig that he had given him. When others argued on Isapini's behalf, A'aisa proved to himself that he was right by calling the pig by the name he gave his and it responded to the name.

A'aisa was so outraged that he decided to take action against his brother. He used his sorcery, causing his brother's son, his namesake, to be bitten by a poisonous snake. Isapini rushed to his brother begging for medicine to heal his son; A'aisa complied but the child died before his father reached home. Isapini went into mourning seclusion and decided to take vengeance. He deployed his own brand of sorcery which caused A'aisa's son to become violently ill. A'aisa rushed to Isapini, begging for medicine, but his son died while he was on his way home.

Because of what had transpired the brothers left their respective homes. A'aisa went westward and eventually settled at a place (Kaliko) in the territory of the Lokou (the Toaripi) people; Isapini went eastward to Kofio, the high mountains. On his journey towards Kaliko, A'aisa carried the remains of his son, crying:

Isapini ooo, Isapini ooo,	Isapini ooo, Isapini ooo,
ngope kapa fa ngope?	which fast shall I take?
Isoiso ngopenga fa ngope.	the fast of Isoiso it shall be.

I said at the beginning that the chief who told me the story implied that people have *pikupa* because of the bad example set by their deity. What this amounts to is a Mekeo statement on the nature of man, specifically that man is prone to envy and jealousy; and the reason for this is to be gleaned from the meaning of the myth. At a literal level, the myth is about misunderstanding and its consequences. Isapini mistakes A'aisa for someone else, being deceived by the latter's appearance, and addresses him by the term 'child'. A'aisa takes offence, thinking that Isapini could not or should not have misidentified him. Isapini does not know of his elder brother's jealousy so he invites his wife to spend the night at his place. A'aisa misunderstands Isapini and believes that Isapini has slept with his wife. A'aisa mistakes Isapini's return gift, believing it to be a rejection of what he himself gave. As a result of these misunderstandings A'aisa kills Isapini's son which leads to a retaliatory killing, and ultimately to permanent separation.

The full meaning of the chief's assertion is that people are prone to envy and jealousy because they do not really know each other's expectations and motives and therefore tend to misconstrue other people's actions.

Equally important are the implications of the myth and what it leaves unsaid, that is, the underlying assumptions about the nature of

the society and polity. The theme of the story is quite clear. But the myth is firmly grounded in Mekeo culture and society, and the kinds of situations in which misunderstandings and *pikupa* arise can be comprehended fully only in terms of their particular cultural and social context. Again, the story line of the myth is so structured that what it implies and what it assumes are arranged neatly and logically. These implications and assumptions form a story of descent group formation and dissolution. I relate this as follows.

Two brothers have problems regarding fraternal relationships. Residential proximity fosters close identity between them: they live on neighbouring hills within easy access of each other. They express their mutual affection through each naming his only son after the other. This naming is also a reminder of each other when dealing with their sons, and is an act of establishing identity, agnatic continuity and solidarity between generations and between incipient lineages.

But beneath this close identity and solidarity are two related countervailing factors. First, built into Mekeo fraternal relationships is a structured inequality between the elder and the younger brothers which gives precedence and institutionalised superiority and dominance to the elder. The elder brother is, by rule, the head irrespective of ability. Second, and in reaction to the imposed inequality, the younger brother resists by living on a hill like his elder brother and not on the plain, a lower position appropriate to his inferior status. I have said in the previous chapter that elder brothers have precedence in the locations of their houses, in front or on the right in relation to those of their younger brothers; and that chiefs, who are in the context of their subclans the most senior brothers, have larger houses with added privileges. In the myth the younger brother also asserts his independence by rivalling his senior sibling in raising pigs, and giving them the same names.

The underlying tensions surface when the elder brother takes exception to his younger brother's failure to recognise him. Worse, the latter addresses him specifically by the term 'child' and commands him to go on an errand. To be treated thus is a sign of disrespect and an insult, a cause of humiliation to the proud Mekeo men.

The elder brother must, however, deal with the threat to his position and to the traditional order; he deals with this not through physical coercion, which is disruptive of fraternal amity, but by recourse to traditionally sanctioned practice. He wears and displays his chiefly

regalia. He goes out of the settlement to do this. He could have done it easily in the house; but as shown in the previous chapter, the house *(e'a)* is in the vulnerable world, the world of relative powerlessness. He retreats to the bush, the location of great powers, and then dramatically emerges in full regalia, a demonstration of official superior status backed by supernatural force. Confronted by this, the younger brother gives due recognition and acknowledgment. Institutionalised order prevails for the moment, and on the surface the brothers resume their harmonious relationship.

The problem, however, is only temporarily resolved, for the inherent ambiguities and ambivalences, fraught with misunderstandings, still remain. At the parting the elder gives his younger brother a treasured pig. On one hand this is a show of affection and love for the younger brother (a point which senior men in Beipa'a often make to their junior relatives) and perhaps a token of reconciliation. On the other hand, the gift could have been given in tacit recognition that there is already a rift and that the younger brother has achieved a certain degree of autonomy and independence. Mekeo normally give large pigs in delayed exchanges between independent individuals or groups, whether in feasts or in bride-price exchanges. The growing rift between the siblings is further evident in the elder brother's not trusting the younger with his wife. The elder fears that the fraternal rift is so wide that the younger would not hesitate to commit adultery with his elder brother's wife, and may even kill him and then by right of levirate inherit her.

The younger brother reciprocates the elder's hospitality by feasting the escort. This is a normal practice and is within the range of genuine expressions of fraternal affection. Unaware of the lack of trust on the part of his elder brother, he invites his brother's wife to spend the night at his place. Her acceptance of the invitation precipitates one explosion. Moreover, he also gives his brother a counter-gift which is the exact equivalent of the original gift. This is the ultimate miscalculation and is the cause of the final misunderstanding which leads to the complete rift. The younger brother would not give a smaller gift, which would be an admission that he is still prepared to maintain his inferior position. He would not give a larger gift, which would put him above his brother: he is still the junior in the relationship. He gives instead an equivalent counter-gift which should equalise the situation.

The wife's disobedience provides an opportunity for the elder

brother to vent his pent-up feelings. He openly attacks her for disloyalty and infidelity, but in reality he is implicitly accusing his younger brother through an outsider, the in-marrying woman. This is stage one of open conflict: redirection of aggression towards outsiders, a common Mekeo tactic. The appearance of the pig provides the impetus to accuse directly. He thinks that it is the same pig that he gave his younger brother, and accuses him of returning the gift, of rejecting their fraternal relationship. In the system of gift-giving a smaller or larger counter-gift would still maintain a particular exchange relationship. An equivalent gift negates the debt and terminates the relationship. In Mekeo feast exchanges, the feast givers generally assert that they have given more than they have received from their partners. The recipients, on the other hand, generally argue that they have received less than they gave. It is in fact a kind of disagreement which is structurally necessary for the continuation of the exchange relationship between two groups.

Open verbal aggression leads not to fights, which are too disruptive and go against the rule of amity, but to actions and counter-actions taken secretly through sorcery. Even then, the brothers appeal to each other to cure their namesakes, that is, they invoke their close kinship ties to heal the rift. It is too late. The outcome of the tragic conflict is severed relationship and emigration. The brothers go in opposite directions, signifying complete separation, and they emigrate right out of their Mekeo homeland for more favourable climates elsewhere.

The story begins with the brothers living harmoniously and in close proximity. In the end misunderstanding, rivalry and hostility overcome close identity culminating in the killing of their nephews, their namesakes. This is symbolic of the fact that fraternal strife, if unchecked, is self-destructive. The elder brother recognises this, for on his departure he carries the bones of his son, crying, 'Isapini ooo, Isapini ooo, . . .' It is a lament not only for his son, but also for his younger brother, and for the loss of the family life they had together.

The story related in the preceding pages is not the overt narrative of the myth itself, but is derived from the form and content of the myth and from what it leaves unsaid. It reflects other contradictions, ambivalences and uncertainties in social life, specifically those concerning relations among agnatic kinsmen. Underlying the relations of shared genuine affection and mutual support between those with close kinship ties are, in Meyer Fortes's words, 'rivalries and latent hostilities that

are intrinsically built into the relationships as are the externally oriented amity and solidarity they present' (1969:237).[1] To this may be added misunderstandings (of great significance in the myth) which arise from the fact that people do not really know each other; and, in the contexts of ambivalent relationships and ambiguous situations this is particularly true. Not knowing what others think and feel leads people to become suspicious, which predisposes them to attach evil motives to the behaviour of others.

The myth refers to three important aspects of agnatic relations within a subclan: those between individual agnates, which, from a sociological point of view, are the basic relations; those between agnatic groups; and third, those between chiefs and their people. The rest of this chapter deals with the first aspect and part of the second, leaving the third for later chapters where chieftainship is discussed in detail. It must be stated at the outset that the myth does not touch on all details of agnatic relations. Rather, it reveals some of the fundamental cleavages which affect the nature of the operation of the Mekeo socio-political system. In the discussion of agnatic, intra-subclan relations at individual and group levels, therefore, other details not explicitly referred to in the story will be considered.

Together and apart

The first point to be dealt with concerns problems of living closely together. The reference at the beginning of the myth to the super-natural brothers living on neighbouring hills is a reflection of the norm and practice of patrilocal residence. Using relevant material collected in Beipa'a, I shall demonstrate first, that Mekeo local groups are agnatic clusters with a high degree of adherence to the rule of patrilocal

1. On the problem of understanding ambivalence in kinship relationships Freeman wrote (1974:117): 'If one proceeds from the assumption that kinship bonds are the expression of a moral and jural order the circumstance that they are so often characterised by both enmity and amity remains a paradox. The problem dissolves, however, as soon as kinship bonds are, in addition, approached in behavioural terms and analysed ontogenetically. It is then seen that the ambivalence which is so integral to the primary bond between child and mother tends to be transferred, in some degree, to all of the subsequent relationships into which an individual enters, and that, on this basis, each new relationship comes to develop, in the course of further interaction, its own ambivalent character. When such a behavioural approach is made it becomes possible to comprehend the simultaneous presence in kinship bonds of love and hate, and to discern that one of the functions of "the rule of amity" among kinsfolk is the containing of ambivalence within manageable bounds.'

residence; and second, that domestic groups consist mostly of close agnates and that there is a strong preference for nuclear family domestic groups. Following this I shall discuss the undesirability of living apart from one's agnates, and then outline some of the ways which villagers use to deal with the problems of living closely together. One of these ways is a factor for the well-known strong control of Mekeo men over their physical deportment. My main argument in this section is that there is a significant connection between the individual's physical and verbal restraint and the various social groupings, strictly exclusive on the basis of agnation, from the intimate nuclear family domestic group to the village as a whole. The organisation of physical space as outlined in the previous chapter and the orderly spatial distribution of people in the village are directly concerned with the issues of security and protection. A detailed exposition of residence and domestic grouping in Beipa'a is provided in Appendix 7.

The basic rule of residence is patrilocal; if put into practice and combined with the application of the ideology of patrilineal descent and inheritance, this rule means that male agnates live together, thus ensuring the continuity of agnatic groups as the basic co-operative, security, and landholding units. In Beipa'a in 1971, the very high proportion (95 per cent) of males over sixteen years of age who lived in

Table 5 Residence of Beipa'a males sixteen years of age and above, 1971*

Mode of residence	Bachelors	Married men	Widowers	Total	%
Patrilocal	31	104	12	147	95
Matrilocal	—	2	—	2	1
Uxorilocal	—	1	1	2	1
Neolocal	1	2	—	3	2
Total	32	109	13	154	99

*Only those in permanent residence in the village at the time of census taking are included. See Appendix 2.

patrilocal residence (Table 5), indicates how close reality is to the ideal. Moreover, of the 116 married men and widowers, that is, heads of nuclear families, living in their respective wards, 110 (96 per cent) lived among their closest agnates.[2]

When we move our attention from residence to the composition of domestic groups we find a similar pattern. Mekeo domestic groups do not necessarily coincide with household groups since in many cases (in Beipa'a, for example, in 22 per cent of the total number of domestic groups) members do not all live in the same house. The minimum definition of a domestic group in Mekeo is that it is a social unit composed of people who take most of their meals from the same hearth located in the family house, the *e'a*, of the head of the group. The ideals associated with the composition of domestic units are as follows.

First, the pattern most generally considered desirable is that the group should consist only of a married man, his wife, and their unmarried children. Table 6 shows that the majority (56 per cent) of all domestic units comprised nuclear families without accretion. This was consistent with the local preference for small intimate grouping.[3] In a society where surface privacy is difficult to maintain, where 'intensive sociability' and inequality of status and power affect a large part of a man's daily life, and where fear of envy and sorcery by others including relatives is strong and ever-present, the nuclear family domestic group not only enables a man to exercise unquestioned authority, which in turn gives him a sense of importance, but it also provides a small intimate group within which he feels most safe and secure.

Second, one of the married sons, ideally the eldest, should remain after marriage in the domestic group of his parents to look after them especially in their old age, and also to care for any of his unmarried siblings. Table 7 shows that when both parents are alive the married son who lives with them is generally the eldest son. Almost all widowed fathers lived with their eldest sons. The equal distribution of widowed mothers among eldest and younger sons indicates the agnatic bias in the eldest son's responsibility to his parents. The distribution of widows, when seen in the light of the place of domicile of both parents and of widowed fathers, indicates that the eldest son's responsibility to

2. Cf. Belshaw 1957: 12-15; Groves 1963 for comparison with the Motu.

3. Stephen (1974:31) wrote that in 1971 approximately two-thirds of the houses in Inawi village were occupied by nuclear families.

his parents is ultimately a duty to his father who is his more important parent with respect to inheritance. By living with his parents, the eldest son strengthens his claim to be the heir of his father's position, and to the lion's share of his father's property, both tangible and intangible. The significance of this in the Mekeo seniority system will be discussed below.

Third, when a man's wife dies, he (after a prescribed period of

Table 6: Composition of Beipa'a domestic units, 1971

	Composition	Number of groups		Average membership
A.	Nuclear family (complete or incomplete)	56		6
B.	Parents, or a surviving parent, unmarried children, and a son's nuclear family	17		9
C.	Nuclear family with husband's dependent siblings, and/or husband's brother's children	9		8
D.	Nuclear family with one dependent non-agnate	3		6
E.	Multi-nuclear families of agnates	10		11
F.	Multi-nuclear families of agnates and affines	4		13
G.	Widowers alone	2		1
H.	Other	1	Total	2
	Total	102	average	7

Apart from 'widowers alone' the range of the size of domestic units is from two to twenty-one.

mourning) and his dependent children (immediately) should be incorporated into the domestic group of one of his surviving brothers, not into domestic groups of the dead woman's agnates. This applies when the mother dies and all the children are still dependent.[4] In every case of this kind in Beipa'a, the incorporation has been in strict accordance with the ideal.

The dissolution of domestic groups with young children when the mother dies contrasts sharply with the continuing existence of domestic groups when the father dies. With one exception (see Appendix 7), all the incomplete nuclear family domestic groups were headed by widowed mothers. In addition to their capacities for child-care, women are, from the point of view of domestic subsistence, more economically self-sufficient than men, and are thus much more able to provide for their children than are men living on their own. Mekeo fathers cannot raise a family of motherless children by themselves because the division of labour between the sexes is such that women do most of the domestic work, including the production and preparation of food. In the early stages of the developmental cycle when children are maturing, the viability of the domestic group depends largely on the mother. If she dies the group dissolves and is absorbed by another domestic unit with women to support it. It is probable that an underlying factor in young widowers' tendency to roam irresponsibly for many years away from their families is that they are really not needed, or that they are escaping from a situation which they cannot handle, leaving the responsibility to their brothers' wives.[5]

Discounting wives and mothers (that is, in-marrying women), 93 per cent of all the domestic groups in Beipa'a consisted only of people who related agnatically to each other (categories A, B, C and E in Table 6). When we consider this percentage together with the 95 per

4. There are four men of my acquaintance whose fathers died when they were small children. Their mothers remarried to men of other wards where they raised their children. When these children grew up and married they all returned to their patriwards where they have since been resident. These men said that although they were brought up in their mothers' husbands' wards they had no rights to their step-fathers' residential or garden lands.

5. On one of my visits to Rarai village in 1971 the main topic there was a woman who was so exasperated by her husband's bossiness during a feast that she shouted at him: 'You are useless. I don't need your head; I don't need your hands; and I certainly don't need your legs. The only useful thing you have is your penis!' She was given a special punishment which was never administered, and which was too obscene to be described here.

cent of the male population of sixteen years of age and older living in their patri-wards, and 96 per cent of married men and widowers living with or among their closest agnates, the very high degree of conformity with the ideals of residential clustering of agnates becomes outstandingly evident. The few exceptions indicate a slight degree of deviation (4-7 per cent) from the pattern. Complete conformity with the ideals cannot be achieved because social life is fluid and often tends to be unpredictable.

Living among male agnates is a continuation and extension of fraternal childhood upbringing in a single household. Brothers who grow up in the same domestic group, wherein they learn mutual affection and respect, marry and live next door to each other, and raise families which grow up repeating the same pattern. The whole subclan and even the ward may be seen as an enlargement of the same pattern. An outline of the developmental cycle of Mekeo domestic groups would show how the pattern emerges. A domestic group comes into existence when a married couple and their very young children move into a house of their own and start a separate hearth for themselves. As each male child reaches the age of puberty (about twelve to fourteen) his parents send him from the family house to live in a *ngove*, although they continue to feed him with food from the family hearth. Nowadays the age of puberty is defined at the completion of primary and even in some cases of secondary schooling. The daughters remain in the family house until marriage, when they depart for permanent residence in their husbands' wards. Meanwhile in the *ngove*, the sons' main aim in life should be to court girls, one of whom they will marry. Let us suppose that there are three sons. The eldest marries first, and leaves the *ngove*. He takes his bride to the family house where they both live

Table 7: Parents and married sons who lived with them, 1971

Parents	Eldest sons	Younger sons
Father and mother	6	1
Widower father	3	1
Widowed mother	3	3

in permanent residence with his parents. The middle son marries next and takes his wife to the same family house where they stay while he builds a house next to and to the left of or behind that of his parents. On its completion he moves into the new house, starting a separate domestic group of his own. The youngest son marries last, leaves the *ngove*, and takes his wife into the family house while he builds to the left of or behind that of the middle son. He and his nuclear family move into this new house and start a separate domestic group. By that stage the original single domestic group of the parents has segmented into three, and perhaps all the daughters have married and left. The parents grow old and pass away, and the eldest son inherits his father's house and site. His seniority is marked by the position of his house relative to those of his younger brothers. The forging among agnates of bonds of affection and dependence, and their antitheses, as a result of residential contiguity cannot be overemphasised.

Living apart from close agnates, especially away from the village, tends to loosen bonds of affection and hostility; it also leads to the weakening of claims for or loss of inheritable property, the most important of which is land. One of the men who have assumed matrilocal residence in Beipa'a is from Amoamo. He went to Beipa'a as a small child with his mother who returned there to her brothers when his father died; he had grown so used to Inaufokoa ward that he did not wish to return to his own village. Though he had usufructuary privileges on his mother's brothers' lands he had no ownership or inheritance rights over them. He maintained the necessary minimum of his agnatic obligations and laid claim to his father's land, but his father's classificatory brother disputed it, saying that he could only exercise his claims if he returned to his own people. Early in 1973 a man who had been living for about two decades in Port Moresby and among his wife's people in Waima, a non-Mekeo village, returned to Beipa'a to claim his inheritance. While he was away he had scarcely visited the village, and had ignored his agnatic obligations. On his return, his relatives accorded him the hospitality proper for a close agnate, but there was discernibly little warmth in it. It soon transpired that he had virtually no land left because during his absence his relatives had staked claims to all of his father's share of the family land. This was not difficult because the Mekeo land tenure system is such that parcels of land claimed are rarely clearly demarcated. It requires continuous residence in the patri-ward or regular visits to it to safeguard one's

inheritance. The case of the man who lost all his land is an extreme one of its kind, and was the consequence of a combination of long absence and the small amount of family lands. Others who have been long absent can (and do) return to assert their claims to both residential and garden lands, provided that their families possess sufficient land and that they have kept up their social obligations to their agnates while away. But it is almost certain that the size of these claims would have been reduced to varying degrees by the inroads of others.

The partial or complete loss of inheritance is paralleled in the sphere of sentiments by the diminution or loss of affect between kinsmen. Descent connections in themselves are not sufficient for the continued presence of affect or for the security of personal claims. Both require careful cultivation and maintenance; and residential proximity is crucial to this.

As indicated in Chapter 2 the large pre-nineteenth century population movements were related to the availability of land not previously occupied. The tendency for separation discussed below was probably heightened by the fact that people could move with relative ease away from their villages into new and virgin lands. By at least 1840, however, all the land of the Mekeo plain had already been claimed and the population was settled. The establishment of the colonial authority in the late nineteenth century strengthened this settled characteristic by the ban imposed on warfare and fights which were hitherto a means of land redistribution between villages and tribes. This effectively froze much of the fluidity in the relations between individuals and groups with regard to land. Small groups can, with the government's protection, maintain claims to large tracts of lands, whereas large groups may have to make do with much smaller ones. A Beipa'a example is the smallest ward, Inau'i, with at least ten times as much land as Inaufokoa which has nearly twice as many people. This implies the extreme difficulty of claiming land anywhere other than on one's own subclan or family land. As noted above, living away from the village involves a risk of losing one's lands. On the basis of the frequency of disputes about land encroachments, it can be argued that such disputes and mutual suspicion about each other's designs provide strong motives which tie people down to their villages, to their wards and to their agnates. And therein lie the roots of so much *pikupa*.

Living together, however necessary to agnatic relations, group identity and personal interests, has its own problems which include

rivalry, disputes over property and women, suspicions about sorcery attacks, and a host of minor daily irritations. To prevent these problems from leading to serious disruption of agnatic relations Mekeo have devised some ways of coping with them. Three of these are pertinent here. The first is the avoidance of permanent residence in domestic groups comprising more than one complete nuclear family. An important factor for the local preference for nuclear family domestic grouping is the unquestioned single authority of the husband or father. Apart from instances of married eldest sons living with their parents and unmarried siblings, where authority lies with the father, who relinquishes it gradually, people do not like living permanently in units where there is rivalry for authority. Where widowers and their dependants live in the domestic groups of their brothers, notwithstanding the fact that the widowers may be elder brothers, the authority still lies with the married brothers because the groups are theirs and because widowers as such have the same lowly status as bachelors. In multi-nuclear family domestic groups there is a tendency for bickering, direct and indirect, between heads of the component nuclear families as to the management of the affairs of the group. Much of the bickering is done by wives who tend to explode more readily than their husbands who try to suppress their hostilities in order to avoid open fraternal conflict. It may be argued that agnates conduct many of their quarrels with each other indirectly, and presumably safely, through their wives. Multi-nuclear family domestic groups are the most unstable units in Beipa'a, and during my fieldwork periods all the splits within domestic groups occurred in them.

It is partly for the reason of avoiding open fraternal conflict that it is rare for married brothers to live together permanently in the same domestic groups. Of the fifteen multi-nuclear family domestic units in Beipa'a in 1971, only three belonged to real brothers. I shall describe these three groups in some detail for they reveal some of the problems of fraternal relations.

One group consisted of a widower, aged sixty-six, and the nuclear families of his two sons. The elder of these, aged forty-two, had six children of his own and a son adopted from his younger brother. The younger, aged thirty-seven, had two children. His wife was thirty-one years old and was still bearing children. Thus the group comprised fourteen people, all of whom lived in the same house. The widower formerly occupied a *ngove* at the back but his sons brought

him into the house because he was incurably sick and needed close attention. He told me that the house, the biggest in Mekeo, belonged to the elder son, and that the younger would eventually move out when he had built one of his own. This group seemed stable partly because the father, who had been a very influential chief in his younger days, still exerted his paternal authority within the group, and partly because the sons were married to real sisters. The adoption by the elder son of his younger brother's son, and the naming of their real sons after each other, as in the myth, were expressions of fraternal affection and solidarity.

Another domestic group consisted of the nuclear families of two brothers and their two unmarried sisters aged twenty-four and thirty-six. The elder brother, forty-two, had three children and the younger, aged thirty-eight, had two, one of whom he had adopted from his elder sibling. They formed a domestic group of eleven members, all living in the same house. It appears that the brothers planned to continue living together indefinitely for they had recently completed the construction of a new and bigger house for themselves. The case of these brothers differed from the two described above and below in that in this instance the younger brother married first, in 1955, while their parents were alive. The reason for this was that the elder brother went away on wage employment while the younger brother lived at home caring for the parents. When the elder returned and married in 1962, the younger brother had already established himself very firmly and was the dominant of the pair, although he still gave ceremonial precedence to the elder brother. By forgoing his responsibility as eldest son and marrying much later than his younger brother who looked after their parents until their death, the elder seemed to have abdicated his authority as senior brother in favour of the younger.

The third group consisted of the nuclear families of two brothers. With twenty-one people living in the same house, it was the biggest domestic unit in the village. The house was much too crowded for the group to continue as a unit. Early in 1973, after a series of quarrels, the younger brother left with his family and assumed temporary residence in his wife's brother's house. The incident which precipitated the rift, a seemingly trivial quarrel over the ownership of a comb, indicates the strength of the already existing hostility between the brothers.

Although brothers may live together, the ownership of their father's

house and site is the elder's by right of seniority. In the first instance described above, the father had specified to whom the house belonged. In the third instance, when the brothers quarrelled, it was the younger one who moved out, leaving the elder brother in sole occupancy, despite the fact that the elder brother had only recently returned to the village after an absence of about a decade during which the younger brother had been looking after their father and their lands. In 1972 an elder brother returned with his family from Port Moresby and took up residence with his married younger brother in their parents' house. A good deal of tension developed between them though they never quarrelled publicly; instead, it was their wives who quarrelled a lot. Just before I left the village the elder brother confided to me that he was thinking of removing his family to live with his mother's people in Aipiana. This case was interesting because the elder brother had been adopted by his father's elder brother so that 'legally' he had no right to his real father's house and lands.

It is for the reasons of ownership, of the rights of elder brothers, and of avoiding open fraternal conflict that it is rare for male siblings to be in the same domestic group permanently after marriage. Younger brothers may live for a while with their elder brothers, especially immediately after marriage, but eventually most of them build their own houses next door and establish their separate and independent nuclear family domestic groups.[6]

The second device for coping with the problems of living closely together is the residential segregation of unattached males. The relegation of bachelors and widowers to separate living quarters deals effectively with one of the most feared consequences of living together: illicit sexual liaisons. Female agnates and wives of brothers and father's brothers, in one's own and neighbouring and related domestic groups, are thereby protected against unmarried men. Sexual improprieties disrupt agnatic relations and, indeed, relations throughout the village. The myth narrated at the beginning of this chapter and the stories of historical fission among subclans reflect this very clearly. When we also take into consideration the position of *ngove* in relation to other buildings in the village, the significance of this spacing mechanism becomes even more evident.

6. Stephen (1974:31-2) said that in Inawi in 1971, twenty-one brothers and their families were sharing houses. She does not, however, indicate how permanent these arrangements were, nor the number of domestic groups involved.

The third way is the avoidance of public expression of anger and personal hostility among close relatives. That kinsmen should not quarrel openly is an ideal most advocated, especially when relationships are strained. People who live contiguously strive to maintain surface amity. The well-behaved person has control over his mouth *(ake)*. In order to prevent outbreaks of quarrelling *(lo'u)*, a man should not be argumentative *(akekua*, which literally means 'sore mouth'). Arguments lead to quarrels, and eventually to uncontrolled screaming (*anganga*, which also means 'itchy' and 'barking'). Once in the state of *anganga* a man loses control of himself and may say things which he will regret later, for example if misfortune befalls those with whom he quarrelled. His strong words will be remembered, and he will be suspected, and even accused, of engineering the misfortunes. On such matters, especially if death is involved, Mekeo neither forgive nor forget. When reasonable men confront each other they have their supporters behind them to keep them under control in their use of their mouths. They debate calmly and endeavour to say nothing which could later be misconstrued. This is known as *niniani*, which in different contexts means either 'discussion' or mere 'conversation'. Thus in situations of verbal confrontation reasonable people try to keep the exchange as close as possible to the level of conversation.

Once I saw a chief who had been very angry with a man who, he thought, had lied to him. The chief controlled his anger and said nothing: instead, he retired to his house where he sat by himself for a long time until his anger had subsided. Later he said that he had wanted to go and 'preach' to the other man but that he had desisted because he was apprehensive of being misunderstood. The same chief also said on another occasion that words, especially those of chiefs, are powerful and the man who has little control over his mouth exhausts his power and is soon reduced to nothing. When a man talks too much, or is in the habit of *anganga*, everyone knows what he is like and consequently he loses any power he has over them. People despise such men and listen to and respect those who speak and talk carefully. Belshaw (1951:3) wrote of an 'old time' Mekeo chief that 'Maino is a dignified figure of a man, dresses conservatively, wears a half-moon shell as badge of office, and is always to be found in the background keeping a watchful eye on joint activities. Councillors and constables may rage at people ineffectively; a short sentence from

Maino in a loud voice, accompanied by a rattling of lime-stick in gourd, brings immediate attention.'

Partly because of fear of being misconstrued, of causing and inviting trouble through the misuse of the mouth, and of losing power and respect through excessive verbal revelation of themselves, Mekeo men in general exert so much control over their tongues that they have become inscrutable and secretive. Their verbal control is matched by the restraint in their physical deportment and demeanour which gives outsiders the impression that they are reserved, proud and arrogant. This is the image of Mekeo men most commonly held by strangers who have come into contact with them in Port Moresby. Their neighbours think of them as being 'uptight' and too serious. A number of neighbouring Roro men have expressed the opinion that Mekeo do not seem to enjoy life for they do not relax easily. Although this is stereotypical, it is far from being meaningless. Mekeo verbal and bodily restraint is, at first sight, belied by their skill at body decoration; yet they regard the most delicately painted faces and plumed heads as masks behind which they hide. When dancers decorate themselves, one of their main purposes, they say, is to baffle onlookers into not recognising them. This brings to mind Mary Douglas's statement (1970:64) that 'the more value people set on social constraints, the more the value they set on symbols of body control'.[7]

This excursion into 'body language' is important in that it highlights the deliberate secretive characteristic of Mekeo men. Yet it is the extent to which they mask their emotions and true selves in order to avoid conflict and to protect themselves that renders them susceptible to being misunderstood. The A'aisa myth reflects this vividly. The initial misunderstanding arose because A'aisa had hidden himself behind the guise of a child. Misunderstanding which arises from excessive secrecy generates a vicious kind of conflict, namely *pikupa*. Since *pikupa* resides in the belly and can only be guessed at, no one admits to harbouring it although people suspect and accuse others of being *pikupa* of them. The two most commonly used terms of abuse in quarrels are

7. In a written communication, Hogbin commented that the 'Wogeo are a complete contrast. They are highly excitable and from early childhood are trained to give vent to their anger, harmlessly if possible—they have a proverb "If you are angry with your wife, smash a pot; otherwise you will be angry for a month". If an adult is angry and beats the village slit-gong and reviles his enemy, people are content that he will harbour no malice and certainly not perform sorcery. The Wogeo do not go in much for face painting and never try to disguise themselves.'

pikupa and *pifonge* ('lies'), both of which are associated with deception and camouflage. Secrecy, misunderstanding, suspicion, *pikupa* and *pifonge*, lead to sorcery which, by its very nature, is the ultimate secret and mystical weapon. Thus surface amity and harmony, like the beautifully decorated head of a Mekeo dancer, can camouflage the underlying tensions and hostilities among kinsmen. The dual division of civilian responsibilities between chiefs and sorcerers is based on this very disjunction between the apparent and the hidden.

We can now see that the spatial arrangement of the village described in the previous chapter, the ideals and reality of residential clustering of agnates, the preference for the nuclear family domestic group, and the individual's masking of himself from others, all fall into a single pattern of what may be called protective privacy. From the individual to the village as a whole are cocoon-like layers which constitute a serried defence system against each other, and against the unfamiliar and threatening world outside.

The 'disruptive influences of women'

I have been told that if left to themselves brothers have no real problems because they grew up together under the 'one father' *(amamai anga'omo)*. Problems between them arise after marriage. Their wives, men say, are not only outsiders and therefore do not have the strong feelings for their brothers-in-law that their husbands do, but they often come from different and perhaps disparate groups and villages, and do not necessarily get along with one another. Moreover, men assert that women often pay too much attention to the welfare and interests of their own children and too little to those of their husbands' groups. Hence, husbands sometimes regard wives as influences disruptive not only of fraternal relations but also of intergenerational relations among agnates.

This came out most strongly during preparations for a feast I attended in 1971. There was a good deal of tension and rivalry among the men of the feast-giving subclans. One afternoon the overworked and much harassed wives exploded into a shouting bout among themselves while their husbands, as is usual on such occasions, maintained discreet neutrality. After the quarrel the men rose and told each other not to be affected by what the women had said for they were scheming to 'spoil our heads' and to scuttle the feast. While there might have been some truth in the men's assertion that women are disruptive

influences, it is also a projection of the men's own fears and uncertainties regarding their own relationships, partly because marriage and the creation of nuclear families necessarily introduce new elements and different and often conflicting interests into the fraternal relations. Living in separate domestic groups is a device brothers use for avoiding conflict, but at the same time it is an indication of separation, of growing apart. In their attempts to solve the problems of living closely together, agnates have at the same time sown the seeds of their eventual and inevitable separation.

When parents dispatch their adolescent sons to separate living quarters, they in fact cut them off from the family house, the most private territorial domain of the father. But in doing this, the parents do not cut their sons completely adrift, for the sons are still tied to the heart of the group: the family hearth *(angava)*, which is the mother's domain, the source of sustenance. The young bachelors eat food cooked on the common domestic hearth. They can visit the family house, but there they confine themselves largely to the verandah or to the platforms under or adjacent to the house. Thus in some important respects the sons are being forced away from complete dependence in the family on the parents, and towards a less dependent life among their peers. Other things being equal, this is the first step in the breaking up of the domestic group. When boys go to the *ngove* it is the beginning of their initiation into the wider male agnatic group. The peer group with which they associate consists to a large extent of close agnates (and often also close cross-cousins). Other adult males, married men and widowers, visit them frequently. Fathers and grandfathers go to the *ngove* to teach the young boys the lore of their society, and magical spells and knowledge. The boys' sisters, in general, bring food to the *ngove* and leave it on the verandah. There is no personal contact between brothers and sisters when the boys fast for making magic. In their childhood years brothers and sisters are playmates; there is no avoidance between them as in some other societies. This ceases when brothers go into the *ngove.* The prime aim of bachelors should be to seek wives, the acquisition of whom takes them a step further away from their parents—that is, if they are younger sons.

Marriage and the establishment of a new single nuclear family household with a new hearth constitute this further severance of the 'umbilical cord'. The new woman cooks for her husband and thereby terminates his dependence for sustenance on the hearth of his parents.

This applies to wives of younger sons. Eldest sons and their wives, as stated, live with the parents and continue to eat from the family hearth. We can see here a main device for the continuity of family traditions through eldest sons. It is one of the bases of primogenital succession and of hereditary authority. The symbolism of the hearth is poignantly displayed at the death of the wife, when her sisters ritually throw it out of the house, signifying the demise of a particular domestic unit. After marriage, male siblings separate not only from their parents but also in a sense from each other, now that they have their own domestic groups to consider. This may be an underlying factor in the ambivalent attitudes that men have towards their wives.

Against these centrifugal forces, male agnates have institutionalised a way of countering it. They gather, exclusive of their wives and children, in their platforms and *ufu* to gossip, to socialise and to share food from their separate hearths. This sharing of food is something which Mekeo society stresses very strongly. When men gather at a place, their wives must cook and bring food for them. It is one of the marks of the good man that food which his wife brings to the gathering is partaken of first by others, and if there is anything left he may eat it himself, or better, he may have it sent out to other men's wives and children. One of the worst things a Mekeo may say to another is that he has eaten stealthily *(eanipainao)*, that is he has received some good food, especially in form of meats, and has eaten it secretly in his house, an expression of utter selfishness. He should have sent it to the *ufu* to be shared with his agnates. In large gatherings where food is plentiful men eat from each other's contributions not touching what their own wives have brought. This may be seen as a kind of sacramental communion in which self is symbolically shared among kinsmen; every item of food is carefully and ceremonially apportioned and presented to the gathering by special functionaries known as *a'iva au'i* ('the knife men'). It is certainly an affirmation of agnatic solidarity.

Because of the seriousness with which Mekeo treat public sharing of food, men feel ashamed if their wives are negligent in providing food for their gatherings.[8] It also partly explains the abuse men some-

8. Knowledge of the *ufu* protocol and obligations is a requisite in a wife since it affects a man's standing with his peers. When a young teacher in Beipa'a married in 1971 his parents objected strongly to his choice because the girl was too educated (she was a clerk in Bereina) in the wrong way. She allegedly had no idea about the duties of a village woman, especially with regard to the *ufu*.

times hurl at, and the authoritarian stance they take towards, their wives in public gatherings. On such occasions men sometimes swear loudly at their wives if the latter are slow in cooking, or laggardly in bringing in the food. On feast days the men summon their wives several times to the ground in front of the *ufu* where they stand in lines and receive their orders. Once in Aipiana village I saw a group of women standing under the scorching sun in a straight line facing an *ufu* from which their husbands, comfortably seated, scolded them for not cooking the food properly during a big gathering on the previous day. The men eventually dismissed the poor women, after they had imposed a fine on them. This usually takes the form of each wife buying a given number of tins of corned beef or fish which, together with cooked food, she presents to the *ufu* for the men.

In the privacy of their own homes men adopt a much gentler attitude to their wives. It is in the small intimate situations of family life that Mekeo display touchingly the more gentle aspects of human social behaviour. But this does not carry over on public occasions when the situation is one of confrontation between men as agnates and their wives as outsiders.

Inequality among male siblings

In the organisation of relationships within the subclan between individual agnates, between groups and between offices, Mekeo emphasise seniority. The local terms for 'senior' and 'junior' respectively are *fa'aniau* and *eke*. A person is *fa'aniau* if he or she is an eldest sibling, and among actual brothers, if he is the eldest. Though by virtue of birth a woman may be senior to her younger brothers, this does not confer upon her any institutionalised advantage or privilege over them, since Mekeo women are considered socially inferior to men. On the other hand, the seniority of the eldest brother is of cardinal social significance. The kinship term for an elder sibling of the same sex is inflected from the stem *aa-*, for example, *aau* and *aamu* for 'my elder brother' and 'your elder brother' when a male is addressing another male. Similarly, the term for a younger sibling of the same sex is inflected from the stem *aki-*, for example, *akiu* and *akimu* for 'my younger sister' and 'your younger sister' when a female is addressing another female. An *aa-* is always senior to his or her *aki-*. By extension a male agnate is senior or junior to another depending on his descent, either from an elder or a younger brother. Lineages and

hereditary offices within subclans are classified according to the same principle of seniority. The most senior men and lineages are referred to as *fa'aniau ipauma.* This principle of seniority finds its ultimate expression in the person of the senior chief, the *lopia fa'a (niau)*, of the localised subclan.

The basic unit of relationships between senior and junior is the set or pair of real brothers. The eldest has an institutionalised entitlement to respect and deference from his younger brothers, and his judgments should hold if good relations are to prevail among them. His younger brothers expect him to be morally correct in his behaviour, and to be impartial in his dealings with them. He represents his sibling unit in its dealings with other groups. By virtue of his seniority he inherits his father's position, house and house site, his father's 'friendship' and food exchange ties, and the lion's share of his father's magical knowl-

Table 8: Order of marriages of pairs and sets of brothers

	Pairs and sets with eldest brothers who married first	Pairs and sets with eldest brothers who did not marry first	Sets of three or more with subsequent brothers who married according to birth order	Sets of three or more with subsequent brothers who did not marry according to birth order
Ongofo'ina	23	0	8	0
Fopafo'ina	18	0	7	3
Aloaivea	12	1	1	0
Inaufokoa	7	1	3	1
Inau'i	7	1	1	1
Total	67	3	20	5
Percentage	96	4	80	20

Number of marriages = 179. Marriages recorded in the twentieth century in the Catholic Church marriage registry, Beipa'a. Single son marriages not counted.

edge. He is the leader of his brothers, the focal point of the fraternal collective life. He is the steward of the fraternal property the most important item of which is land, and of the family wealth, in particular such items as shells and feathers for bride-price payments. He organises family weddings and marriage payments. Wealth which flows in from the marriage of sisters (real and father's sisters' daughters) is apportioned under his auspices, or is held in trust by him for the marriages of his younger brothers. He organises family funerals and minor mortuary ceremonies for the family dead, receives and distributes payments for the death of their father's and of their own married sisters.

These status-enhancing responsibilities and advantages are institutionalised relationships embedded in and validated by the ideology of seniority. In practice, however, their applications vary depending on

Table 9: Average number of years between births of brothers, and average number of years between marriages of brothers

	Years between births	Years between marriages	Number of pairs
First and second brothers	6	7	63
First and third brothers	10	15	27
First and fourth brothers	14	16	8
First and fifth brothers	15	22	3
First and sixth brothers	21	24	1

Of the 63 second brothers shown in the table above, a third were born within three years of the births of their eldest brothers; the births of the other two-thirds are distributed (with four exceptions) between four and ten years after the first brothers' births. Of the 27 third brothers in the sample only two were born within five years of their first brothers, 13 between six and and ten years, and the other 12 or roughly half were born more than ten years later.

the character and personality of the eldest brother, and on extant relationships between him and his younger brothers. Nevertheless, the ideology is there and is adhered to or manipulated in some circumstances. The relevant problem for our present purpose is to delineate the empirical circumstances which sustain the ideology.

As shown in Table 8, the vast majority (97 per cent) of eldest brothers marry first; moreover, the vast majority of subsequent brothers marry in accordance with their order of birth. This firmly supports the ideology of the seniority of the eldest brother, as we shall shortly see. Marriage and its chronological ordering is of enormous practical importance to the dominant position of eldest brothers. Mekeo assert that eldest brothers should marry first because they are the first born. An analysis of Table 9 explains largely why there has been such a high degree of adherence to the principle. It does not, however, diminish the particular value which the people hold; on the contrary, the spacing of births of brothers, together with factors which shape the form of adolescent maturation, reinforces the value.

Table 9 shows clearly that there are relatively long time intervals between the births of eldest and subsequent brothers, and between the marriages of elder brothers and subsequent brothers. In the past, with high mortality rates (especially among children), post-partum sexual abstinence of at least eighteen months, sexual abstinence in preparation for wars and for magical performance, and births of females between males, the spacing of live births of sons was wider than it is now, especially with the vast improvements in medical facilities since the Second World War.

The average intervals shown in Table 9, even if that between the births of the first and second brothers is reduced from six to four, are critical, especially when brothers are still prepubescent. During this period eldest brothers are most dominant physically in relation to their younger siblings, as is readily observable when children play or otherwise interact. When boys grow older, the probability that younger brothers will challenge the physical dominance of their brothers increases. Apart, however, from the inculcation of the ideology of seniority, Mekeo have devised, albeit unconsciously, ways which perpetuate the superiority of eldest brothers.

When a boy becomes a bachelor at puberty, he moves out of the family house into the *ngove*, as described above. This act in itself separates an elder brother from his younger siblings who are still

children. Hitherto many of them had played, lived and slept together. From now on the bachelor elder brother sleeps among and socialises with his peers and older unmarried men. With this separation the elder brother is virtually promoted above and beyond his younger brothers, adding a new dimension to his still unchallenged physical dominance. If the average of six years between the births of the eldest and the second brother is considered in the light of what has been said above, it means that the second brother waits another six years before he rejoins his elder brother. But soon after, if not even before, the younger brother's arrival in the *ngove*, the elder brother marries and moves up (and out) into the world of adult males. He lives in his father's house; when the younger brothers marry they live separately in their own houses. This separation helps the avoidance of open physical or verbal conflict between brothers, which would not only disrupt the group but also violate the principle of seniority. Before the eldest brother marries, however, he has had years in advance of his younger brothers to learn from his father, in the *ngove*, all kinds of magic and skills; and as the senior he gets the largest share of these.

By the time the younger brothers marry, the elder brother has had years of being a married man (see Table 9), and has established himself firmly as a full adult. Normally it takes a varying number of years for newly married men to become full adults, depending on their personalities, unless they are chiefs. In the world of adult male agnates which revolves around the platform and the *ufu*, the elders and other established kinsmen give orders to the young newly married men. In formal meetings of the ward the latter sit quietly and listen deferentially to decisions being made by their elders and chiefs. They run messages, do minor chores, and perform the hard common work while their elders, especially the most senior and old men, sit and talk. All this is a tacit reminder to them that they are still juniors.

By marrying first, the eldest son moves into his father's house and stakes his rightful claim to be the heir. By associating so closely with his father, the eldest son identifies with the authority within the family, and he gradually assumes this authority as his father gets older. In Mekeo, people 'don't get anything for nothing'. The father does not give everything at once to his eldest son; he gives it gradually, to ensure that the son fulfils his filial obligations. Fathers assert that if their eldest sons neglect their obligations to them or if they become unruly, then they give them little or nothing; they may even give the

things, even their positions (although this is rare), to their younger sons.

As shown in Table 8, most younger brothers marry according to their order of birth. When the second brother marries he builds his house next to that of his father (and first brother). But the principle of seniority and ranking is observed in the fact that the second brother's house is built either behind or to the left. As the subsequent brothers marry they construct their houses according to the same principle. We can see that if the order of marriage of brothers is upset then the principle of seniority expressed through the spatial arrangement of houses is violated. More significantly, however, when an eldest brother fails to marry, it is usually the case that it is not the second eldest but the youngest brother who marries first (see Appendix 7). It seems as though when an eldest brother's failure to marry upsets the seniority system, the system is turned upside down so that the junior becomes the senior.

Finally, by marrying first the eldest brother has the opportunity to lay claim to the largest share of his father's lands. Mekeo fathers rarely divide their lands among their sons for fear of causing dissension among them. The latter inherit the patrimonial land as a unit and each then makes claims for himself, one small plot at a time, by working them. There is no formal subdivision and allocation. What usually happens is that by marrying first the eldest brother has an average of seven years over his nearest brother to make gardens with his wife and strengthen his claims. The unmarried younger brothers, especially the youngest of all, are placed at a disadvantage. Normally, however, in order to maintain amity within the fraternal group, and to maintain his influence over them through kindness and generosity *(ngavengave)*, an eldest brother considers his responsibility as a senior partner and behaves accordingly. Nevertheless the advantage of the eldest brother in this regard is clearly demonstrated in the fact that the largest blocks of land in most subclans belong to senior men and groups. This disadvantage of younger brothers may explain why, as shown in Father Egidi's genealogies, so many of the lines of the most junior men and groups have disappeared in the past. They seem to have simply died out or moved elsewhere in search of available land.

The foregoing account of Mekeo seniority as seen through fraternal relations shows clearly that it is a system with potential for intense dissension. The societal emphasis on the seniority of the eldest brother, reinforced in practice by wide spacings in birth and marriage, which

allow him several years' advantage over his younger brothers, provides him with opportunities and temptations to advance his own interests at the expense of the fraternal group. Whether or not he succumbs to temptation and exploits the opportunities is not as important as the fact that his very seniority makes him an easy object of suspicion, misunderstandings and accusations. Thus in the myth A'aisa, the elder brother, is portrayed by Mekeo as the culprit, and Isapini as the innocent victim; it is a common theme in the people's mythology. The restraining factors against blatant abuse of seniority are the strongly held ideal of the responsibility of the senior for his fraternal group, and the unspoken threat of sorcery retribution by juniors hiring the professional services of sorcerers. The ideal is projected on to the larger agnatic and ward groupings in the responsibilities of the senior chief (the most senior brother) towards his subclan, and the sanction against blatant abuse of seniority by the *fa'aniau*, in the role of the sorcerer (usually a junior agnate). The chief and the sorcerer are personifications of these aspects of the moral life of the people.

The seniority system, as an instrument for orderly and amicable relations within the agnatic group, is in itself a factor for *pikupa* which poses a real threat to the solidarity and harmony of the group; and therein lies another fundamental ambivalence in Mekeo social life. This further explains the Mekeo strong control of their visible behaviour. Nevertheless, fraternal tensions and hostilities cannot always be suppressed successfully. I personally saw only a few quarrels between brothers in Beipa'a. One incident, which I have described above, involved an elder brother who returned from a long absence in Port Moresby and successfully ejected his younger brother from their father's house. At a large meeting in which they presented their respective cases, the elder assumed the air of someone whose case was legally unassailable. The younger brother, on the other hand, could not contain his frustration which he expressed in aggressive terms. He was most indignant and frustrated (he wept as he argued) because after so many years of his looking after their home and property, the elder brother had not only returned and imposed his seniority unfairly on him, but had also gained the sympathy of the men at the meeting, who frequently interrupted the younger brother, exhorting him to calm down and listen to the elder for it was the proper thing to do. Another incident was a quarrel between two brothers over their land. The elder brother asserted that what he as the senior said about the disposition of their land must stand. The

younger brother countered that since the land belonged to both of them he had a say in it. The third incident has been described above. In this dispute the brothers did not quarrel openly themselves; instead, their wives waged the campaign.

The three examples cited above were isolated cases; in general brothers living in the village maintain amicable relations. They sometimes quarrel but they settle their disagreements quickly and make every effort to prevent a rift. Mekeo have captured the intricacies of fraternal relationships in their myths and legends, as in the case of the A'aisa myth told above. I shall close this chapter by narrating and analysing a myth which shows an ingenious way of resolving crises in fraternal relationships.

Kaisafa and his elder brother

Once there were two brothers, Ikuafa, the elder, and Kaisafa, the younger. It came to pass that they decided to go hunting. They fenced a large tract of bushland after which Ikuafa waited at the gate while Kaisafa went to drive the game towards him. When the animals reached the gate, Ikuafa killed them, hid all but two pigs in the bush nearby and waited for his younger brother to appear. When Kaisafa arrived and saw only two animals he demanded an explanation from Ikuafa. He was told that the animals were so adroit in making their escape that he, Ikuafa, was fortunate to have caught anything. They then took a pig each and returned to their village. In the evening Ikuafa and his wife stole into the bush, brought what he had hidden, and smoked it over their fireplace inside their house. Meanwhile Kaisafa's wife was berating her husband for the small amount of meat he had brought, but she was told Ikuafa's version of how the animals escaped. On the following days the brothers went hunting and each time Ikuafa deceived Kaisafa, depriving him of a fair share of their catch.

This was the state of affairs until one day, after the men had once again left for the bush to hunt, Kaisafa's wife paid Ikuafa's wife a visit and saw the large amount of meat inside her house. Upon inquiry Ikuafa's wife confessed and revealed the way in which the meat had been obtained. When Kaisafa returned in the afternoon with his usual share his wife told him that he had been deceived. Kaisafa said nothing but waited until it was dark, when he went to the hunting area and hid himself near the gate. Shortly afterwards Ikuafa appeared with his wife, packed the concealed meat and returned to the village.

Kaisafa spent the following day preparing his weapons: a club and several spears. In the evening he told his wife of his plans, and very early in the morning he rose, stood in front of his house and publicly announced to Ikuafa that because of his gross deception he, Kaisafa, was no longer his brother. Furthermore, he was leaving the village to fight Iko, the giant ogre, and if he survived he was going to live with his sister Velovelo. Iko—who lived entirely on human flesh—had for a very long time blocked the access routes to the village where Velovelo lived. Anyone who dared go through Iko's territory was killed and eaten. At the conclusion of his speech Kaisafa took his weapons and some provisions and embarked on his adventure. The villagers confronted Ikuafa, told him of the enormity of his actions, the consequence of which would be Kaisafa's certain death at the hands of Iko. Stricken with remorse, Ikuafa took his weapons and set out to assist his younger brother. Although at first Kaisafa angrily told him to return to the village, Ikuafa persisted quietly. But as they approached Iko's forbidden territory, with wooden statues of Iko erected along the tracks to frighten off intruders, Kaisafa relented and began to talk to Ikuafa in conciliatory terms.

When they reached Iko's compound they rushed his house, brandishing their spears and shouting their war cries. Kaisafa yelled in a piercing voice, 'Aaaaaa, Ikuafa!' and Ikuafa screamed, 'Aaaaaa, Kaisafa!' But they elicited no response from the house for Iko was away hunting. After a search of the premises they found Iko's two granddaughters whom they instructed to inform their grandfather to expect their return within two days. The brothers left and spent a day with their sister, after which they returned to Iko. Again they rushed the ogre's house shouting their war cries, 'Aaaaaa, Ikuafa!' and 'Aaaaaa, Kaisafa!', and this time Iko leapt out, his face painted black, and his body covered with an armour of human bones. The first spear he threw struck Ikuafa on the thigh and felled him. Kaisafa ran to his elder brother's rescue, extracted the spear from his thigh, evaded Iko's second spear, threw a well-aimed one in return and hit him. The brothers then jointly speared the fallen Iko to death, looted and razed his compound. In sharing the booty Ikuafa claimed the elder granddaughter as his wife, and Kaisafa took the younger one. They returned to their village together and presumably lived happily ever after.

The story opens with two brothers embarking on hunting expeditions. We see the operation of the seniority system through the elder

brother taking upon himself the easier and more prestigious task, while the younger performed the more difficult chore of running around in the bush driving the animals. But the Mekeo suspicion that while junior agnates work hard for their groups their seniors appropriate the fruit of their labour for their own selfish ends is projected in the story through Ikuafa's acts of blatant deception against his younger brother, depriving him of his fair share. When Kaisafa discovers Ikuafa's deception, he promptly severs their relationship. He is so humiliated that he decides to leave and fight Iko, whose ferocious reputation is such that Kaisafa's decision is tantamount to committing suicide. Some people say that in the past when a person was so humiliated by, for example, his wife's infidelity, he went to an enemy village, entered the *ufu* of a military chief and sat against the central post in a deliberate act of demanding to be relieved of his misery. His hosts gave him a very soft areca nut to chew before they killed him at the outskirts of their village. His death would mortally shame those who had wronged him. Kaisafa's action can best be understood in this context, else he would not have declared his intention before leaving the village. His plan works, for soon after he leaves Ikuafa is made to feel thoroughly ashamed of himself.

In order to make amends, Ikuafa takes up his weapons and follows his brother to help him fight Iko. He makes no attempt to dissuade Kaisafa. He knows that the only way available for him to prove his repentance and to salvage their relationship is to share in his brother's adventure. This is to be their biggest and most dangerous hunting expedition. At first Kaisafa refuses to accept him. But on entering the alien and forbidden territory, a sense of real danger compels Kaisafa to change his mind and to take a more forgiving attitude towards his brother. And by jointly attacking the common enemy and working out their aggression on him, Kaisafa and Ikuafa rediscover the value of their fraternal identity. Nevertheless, just desert overtakes Ikuafa, the wrongdoer, who is nearly killed by Iko but is saved by Kaisafa. This is a reminder to senior members of agnatic groups that as they depend on the work of their juniors, they should behave responsibly towards them.

The most important point in the story is seen in the brothers' war cries as they challenge Iko: 'Aaaaaa, Ikuafa!' and 'Aaaaaa, Kaisafa!' It is a statement to the effect that in assaulting Iko they symbolically attack each other, and in killing Iko they lay to rest their mutual anta-

gonism. Unlike A'aisa and Isapini, who went in opposite directions and separated for ever, Kaisafa and Ikuafa return together to their village and cement their reconstituted fraternity by their marriage to two sisters, the granddaughters of their enemy. The killing of Iko symbolises the end of hostility between brothers, and the marriage to Iko's granddaughters represents the rewards of fraternal solidarity against a hostile external world. With reconciliation comes the restoration of proper fraternal relationship: the story ends with the reaffirmation of the principle of seniority. The elder brother takes the elder sister, and the younger brother accepts the younger sister.

The nature of the conflict in this story and the way in which it is resolved (through joint attack on an outsider instead of fighting each other) stand out sharply in contrast to the tragedy in the A'aisa myth. More significantly, the two myths portray elder brothers not in terms of the societal ideals of them as good and selfless men concerned with the welfare of their fraternal groups, but rather in terms of their actual relationships with their younger brothers who often see them as weak and self-centred men who are mainly interested in themselves. The true picture lies somewhere in between.[9]

9. Many months after I had written this chapter, Michael Jackson told me how fiction often contradicts societal dogma. Thus although elder brothers are good men according to dogma, myths and legends portray the darker side of their character.

5. The predicaments of bachelors and husbands

The discussion in the previous chapter of agnatic relationships within Beipa'a local groups highlighted the importance of the principle of inequality as exemplified in the seniority system. In this chapter I discuss two further manifestations of the principle, namely, inequality among men with regard to marital status, and inequality between givers and takers of wives. In the context of traditional Papua New Guinea societies, the unusually strong emphasis in Mekeo on the differences in the status of the married and the unmarried, and of givers and receivers of wives, requires some prior investigation of the bases of these distinctions. For this purpose I discuss first the importance of marriage in Mekeo. I devote the larger part of this chapter to the problem of affinity since marriage ties form the most important and structurally consequential connections between agnatic groups and between wards.

The problem of inequality in affinal relationships revolves on the question of the rights and obligations of wife-givers and wife-takers. In parts of South-east Asia the superiority of wife-givers over wife-takers is a characteristic feature (Leach 1954; Needham 1958, 1960; Cunningham 1958). The Kachin use this to bolster their political ranking system, and Needham said that it is usually the case that in groups with prescriptive matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, wife-givers are superior to wife-takers (1958:82).

Although much of the ethnography of Papua New Guinea is not specifically concerned with this question, it nevertheless shows a great diversity in affinal status relations.[1] Even within a single culture area

1. The lack of attention paid to this question by ethnographers of Melanesia is due partly to the interest in material exchange generated by marriage. As Forge (1971) noted, the inequality established by most marriage systems in Papua New Guinea is mainly inequality in things exchanged: valuables against food; and almost invariably wife-givers are in an advantageous position for they are the receivers of valuables and givers of food.

such as the Massim, we find that the Kalauna of Goodenough Island accord wife-givers a superior status (Young 1971:52-3, 93), whereas it is exactly the reverse in the Trobriands where 'marriage puts the wife's family under permanent tributory obligations to the husband . . .' (Malinowski 1929:121). Among the Melpa of the Western Highlands, the Stratherns (1969) note that equality and inequality depend on extant political relationships among marriage exchanging groups, and that people gain superiority by taking more wives. This, however, is not a clear-cut case for the giving of wives may be the way used by a host group to incorporate another into itself. This uncertainty is also present among the Ilahita Arapesh where the ideal of the superiority of wife-givers is obviated by the superior position of local groups which take more wives than they give (Tuzin 1973:108-11). With the Lakalai, husbands are inferior to their parents-in-law but at the same time are the equals of their brothers-in-law (Chowning 1963-6; Chowning & Goodenough 1971). This seems also the case with the Kyaka Enga (Bulmer 1960:311-12). Finally there are groups which ideally minimise the disparity in affinal status between groups and between individuals. Reay said of the Kuma (1959:61) that 'reciprocity in providing and receiving brides is phrased in terms of actual sister exchange, which does occur sometimes. But it is the exchange between clans rather than between individual men, that is important. Nearly every clan is associated with at least one other with which constant and intensive intermarriage takes place. The final "ignoring of affinity" (in Rivers's terms), or identification of brothers-in-law with actual siblings, is expressed in a term for the relationship between two such clans: they are "as brothers" *(angam angam)* to each other. Members of such clans are generally anxious to sustain the relationship, which further intermarriage can perpetuate'. With Mekeo there is a clear-cut difference in status between wife-givers and wife-takers,[2] with the former in an institutionalised superior and dominant position over the latter. As we shall see below, there is probably no other traditional society reported in Papua New Guinea, with the notable exception of the Trobriands, where inequality in affinal status relationships is so strongly and elaborately expressed as in Mekeo.

2. The terms 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers' have been used largely in the context of alliance systems. Because I could not find suitable alternative words I have used these terms to refer to individuals and groups without implying marriage alliances between Mekeo descent groups.

The importance of marriage

So important is marital status in Mekeo that it forms the basis for the most comprehensive classification of the entire post-childhood population, cutting across all other divisions, whether local or by descent. There are no equivalents in the language for the terms 'youth', 'man' or 'woman'. Apart from the use of personal names, people refer to each individual as either a bachelor, a single female, a married male, a married female, a widower, or a widow, according to the individual's marital status (see Table 10). The word for 'people', *papiau*, which is a combination of the words for married females and married males, is significant in its terminological exclusion of those who are not 'complete citizens'. Pre-pubescent children are known by the general term *imoi*, and only when it is necessary to distinguish their sex are boys called *imoi manguae*, and girls *imoi papie*. That children are most commonly referred to, and are often addressed by, a word which does not distinguish their sexes is an indication of their marginality in marital consideration.

Marital status is a determining factor for a person's daily movements, associations, and civil rights. Those without spouses, particularly the males, are restricted in their movements and associations within the village, and have no rights whatever in the conduct of group affairs except those of their own peer groups. An understanding of the marginal and low status of unmarried males requires prior appreciation of the importance of marriage, and of the courting attitudes and behaviour in the society. Four main factors account for the importance of marriage: legal, economic, social, and demographic.

Legally, the most important aspect of marriage is the establishment of the exclusive rights of the husband to his wife's sexuality, and through this, his claim to their children as his heirs and as primary members of his subclan and ward. The emphasis on exclusive sexual

Table 10: Marital status classification

Male	*Female*
o'oae — bachelors	iviao — single females
au — married males	papie — married females
oa'oae — widowers	afuafu — widows

access is so strong that at least two deaths in the village, and the only dispute which led to temporary emigration during my fieldwork period, were attributed to adultery. As pointed out elsewhere, adultery has been advanced by villagers as one reason for the historical dispersion of clans in Mekeo territory, and as projected in the myth (Chapter 4), A'aisa's first public outburst against his younger brother, Isapini, was brought about by his suspicion of Isapini's having slept with his wife.

From an economic point of view marriage is necessary for men since women do most of the gardening and household work, as well as raising children. As women raised by a group ultimately marry and leave their natal homes, they have to be replaced by their counterparts recruited from other groups. Because of the Mekeo system of affinal obligations, individuals, family groups, and entire wards have an additional pool of labour in the husbands of their female agnates and of their female agnates' daughters. Moreover, it is through marriage that most of the traditional objects of wealth circulate. When I asked villagers to specify the richest categories of people in their traditional society the invariable answer was sorcerers and those who had many daughters. Although from the point of view of agnatic group survival sons are more important than daughters, a man who has many sons or who has sons but no daughters spends his wealth without recovering anything except the little he acquires from the marriages of the daughters and sisters of his agnates.

Socially for males, marriage is the crucial stage in their maturation since only at marriage do they become full adults and enter into the company of those who make and execute socially significant decisions, those who enjoy to the full the privileges which their society bestows. Besides, marriage and having children is, for a man, a sign of complete manhood and a proof of his masculinity. It is also an assurance of his being properly cared for in old age, and of the perpetuation of his name and his line.

Demographically, marriage is vital for the physical survival of the group and for the maintenance of its political strength and position in the village relative to other descent and local groups. Though recruitment to ward membership before this century was complemented by the incorporation of refugee groups, most of it was replacement through legitimate births. In view of the fact that there was no significant increase through natural growth, the term 'replacement' is most

appropriate when we consider the demographic conditions in Mekeo up to the 1940s. The available population estimates for Mekeo villages from the 1890s to the 1940s suggest little variation in the size of Beipa'a and of Mekeo as a whole. As seen in Table 1, only three villages, Inawi, Jesubaibua and Inawabui, showed marked increases and these were the outcome of population shifts rather than of natural growth. Around the first decade of this century the village of Afa'i was abandoned and many of its people migrated to Inawi. Jesubaibua was founded in 1891 (BNG 1891-2:20) by a breakaway section of Inawaia village and owed its increase to its attraction of people from Inawaia and other neighbouring villages including the Pioufa village of Inawae. The rise in the population of Inawabui was probably due to the influx of people from Inawabui-Kaenga, in Northern Ve'e, which was abandoned around the second decade of this century. Those villages such as Amoamo, Inawae and Bebeo which show a slight decline in their populations are traditionally small, peripheral villages; and those with some increases such as Beipa'a and Aipiana are large, central villages. This further supports the point made in Chapter 2 about the stability of central villages and the instability of the peripheral ones.

Only since the Second World War, with marked improvements in health and educational facilities, have there been real, and in some cases accelerating, increases in the populations of Mekeo villages. My interests, however, centre on adult populations most of whom were born or married before 1945. These are the people, nurtured under the 'old regime' which moulded their views and habitual practices, who provide the leaders of the society today.

The stationary character of the pre-war Mekeo population size was viewed with considerable concern by the administration as part of the general problem of population decline in Papua. In 1920, accordingly, the government instituted for the Territory a family bonus scheme aimed at encouraging people to raise large families (Papua 1920-1). But in 1933 a government official admitted that the scheme was of dubious value in Mekeo where men allegedly stopped when they had the necessary number of children to receive a bonus and to be exempted from taxation (KPR 1932-3).[3] The implication here of the people's

3. Under the family bonus scheme 5s. (50 cents) per annum was paid to mothers with four living children under sixteen years of age, and 1s. (10 cents) for each additional child. The Taxation Ordinance of 1918 exempted fathers of four or more children from the annual head tax of £1 ($2) (Papua 1918-19; 1919-20).

preference for small families, confirmed for Inawi by Stephen, is a moot point. Beipa'a people said that a reason for their not having large families in the past was the high rate of child mortality when compared with the situation today. Assuming that infants are among the most likely casualties, then the epidemics which frequently swept the area would have taken a fair toll among them. European-introduced diseases caused half a dozen epidemics in the Central Division of Papua, between 1880 and 1890 (Mosko 1973:65 ff.). In 1928 and 1929 there were 103 deaths and 73 births reported for the village of Rarai alone (KPR 1928-9), and in a period of nine months in 1941, 374 Mekeo were reported to have perished in an influenza epidemic, of which 25 were from Beipa'a (KPR 1941-2). It is possible that there were other smaller epidemics which went unreported during this period, and which took a toll among the very young and the very old.

It was not only disease and childhood mortality that kept the population precariously stationary. Up to the very early years of European intrusion warfare also contributed. In 1890 William MacGregor reported four warring Mekeo groups. Amoamo, assisted by Beipa'a had recently killed twenty-five Rarai people who had previously killed seventeen or eighteen of the Amoamo. Inawaia and Inawabui were fighting with a total loss of thirteen men (BNG 1889-90:79-80). Perhaps more than actual battle casualties, warfare and the threat of war kept warriors away from their wives over prolonged periods. The people of Inau'i ward gave as a reason for the present small size of their group the fact that their forefathers spent too much time preparing for or fighting wars. Sexual abstinence was a requisite of preparation for warfare.[4] Other sexual observances also contributed to wide birth spacing and hence to its low rate. These include at least a one-and-a-half-year post-partum taboo, and abstinence during periods when men were preparing for and performing magic which was (and is) involved in all important ventures. There were other chance factors such as sterility and births of females only. Father Egidi's genealogical collection documents several family groups which disappeared for one or other of these reasons.

In summary, legal, economic, social and demographic factors underlie the importance which Mekeo attach to marriage. The first

4. This could have also been a reason for the small sizes of peripheral Pioufa villages described in Chapter 2.

three categories are common to many other societies in Papua New Guinea, and in themselves do not provide an adequate explanation for the peculiarly Mekeo treatment of the unmarried and the wife-takers. For this we have also to look to demographic factors in conjunction with courting practices and the firmly embedded principle of inequality. Given the stationary character of the population before the 1940s, the harsh and debilitating environmental conditions, the outbreaks of epidemics, the practice of sexual abstinence, and the poor state of health facilities, there was real danger of a decline in population. For Mekeo, then, marriage of every male was essential for the mere maintenance of an acceptable and viable size of social units. The importance of marriage for every male followed partly from the low level of pre-colonial plural marriages, and partly from the successful efforts of Catholic missionaries in suppressing them.[5] At the turn of the century, plural marriages, mainly involving no more than two wives at a time, constituted only 6 or 7 per cent of all marriages. Marriages with three or four wives were very rare (Egidi 1912:220). This, according to Egidi, was because brides were expensive to 'buy', and parents disliked the notion of their daughters becoming second wives. This is understandable because the seniority system placed the second wife in a junior position and her children were, in consequence, junior to those of the first wife. Egidi does not mention that polygynous marriage places the husband in a difficult situation since he is obliged to work for the agnates and the mother's agnates of each wife he takes.

The joys and sorrows of bachelorhood

The foregoing statements on the importance of marriage enable us to see some of the reasons for the low status of unmarried males and the disapproval of permanent bachelorhood. In the following pages I discuss additional reasons for this disapproval. It is a fact of Mekeo social life that on the one hand a man is damned if he is not married, and on the other hand, he is bonded to a lifetime of service to his affines whenever demanded, if he is. Once a boy reaches the bachelor stage and goes out to live in the *ngove*, he is more than merely cut off

5. Bowers (1965-6:31) argues that a reason for the high rate of permanent bachelorhood in the Upper Kaugel Valley is the practice of polygyny (some men had ten wives) which tended to reduce the number of eligible women.

from complete dependence upon his parents. More importantly, he is freed from much of the constraint such dependence entails. The physical separation removes him from the overpowering presence of his parents into the freer world of his own peers. From then until his marriage he enjoys the most carefree and irresponsible part of his entire post-childhood life. Being on the periphery, physically and socially, he is relatively free for a number of years from the tensions and conflicts inherent in the lives of those living inside the village.

With other young bachelors he spends the best part of his time in the most exciting and titillating occupation of adolescents: courting girls, one of whom he hopes to marry eventually. The term used for courting is *iviao a kapunga* ('we are searching for girls'). The word *kapunga* is related to *kapukapu*, which means 'hunting'. The phrase *iviao a kapunga* aptly places the courting of females and the hunting of game on the same cognitive level of activity. Another phrase for courting is *pealai a peni'i*, the closest English translation of which is probably 'we are going after them'. Just as the hunter uses his magic to attract the game and to destroy the animal's evasive faculties, so does the lover employ his magic to attract girls and to banish from their minds all other thoughts except those regarding their suitor. So powerful is some of this magic *(pakai)*[6] believed to be that it is not only nubile girls, but any female, including the lover's sisters, mothers, and brothers' wives, who are liable to fall victim if suitors do not handle their love magic carefully or if they use it with evil intent. *Pakai* may be obtained from sorcerers who allegedly have in their possession the most powerful love magic, and control the access to sacred spots where powerful *pakai* substances such as stones, clays and liquids are located. In the 1930s and 1940s, during the youth of old and middle-aged men still living, the sorcerers' *ngove* were favourite gathering places for young men in quest of potent *pakai.*

The Mekeo men's penchant and flair for dressing-up and self-decoration, which, in a fit of ethnocentricity, Belshaw (1951) characterised as their effeminate dandiness, date back to their bachelor days when they spent so much time and care in making themselves irresistibly attractive to girls and women. The following are quotations

6. This term is related to the verb *pakaikai* which means 'to decorate oneself with flowers, leaves, feathers and paint'.

from early visitors to Mekeo who described the bachelor in this manner (Haddon 1910:256-8; Williamson 1914:122, 127):

> When a boy has been declared *ibitoe* [the Roro word for bachelors] he is told, 'Now you are free look out for a woman and marry as soon as possible'. At first the young man does not think about such things. He enjoys his absolute independence; he goes, comes, plays the fool as he pleases; he dances for the sake of dancing; decorates himself for his own delectation; but gradually other thoughts arise. The girls of his own age grow up; his parents begin to talk about the girls, about the presents and marriage and so forth. Such suggestions soon have the natural result.
>
> The lad becomes *rove* [or *ngope* in Mekeo]. It is difficult to find a proper English equivalent for this term: 'holy' or 'sacred' originally expressed this idea, now other meanings have been read into them; it is perhaps best to simply appropriate the Polynesian term 'taboo'. He ornaments himself more extravagantly, and wears tight laces till human nature can stand no more; he plays sweet, melancholy airs on his flute in a corner of the village, and the girls creep out to listen to the ravishing music.
>
> The young men waylay the girls and offer presents. The weak damsels may cry out and run to their parents, the lusty will beat and scratch the adventurous youth, who never dares to resist lest he draw upon himself her parents' wrath. Should fair means fail, recourse is had to the sorcerer, and he generally brings the girl to reason.
>
> Look at the young dandy strutting about the village enclosure, for the sun has set and he is no longer forbidden to do so. There is no dance or ceremony impending, but his body shines with the oily red paint with which he has smeared it; his black frizzy hair has evidently received careful and prolonged attention, so beautifully is it combed out.
>
> His perineal band of bark cloth is immaculate in neatness; and a fine necklace of beads round his neck, cut-shell ornaments, with coloured draceana leaves tucked into them, on his arms, and bands on his legs, below the knees, render him a figure of beauty, which hardly requires the hibiscus flower in his hair to complete it.
>
> He is evidently paying court to some girl, and, if so, it behoves him to look his best . . .
>
> Paying court to the girls and women, whether with a view to ultimate marriage or merely for present amusement, is the constant thought and chief diversion of every young Mekeo man who respects himself; and in his old age he will relate with pride his successful efforts to induce a girl to leave her relations, or a married woman her husband, and to come away with him.



VI Mekeo youths in typical finery.

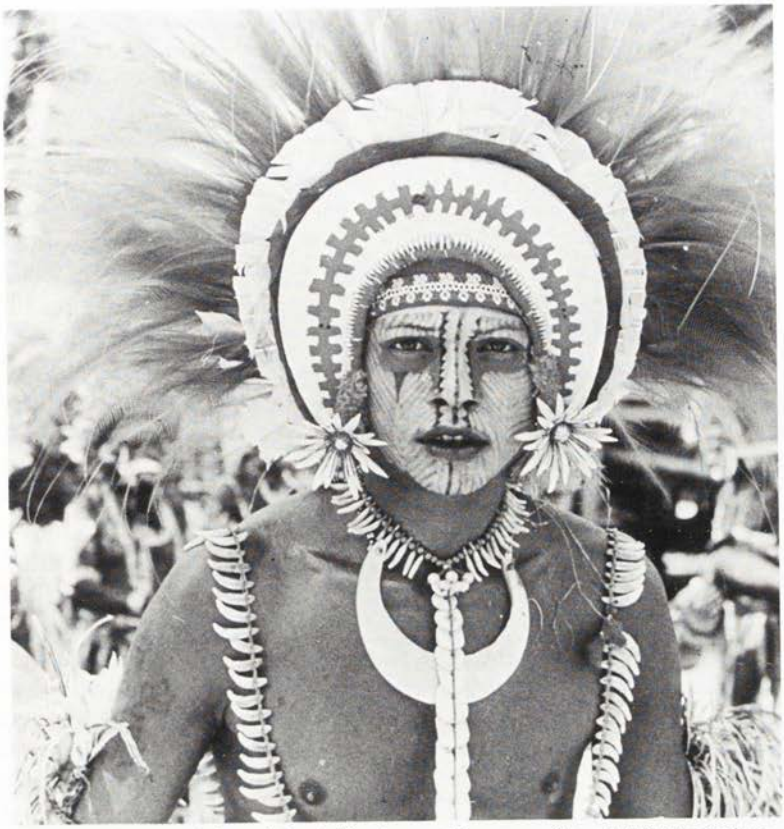
These descriptions are virtually identical with those which old and middle-aged men, and even younger men in their mid-thirties in the early 1970s, provided me with regard to their own bachelorhood activities. Although the mode of dress has changed recently with the increasing use of European clothes and decorative materials, the attitudes and practices of bachelors have altered only slightly. The aims of self-decoration were not lost on Catholic missionaries in Beipa'a who, until after the war, forbade any man from entering the church for Mass if he so much as had a feather or a flower on his head, or a daub of paint on his face.

With a touch of nostalgia, married men now say that in their bachelor days they courted simultaneously at least three or four girls, partly for the fun of it and partly for the enhancement of their chances of capturing a wife. This means that much of the bachelor's time is spent traversing miles of bush and forest lands, going furtively from garden to garden, of his own and neighbouring villages, keeping dates with his several girlfriends. In early mornings or at dusk bachelors risk

their health lurking in the bush behind the backyard hoping to see or meet the girls; and in the dead of the night when the village is in slumber, they risk their lives prowling under houses trying to entice their girlfriends outside, often by inserting thin needles through spaces between floor boards. Sometimes they strike through wrong spots and arouse instead the fathers, who rush out, armed, and give chase; the youngsters invariably escape into the backyard and the bush beyond.

One such incident occurred while I was in the village. The night prowler was so bold as to enter his girlfriend's house and somehow woke the father, who chased him. Because of recent rains the adventurer's footprints were easily traced to a young widower's *ngove*. The widower, allegedly fast asleep at the time, woke up and protested his innocence. Other people gathered at the *ngove* and managed to clear him because the footprints did not match his. They finally agreed that the real offender had resorted to an ancient ruse. When chased from a house, some bachelors would run to the ladders of *ngove* not their own, and continue their escape underneath and into the bush. Meanwhile, their misled and furious pursuers, following their footsteps, would stop at the wrong *ngove* and abuse or assault the innocent occupants.

The problem with Mekeo is the lack of provision for open and regulated courting such as *karim lek* in parts of the New Guinea Highlands. The only open form of courting is during dances, which are infrequent. Since, however, spouses and parents know what is involved in dancing, they always watch their marital partners and daughters closely to make sure that nothing happens. Even in dancing the courting is done as secretly as possible. It has to be covert—and the most covert of all are things which occur invisibly—hence love magic and its use in dancing to make women fall in love to such an extent that they have to send messages of assignation to the men, rather than the other way around. Men initiate action through magic, women respond through secret messages. Ordinarily couples meet and court in utmost secrecy and privacy, in the bush or in the dark. Because of this parents have few ways of supervising their daughters' courting activities, and are therefore suspicious of them. They tend to be indignant and violent when they discover such goings on behind their backs. Not being given to gallantry, the young men, when discovered, do not hesitate to use their legs, leaving their girlfriends behind to be severely beaten by their own irate fathers and mothers.



VII A Mekeo youth dressed for civilian dance at Imounga village, 1972. His aim is to appear attractive.

To the young bachelors courting is a thrilling adventure which involves, among other things, risks of violence at the hands of their girlfriends' parents. To the parents, on the other hand, unmarried men are an undesirable lot whose aim is to steal their daughters. The antagonism between affines and affinal groups has some of its origins in this secretive courting system. Of the nine marriages and attempted marriages which occurred in Beipa'a during my fieldwork periods, seven were elopements, which are aptly termed *amange painao*, literally, 'marriage by theft'. The antagonism referred to above was institutionalised in an old custom called *avani*. When a 'marriage by

theft' occurred the relatives of the bride would stage a raid on the residential strip of the groom and carry off everything they found. People conducted similar raids when proper marriages were contracted, but the bride's side would take only those items previously agreed upon. When Ame Mangaiva eloped with an Inaufokoa girl in 1940 the woman's agnates raided his parents' home and slaughtered all the pigs, the chickens, and the dogs they could lay their hands on. Then they proceeded to strip the fruits from all the family areca and coconut palms behind in the backyard. When after a few weeks of hiding, Ame and his bride returned to the village, the Inaufokoa forced him to spend one whole day climbing coconut trees in their backyard. Villagers said that the councillors banned *avani* in 1960 after a raid on Fopafo'ina by some Aipiana people (of Meauni ward), one of whom was seriously injured with a club by the irate owner of a large pig which was mistakenly speared.

Consistent with the secrecy in courting is the fact that it is not only the boys who conduct multiple dating; girls also have several boyfriends. Young men do their utmost to conceal from each of their girlfriends their multiple courtships and if pressed do not hesitate to fabricate answers. The girls allegedly do exactly the same. Consequently, people suspect their pre-marital partners of indulging in the same deceitful games that they themselves play. This leads to some important consequences after marriage. It is one of the nightmares of husbands that their wives are conducting adulterous liaisons with 'old flames' among whose number are their own agnatic peers with whom they shared past amorous adventures. Women entertain similar suspicions about their husbands. Thus a good deal of the tensions which might have originated in matters other than sex, sometimes find expression in accusations of adultery. The mythical A'aisa's initial accusation that his wife had committed adultery with his younger brother, Isapini, may be said to be a projection of this fundamental suspicion. The local courting system, then, is a source of post-bachelor *pikupa*. During my fieldwork an incident and some stories made me aware of this aspect of the society.

It was an open secret in a village that a middle-aged married woman there had been conducting extra-marital liaisons with at least two lovers from her unmarried past. One of the lovers fell seriously ill and upon his recovery repented and joined the Legion of Mary. Early in 1973 the other man, who persisted heedlessly, died after a prolonged

illness. The person most suspected in relation to the death was the cuckolded husband, who had allegedly hired a sorcerer in another village to kill his rival. A few months after the lover's death the husband also died, and there is no doubt that this was regarded by the villagers as retaliation by the relatives of the unfortunate adulterer.

One story relates that the father of one of the oldest men in Beipa'a was a great friend of a powerful sorcerer of Aipiana. The father, who was a notorious womaniser, double-crossed his old friend in a love affair. In retaliation the sorcerer killed him and ran away with his widow (see Chapter 7). As a final illustration, one story has it that a sorcerer gave some venomous potions to two good friends, both of whom he disliked intensely. The sorcerer told each that the other was going after his wife. The two men very nearly committed murder but fortunately their friendship was sufficiently strong for them to reveal to each other their secret missions. One of them allegedly gave the poison to a nephew of the sorcerer and killed him instead. The point of these stories seems to be that even close friends, whose relationships are usually cemented during bachelorhood, are foolish to trust each other with their wives and that such trust, when it is found, is extremely precarious.

Adults' suspicion of the behaviour and intentions of bachelors, coloured as it is by their own past personal experiences, reinforces the low esteem in which bachelors are held, and contributes to their low and marginal status. Theft and other kinds of mischief are generally blamed on young bachelors. During the Christmas holiday season, for example, when young men returned home for the festivities, villagers warned me to lock my house because of the thieving bachelors. They told stories of sons who robbed even their own parents. Although I did not take the well-meaning advice, in the three Christmas seasons I spent in Beipa'a I never lost anything except a wrist-watch which was promptly recovered from a bachelor.

Moreover, because of the association of some bachelors with powerful magicians and sorcerers in particular (much of which is innocent association in quest of effective love magic), they are sometimes suspected of being in league with sorcerers. Thus young men who lurk behind in the backyard, or sneak around in the bush, or prowl under houses at night, appear to behave exactly like sorcerers and their assistants, and are therefore easily mistaken for the latter. When councillors warn the people at night that sorcerers have been

Table 11: Age at first marriage of Beipa'a males and females (Marriages recorded between 1901 and 1970)

Age at marriage	Male 1901-40 %	Male 1941-70 %	Female 1901-40 %	Female 1941-70 %
14	1	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	1
16	5	1	6	2
17	6	1	15	6
18	9	2	11	5
19	11	7	15	11
20	11	8	15	14
21	13	7	9	15
22	9	10	11	10
23	8	6	4	11
24	7	12	3	6
25	4	4	6	5
26	2	8	2	5
27	2	7	0	2
28	2	4	0	2
29	3	6	0	2
30	1	2	1	1

seen in the vicinity of the village, or in the bushlands in daytime, some people would say that these are indeed sorcerers; some that they are thieves from other villages; while others would suggest that they might have been bachelors looking for girls, or perhaps widowers on some dangerous nocturnal mission for sorcerers. No one is certain, for such prowlers are rarely caught. Because of this uncertainty and unfavourable views regarding unmarried men in general, a whole section of the community is often viewed by their fellow-villagers with suspicion which carries over even after marriage. There are to my knowledge six men in the village who are established heads of domestic groups, and who are said by some others to be bad men because of their past and youthful associations with sorcerers.

Table 11 Continued

31	1	1	0	2
32	1	2	0	0
33	1	4	0	0
34	1	3	0	0
35	1	2	1	0
36	0	2	0	0
37	0	0	0	0
38	0	0	0	0
39	1	0	0	0
40	0	0	0	0
41	0	0	0	0
42	0	0	0	0
43	0	1	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
N	156	118	137	111
Average age at marriage	22	25	20	22

Only those whose birth and marriage dates are estimated or precisely recorded in the Church registry at Beipa'a are included in this table.

To take young men out of the bachelor stage of mischief and alleged anti-social activities, and to have them contributing to the manpower of their families, subclans and wards, it is desirable that they should marry as early as possible. In the pre-1941 period a third of the men who married did so between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, and 80 per cent before they were twenty-five. Table 11 provides details of ages at marriage. That men married older in the 1941-70 period is a direct consequence of the changes brought about by the post-war reconstruction and development which has extended educational opportunities and attracted young village lads to urban areas in search of wage-employment. Table 11 also shows that during both periods women married younger than men, and the women's delayed age at

marriage for the latter period is the direct correlate of young men's prolonged absence from the village. Mekeo prefer that women marry young, for bachelors favour young and attractive girls for wives; the older a woman becomes the less are her chances for marriage, for, among other things, when a woman reaches her mid-twenties she tends to age rapidly because of her heavy workload. This is not helped by the fact that personal beautification is a privilege largely of males. In the pre-war period more than 80 per cent of married women had married before they were twenty-three, and almost all had done so before the age of twenty-seven.[7]

The fact that in the 1901-40 period a sizeable proportion (27 per cent) of married men committed themselves after they were 23 years of age, is not only attributable to economic factors such as bride-price considerations, or to factors such as younger siblings waiting till their elder brothers were married first, but also, I would argue, to the attractions of bachelorhood. As stated previously, the bachelor stage is for a man the most exciting, carefree and irresponsible of his entire post-childhood life. That so many of the young men who have emigrated to urban centres have also refused all entreaties to marry early to their village girls is to some extent an expression of their endeavour to maintain their freedom, especially in view of the fact that marriage entails for them very heavy affinal burdens.

Since marriage is necessary for the return into the main part of the village of those who would otherwise remain for the rest of their lives on the periphery, leading inadequately supervised and threatening lives, strong inducements are offered for marriage and equally strong sanctions are presented against prolonged and permanent bachelorhood. I discuss these concurrently since point by point the sanctions are the reverse of the inducements.

It is only when a male is married that he enters the final and most important stage of his social maturation, that of full adulthood. At marriage a male ceases being an *o'oae* and becomes an *au*. The stage of *au* entitles him to rights and privileges which are strictly denied to any other category of males. Only *au* have the right to participate in

7. Reay told me that even in the pre-war period Mekeo women did not marry early when compared with women in other Papua New Guinea societies such as Kuma. A probable reason for Mekeo women's late marriages was the criterion of 'a good worker' for marriage: a girl had to prove herself first. Moreover, because of the increasing late marriage among the men, unmarried women have an increased value to their parents until they are replaced by their brothers' wives.

important decision-making and deliberations affecting social groups. Bachelors of all ages not only have no voice whatever in these deliberations, but they are strictly barred from attending them. The only exceptions are government officials and school teachers, because of external sanctions backing them; and they are tolerated only within the limits of their official competence.

The right of access to the focal point of a ward's social, ceremonial and political life, the *ufu*, is reserved for married men. Here they hold important meetings, or merely enjoy each other's company, and are feted with the best their womenfolk cook. The choicest foods are for married men, who can eat as much as they wish, openly and anywhere. In general, men consider it a point of honour to taste the food and send the bulk to their families. The point, however, is that they have the sole privilege and occasionally take full advantage of it. Unmarried men, on the other hand, are not supposed to be seen eating. They should abstain from eating good food: they are supposed to be on the strict diet of a few roasted bananas and plenty of chili and ginger in order to strengthen their resolve and their magical powers so as to capture effectively the affections of nubile girls.[8] If they appear too well-fed, showing no signs of food abstinence, then girls would say that their approaches are faked, and that they are weak, greedy, and selfish. Thus when good food is cooked, especially during feasts, unmarried men are the category of people least considered for feeding. The moral is clearly this: 'get married soon and then you can eat well'.

At marriage a man may begin to lay claim to parts of his patrimonial lands. Land is the most important of all Mekeo material possessions and those without it are forever dependent on other people's lands for subsistence. Since individual claims to plots of land depend on effective use by gardening, and since so much of the garden work depends on women (mainly wives and daughters), it is necessary that a man marries as soon as he can if he is to acquire sufficient land for himself. In general, those with small amounts of land are junior members of families, or descendants of junior lineage agnates. This is partly because younger sons marry relatively late. The longer a marriage is postponed the less chance a man has to claim an adequate amount of land, since his married male agnates are appropriating more of their common inheritance each year.

8. Bachelors no longer do this except when they are fasting for making love magic.

Marriage also earns a man the right to leave the periphery, to enter and live in the main part of the village, to claim a house site on his family residential strip, and to build a family house of his own. To have a family house which is a man's castle, and establish a domestic group, is, for him, the ultimate show of his full maturation and the attainment of complete manhood. The right to take up residence in the main part of the village saves him from being perpetually fated to live on the periphery, in the backyard, which is the dangerous meeting point of the mundane and the sacred-evil worlds. Marriage therefore introduces him into the relative safety of the village. Furthermore, it offers a means of rescuing him from the general poor reputation of occupants of *ngove*, though there are men who have not successfully shed the notoriety they earned during their bachelorhood. The word *au* is also the term for 'trees' which are associated with solidity, strength, steadfastness and uprightness. It aptly signifies the ideals of the married state as a position of power, stability and moral rectitude, as opposed to the state of prolonged and permanent bachelorhood which connotes weakness, instability, and amorality if not outright moral turpitude.

Marriage at an early age offers a man an early opportunity to enjoy the rights and privileges of being an *au*, and enables him to take an early and full advantage of the social salvation and economic advancement such rights and privileges bestow. The longer a man postpones his marriage the less are his chances for securing a wife. This was why in the 1901-40 period nearly all (94 per cent) of married men had taken the step before they were thirty years old. In 1971 out of a total of thirty-two resident bachelors over sixteen years of age, eight were permanent bachelors, *ongo*. Two of these were between thirty and forty years of age, three between forty-one and fifty, and three were well over sixty. The other twenty-four, all between the ages of sixteen and thirty, were still elligible. There were also sixteen other bachelors between the ages of thirty and fifty all of whom had left the village in their early youth to work for the government or for private enterprise (see Appendixes 2 and 3). Their prolonged bachelorhood has undoubtedly been affected by factors other than those traditional to Mekeo. If we take as our sample only those single men over sixteen years of age who were resident in Beipa'a in 1971, then the eight permanent bachelors represent 25 per cent of the total. Most of them, however, were unmarriageable. Five were either physically crippled or

ugly or both; the sixth was mentally defective; and the seventh was, according to his chief, given an unfortunate name at birth: none of the previous holders of the name, all belonging to the same lineage, ever got married because the original holder was not only an *ongo*, but was also a notorious sorcerer. The eighth permanent bachelor was an excessively shy man of considerable physical strength and attractive demeanour, who rarely spoke to anyone, least of all to women. Some people said that he was odd and did not want to marry, while others maintained that since he was not already married it must be that his love magic was weak. It can be argued that the pressure for marriage in Beipa'a, and in Mekeo as a whole, was so strong that practically all but the unmarriageable men succumbed, and, excepting those affected by modern changes, most men married by the time they were thirty years of age.

In summing up this section we can say that the ranking of males according to marital status is based on two related factors: the importance of marriage, which leads to the use of supposedly dangerous magic; and the fears and suspicions on the part of adults of the sexual activities of bachelors. The consignment of young boys to bachelors' quarters at the periphery of the village is, among other things, a recognition of their potential sexual threat and a means of encouraging them to use powerful magic to secure wives quickly. By living separately and leading relatively unconstrained and ill-supervised lives, bachelors pose a nuisance if not an outright threat to society. The fact that some resort, or are suspected of resorting, to sorcerers for assistance in their quest for women makes unmarried men even more threatening. Moreover, the lack of institutions for open and regulated courting forces young people to consort secretly. Secrecy leads to misunderstanding and suspicion. The lack of open courting institutions and the Mekeo inclination toward secrecy and privacy has produced a courting pattern in which, while parents encourage their sons to court other people's daughters, they are at the same time most indignant and at least vocally violent when sons of other people are found courting their daughters in the bush or in the dark, the most common way such activity is carried out in the society. From their bases, the *ngove*, at the edges of the village, bachelors are associated with evil powers 'outside' the village, threatening the well-being of the inhabitants within. It is natural, therefore, that they receive the blame for other non-sexual offences such as theft. One final point must be made. The

increasing emigration of bachelors from the village has wrought a certain measure of change although the old attitudes still remain. Many domestic groups do not have *ngove* so that when the young unmarried men return home for their Christmas holidays many of them stay in the family houses. Nevertheless, since their visit is short, this deviation from the norm has so far created little problem.

The bondage of marriage

The importance of marriage is closely associated with an elaborate system of inducements and sanctions which strategically affects every major aspect of an individual's post-childhood and post-adolescent life. The system is aimed at compelling eligible men to marry early. We cannot appreciate fully the reality of affinal relationships of the Mekeo without prior comprehension of what marriage means to the society. It is crucial in the understanding of affinity, the *ipangava* relationship, to bear in mind the fact that, in Mekeo, it is the services and not the persons of women which are transferred at marriage. While away in servitude to their husbands and their husbands' groups, women retain permanently their primary membership in their own natal groups. Further, while they may live in their husbands' wards for the rest of their lives, they are always returned at death to be buried by their agnates in the 'womb' of their natal *pangua*, this nowadays being located outside the settlements. All this forms the basis for the continuing assertion by wife-givers of their superiority over the husbands of their female agnates. It is clearly expressed during confrontations between affinal groups in which the standard admonitions by wife-givers are variations of the following:

> Our brothers-in-law, our sons-in-law. We gave you our sisters and our daughters. They bear your children and take good care of them. They grow your bananas and your taro. They raise your pigs and your chickens. They cook for you, they wash your clothes, and work for your chiefs. You know, and we know, that our great generosity has been with you. Through our kindness your lineages will not perish. That is why, our brothers-in-law and our sons-in-law, we ask you: Why do you dislike us? Why do you always argue against us? Why do you disobey us? Are our sisters and daughters refusing to work for you and your chiefs? If this is so then say so.

To admonitions and rhetorical questions such as these there is invariably no verbal response, for they are designed to shame the wife-takers

and to remind them of their proper inferior and subordinate status. There is no doubt, however, that both sides in the affinal situation know that there exist between them the ambivalent feelings and at times open hostility that relationships of inequality so often entail. Two incidents which occurred very soon after my arrival in Beipa'a dramatise some of the reasons why people at times bear no great love for their superior affines. The first concerns female, and the second male, affines. The inequality between affines is not restricted to males but also pervades relationships between women. Indeed the Mekeo terms for affinity do not specify gender: the general terms for affines, *ipangava*, combines *ipa* (brothers- and sisters-in-law) and *ngava* (sons- and daughters-in-law, and fathers- and mothers-in-law).

On Saturday 13 March 1971, Aisa'au Isava, an elderly and very short Inaufokoa woman who had married an Ongofo'ina man, passed through her natal ward on her way home. A group of Inaufokoa wives, gossiping on a verandah, saw her and one of them, Apini Opungu, remarked loudly: 'Teh! That one walking down there, is it a woman or a little girl?' The remark was followed by uproarious laughter from the other women, but Aisa'au ignored it and went quietly on her way. She was, however, humiliated and furious.

After Mass on the following morning, when people were relaxing on their verandahs and platforms, as they usually do on Sunday mornings, Aisa'au reappeared at Inaufokoa where she stood on the central ground in front of Apini Opungu's husband's residential strip, and announced in a calm but distinct voice, 'As I passed through here yesterday, you made a slighting remark about my height. I have come back to you and I will stay here until you make me grow taller.' She then sat down on the bare ground looking very solemnly in front her. After a moment of silence following the announcement, people began to realise that Aisa'au wanted to get satisfaction from her *ipangava*. Hastily, one of the Inaufokoa wives rushed out with a good mat, spread it, lifted Aisa'au bodily and seated her on it. Another woman came out with an umbrella, opened it, and tied it to a stick which she planted beside Aisa'au to protect her from the elements. It was understood that Aisa'au was to take possession of both the mat and the umbrella.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Inaufokoa wives gathered, held a quick meeting, and then started a collection of dishes, cups, plates, cutlery, mats, blankets, mosquito nets, sheets, canned meats, ten dollars in

cash and traditional valuables. They presented these formally to Aisa'au and apologised for their insult. Then they took her into Apini Opungu's house and bathed, clothed and fed her. The big basin from which she was bathed, the towel she was dried with, the food presented to her together with its containers and the plates, cups and cutlery she used, were all added to the collection. After this her *ipangava* escorted her home with all her newly acquired wealth. While the women were outwardly good humoured during the proceeding, their husbands were visibly embarrassed and kept their distance and their peace. Aisa'au was stony-faced throughout.

Almost exactly two weeks later, Ivangu Kaengo, a close female agnate of Aisa'au, who was also married to an Ongofo'ina, died after a prolonged illness. Her husband's people returned her body to her patri-ward, for a short mourning and for burial. In accordance with tradition, the Inaufokoa summoned all their male *ipangava* present in the village to dig the grave, to refill it after the funeral, and to assist in the task of catering for scores of mourners who had come to pay their last respects. They killed a middle-sized pig to feed their working affines.

Two of the *ipangava*, Kape A'iso and Aisa Maino, who had married women from the deceased's lineage, did not go to work for the funeral although they were in the village. Mekeo say that funeral work is one of the gravest of the *ipangava* obligations and it applies especially to men married to women most closely related to the deceased. The Inaufokoa were so angry with Kape and Aisa that they demanded payment of a pig each for their atrocious behaviour. On hearing the demand conveyed to him by some *ipangava*, Aisa Maino retorted that he had refused to work because the Inaufokoa had killed only a small pig. Then he added, 'Did they grease your mouths with pork fat?' This was overheard by his wife who dutifully reported it to her agnates. This slur on their name and standing in the village so shamed the Inaufokoa that they held a meeting and decided to provide a special feast, *ipaani ngakunga*, for all their male affines and to 'grease their mouths' with so much pork fat they would never again complain about not being properly fed.

Although the feast was not held until late in July, the Inaufokoa summoned their *ipangava* on many occasions to do most of the preparatory work during the intervening period. They told them that they were in 'gaol', *tsipula*, and must therefore be on alert for calls to work

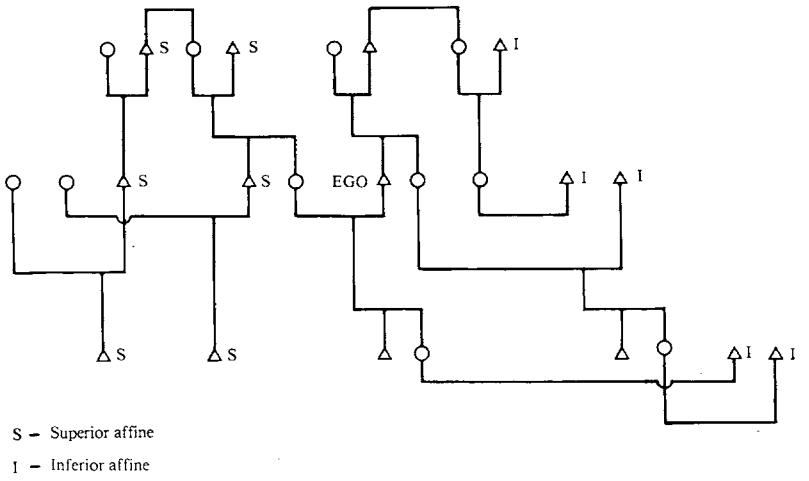


Fig. 4 The principal male affines of a married man

at any time. During this period also, the Inaufokoa made fun of their affines, bullied and provoked them into quarrelling among themselves or with their superiors so that they could be fined for their misbehaviour. They set out deliberately to get the *ipangava* into a suitably submissive state of mind for the feast.

On one occaison the senior boss so intimidated an affine that the latter addressed him by the wrong name. For this the boss punished him in public by force-feeding him with a large, unhusked, hard areca nut. It is not physically possible to eat such a nut in this way. The boss shoved it several times into his mouth and once he pushed it in so deep that the wretched man nearly choked. He begged almost tearfully for mercy which was granted only after he had paid a two dollar fine. The rest of the *ipangava* were so duly impressed that they became morose for the rest of the day.

One day before work started some of the *ipangava* complained of feeling ill. As a cure the Inaufokoa forced them to drink water heavily laced with hot chili before they went to work. As a result of this treatment an elderly *ipangava* vomited in the Inaufokoa *ufu.*

During work one afternoon an Inaufokoa man deliberately provoked an *ipangava* into swearing at him. Later in the evening some of the overworked and exhausted affines quarrelled among themselves after

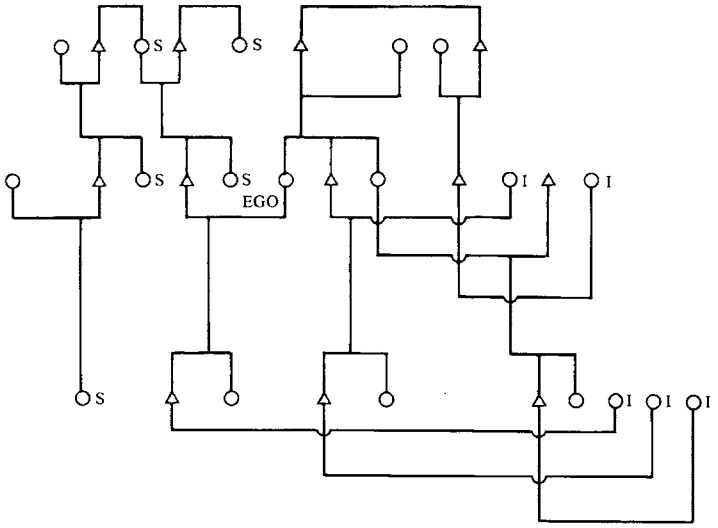


Fig. 5 The principal female affines of a married woman

an Inaufokoa man had apparently accidentally poured tea from a large teapot on the lap of a hapless *ipangava.* For these two offences the Inaufokoa imposed on them a fine of a dollar each. On the following day the *inpangava* collected a total amount of $44 and purchased a pig which they took in a slow, solemn procession, singing mournful songs, and formally presented to the Inaufokoa chiefs, asking for reconciliation.

The events described above indicate some of the methods the Inaufokoa employed to assert their dominance over their affines, cowing them in preparation for the main event. On the feast day six large village pigs were slaughtered in addition to about the same number of feral ones and a fully grown cassowary. One of the pigs, the biggest ever seen in the village, was purchased for $190 from a European-owned piggery near Port Moresby.[9] The fat from these pigs

9. Since the pig was white and raised in the whiteman's way, the Inaufokoa fed it with bread and bathed it daily with soap. Its sores were patched with Band-aids provided by my wife. This attention was given more with amusement and with a spirit of entertainment than with a serious purpose, for the person responsible for the welfare of the pig, Kape Ame, was one of the funniest and most jovial men in the village.

was separated raw from the flesh and cooked in large slabs and strips. These were then suspended from a long pole resting horizontally on two upright posts. At sunset the *ipangava*, thirty-one of them, went to the feast. As each entered through a gate into an enclosure specially prepared for the occasion, he paid a $30 entrance fee. Kape A'iso and Aisa Maino paid an additional $10 each since they were the culprits. The whole village and people from neighbouring villages went to see the feast, which was the first of its kind held in Beipa'a for more than twenty years. A large quantity of cooked vegetables and meat was presented to the *ipangava* to be eaten in its entirety in one sitting. The Inaufokoa instructed them especially to consume all the suspended pork fat without the aid of their hands, and to eat it in the same way as their (Inaufokoa) totemic bird, the hornbill, pecks fruits.

At first there was a good deal of humour involved as the *ipangava* jumped around imitating the hornbill cry as they tried to bite off pieces of fat, and getting not only their mouths but also their faces smeared with grease. But it all turned sour when their stomachs were full and the sadistic nature of their punishment became increasingly felt. The spectators ceased laughing but the Inaufokoa taunted their *ipangava* relentlessly and ordered them not to stop eating. They kept calling out, 'You asked for pork fat, now eat it all up!' Several times during the evening the Inaufokoa escorted individuals or small groups of *ipangava* out of the enclosure to vomit or defaecate before they resumed eating. By the early hours of the morning they could not eat any longer, despite orders and taunts from their superior affines. Though they looked ill, miserable and very angry with their tormentors, most of them took their humiliation quietly. They sat down and sang mournful songs about misery. And since they could not eat half of what was presented to them, the Inaufokoa claimed victory, ordering them to rise and dance, then dismissing them.

In the two incidents narrated on the preceding pages the parties in conflict stood in positions of institutionalised inequality and their confrontations were brought about by acts of disrespect and belittlement. In both cases those in a position of superiority exacted submission from their subordinates, however costly or humiliating it was for the latter. Their ability to do so demonstrates the reality of the power Mekeo attribute to them. There is an important similarity here with the myth told at the beginning of Chapter 4. The hostile sentiments held by A'aisa against his younger brother, Isapini, were aroused by

the latter's addressing his elder brother by the term 'child'; consequently A'aisa, through the display of official rank, forced from Isapini an acknowledgment of his seniority. Similarly, Aisa'au Isava took offence and revenge when her *ipangava* compared her size to that of a child, and the Inaufokoa reacted strongly because their *ipangava* scorned the size of their pig. In all three instances trouble arose when someone violated the principle of orderly relations of inequality. No one in Beipa'a questioned the rights of Asia'au and the Inaufokoa to demand and obtain submission and reparation from their *ipangava.* Disagreements which surfaced, particularly with regard to the Inaufokoa case, were questions not of rights but of the extent to which the Inaufokoa exercised them. I return to these incidents later.

The following description of affinity should be read in conjunction with Figures 4 and 5. Mekeo wife-givers are not only a woman's own agnates but also the agnates of her mother. Thus Kape, a married man, is principally superior to two categories of male affines. The first consists of the husbands of his sisters, of his daughters, and of his father's sisters. These men, being married to his closest female agnates, owe him their primary affinal obligations. There are, however, differences in the degree and quality of relationships and interactions between Kape and these affines. Kape is a middle-aged man in his late forties or early fifties with a married daughter. In the generation above him, his father's sisters' husbands are elderly and respected citizens. For this reason, he does not ordinarily demand their services unless for major work projects and in emergencies. His sisters' husbands are roughly his own age, and some of them are likely to be his friends. He calls on them frequently and, though on occasions he may be authoritarian towards them, his relationships with them are often of a joking kind, usually at their expense. Thus it is not unusual to see Kape in a lighthearted fashion beat another man, his sister's husband, on the head and body with the palm of his hands or with a stick and he may even rise and kick him while the latter keeps seated, screams and laughs. The sister's husband never does the same to him, for that is not allowed.[10] Kape's relationship with the husbands of his daughters is more distant than with his sister's husbands. They are young men who approach him with respectful and sometimes almost

10. Cf. Radcliffe-Brown (1952:105-16) on 'joking relationships'.

servile attitude. He has more control over them than over any other of his inferior affines.

The second category of affines to whom Kape is principally superior includes the husbands of his daughters' daughters, of his sisters' daughters, and of his father's sisters' daughters. His claim on these men is based on the idea that children of female agnates *(papie ngaunga)* owe half of their blood, and therefore their being, to their mother's people, and that they were raised by their mothers, that is through the hard work of agnates of Kape. (This is symbolised in feasts when half of every pig donated to chiefs for the feasts is sent to the brothers of the women who raised the animals.) Hubsands of *papie ngaunga* owe Kape secondary affinal obligations, their primary ones being to their wives' agnates. Kape calls on them mainly when he has some major work projects, for example the construction of a new house, or the replacement of his coconut-trunk house posts, or the clearing of virgin land for his new garden. But if he is an only child and has no daughters of his own he may have to rely for extra labour on the husbands of his father's sisters' daughters.

Conversely, Kape is himself an *ipangava* owing obligations to two categories of affines: his primary obligations are to his wife's agnates, and his secondary ones to his wife's mother's agnates. To these two groups Kape stands in the same relationship as his inferior affines are to him. If his present wife is his second, whom he acquired following the death of his first wife who had borne him children, then he owes affinal obligations, while children of the first wife survive, to four groups of affines. This is a burdensome affair, which explains why polygyny was not a very common practice in traditional Mekeo society.[11]

Although affinal superiority and inferiority exist among women, it is not as socially and politically significant as it is among men. The politics of affinity is primarily a male affair, and it is relatively uncommon for women to assert their superiority over their female affines; when it happens it is often lightearted. Perhaps the main

11. That some Mekeo men in the past indulged in plural marriages despite the onerous burdens of affinity may be explained in part by the fact that, according to Egidi (1912), men were often compelled by their fathers to marry women they did not wish to marry, and that some of them took, in addition, women of their own choice. Such men were obviously prepared to endure the burdens of *ipangava* obligations rather than lose their loved ones.

explanation for the relative insignificance of affinal ranking among women themselves is that married women as agnates are dispersed among their husbands' wards; they are kept busy and have fewer opportunities than men to play affinal politics. Nevertheless, the female affinal ranking exists, and a strong-willed woman like Aisa'au Isava can take advantage of it for retaliation and for personal gain.

Mangaiva, a married woman, is principally superior to her brother's wife and her brother's son's wife. These are her closest male agnates' wives who live in her natal ward. And, as seen in the Aisa'au incident, she is superior to all the women married to the men of her ward. In addition to these, Mangaiva is also superior to her sons' wives and the wives of her sisters' sons, and of her father's sisters' sons. These women owe secondary affinal obligations to her agnates, and though they live in wards other than her patri-ward, they are liable to be summoned to work for feasts given by her ward. Conversely, Mangaiva is inferior to her husband's female agnates and to her husband's mother's female agnates.

An interesting anomaly appears in female affinal status relations which serves to highlight the ambivalence in the relationship between mother and daughter. Such an anomaly can occur only in a strict patrilineal society. In certain, specific and ritualised situations a woman may display affinal superiority to her mother and inferiority to her daughter. This is an aspect of identity between male and female agnates. Mangaiva's mother is an affine of Mangaiva's agnatic group. Mangaiva, on the other hand, is an outsider living in her daughter's ward, and an affine of the latter's agnates. The relationship between a mother and her daughter as parent and child in which the mother exercises moral and psychological dominance over the daughter is reversed when the daughter identifies with her agnates against her mother and other married women in her ward as outsiders. The system provides a mechanism by which daughters may express safely and harmlessly their irritations with their mothers in the form of games they play with each other. (There is no such safety valve in the relationship between father and son. The father always has ascribed superiority over his son. What actually happens is that sometimes grown-up sons get so exasperated with their fathers that they assault them physically. One Beipa'a man was goaled in 1970 for beating his elderly father. A common explanation for sons who have lost their inheritance is that they used to beat their poor fathers who retaliated by disinheriting

them. Although father-beating occurs it is rare and strongly disapproved.)

Early during my second field trip some events which occurred in Ongofo'ina ward illustrated the ambivalence in the relationship between mothers and daughters. One day, during a gathering, some Ongofo'ina wives ordered their grown-up unmarried daughters to go on an errand. The girls obeyed but they grumbled about their being ordered around by their *'ipangava'*. This complaint was somehow conveyed to their mothers who were perturbed and ashamed. As a consequence all the married women in Ongofo'ina held a meeting and decided to cook some good food and have their daughters as their guests of honour. This was duly executed and the unmarried daughters, who are normally ordered around by their mothers, were fed, waited upon and entertained by the same women taking up their roles as inferior affines. A week later, the girls cooked, and invited their mothers who responded as affines. They instructed their mothers to wear their grass skirts while they themselves went dressed as males, wearing shirts, long trousers or loin clothes (laplap), and some even wore men's hats. Some of them carried guitars and drums, two types of musical instruments played exclusively by men in Mekeo. The women were then told to dance to the music played by their daughters and to make clowns of themselves for the merriment of a large crowd of women, children, single girls and bachelors. There was not a married man around. After the dance the girls escorted their obedient mothers to a big platform and the spokesman for the girls delivered a short speech giving the causes of their 'dissatisfaction' with their mothers, and asked them, 'Am I married to your fathers? Am I married to your brothers?' by which was meant 'You are married to my agnates and therefore you are my *ipangava*'. After the speech each woman was called by name to climb onto the platform and as she did so a girl confronted her holding a long stick to which was wound a toy rubber snake. The woman was compelled to touch the head of the snake before she was finally admitted into the platform. Some of them kissed the snake, some feigned horror or disgust, some said the snake looked ugly, or was too small or too big. Although on the surface the performance was a huge sexual joke, it was also a symbolic expression of the women's submission to their husbands. The girls, as pointed out above, had impersonated their fathers and brothers, and the snake represented their penises. And since the snake is also the most dreaded

agent of death, its use by the girls may be said to represent a warning to the women not to forget that in addition to being mothers they are also *ipangava* to them.

With regard to men, and from the point of view of affinal inferiority, Mekeo *ipangava* obligations are an individual matter rather than relationships between groups as such. Marriage entails inferiority for the husband alone and not his agnates or his mother's agnatic group. The husband's obligations, for instance, to pay bride-price or fines, or to contribute materially to his superior *ipangava*, may draw in his agnates, his subclan and his ward, but such involvements are phrased in terms of assisting the husband to discharge his responsibilities. His obligation to work for his affines is his alone. When the Inaufokoa tried to secure the brothers of two absent *ipangava* to act as substitutes for them in the feast described above, the absentee chiefs promptly dispatched a joint curtly worded rebuff and the Inaufokoa quietly shelved the idea. But though affinal subordination and service obligations are strictly individual matters borne personally by each man with regard to his superior affines, each married man is not only inferior to his principal and secondary affines, but also to their lineages, subclans, wards and chiefs.

When a lineage group needs labour, the head of that lineage calls on all its *ipangava* to come and work. The same is true of a subclan. But on matters affecting the ward as a whole then the summons is for all the *ipangava* of that ward and is issued by the senior ward chief, or in his name. When the Inaufokoa decided on their *ipangava* feast, the senior men of the ward made the decision which they announced formally in the name of their senior chief who took little active part in the deliberations because he was a semi-invalid and a weak man. Nevertheless, had the chief opposed the feast it would not have been held, and had the announcement been made without the formality of being made in his name no *ipangava* would have attended.

Chiefs, sorcerers and other traditional leaders may impose affinal dominance for purely personal purposes on *ipangava* who are not their principal or secondary affines. One day A'oae Efi, a leading Mekeo sorcerer from Aipiana, visited my house where there was a large gathering of Inaufokoa men. After I had offered him some specially prepared food, A'oae singled out one Kaekae Afa'isa to get it ready for him to eat. Kaekae submissively moved up, sat facing A'oae Efi, dished out the food onto a plate, cut it all up into small

pieces, and then waited until A'oae had finished eating. Afterwards Kaekae removed the dishes and plates to the side before he returned to resume his seat. Kaekae was married to a woman of a lineage which was not A'oae Efi's but was within his ward. No one else in Beipa'a ordered Kaekae around in that way for he was a greatly respected man, being the local court magistrate for the whole Kairuku Subdistrict. A'oae Efi's behaviour was clearly a demonstration to the gathering of his affinal superiority over the magistrate. On another occasion, A'oae Apounga, the effective ward chief of Ongofo'ina, visited my house where there was again a gathering of Inaufokoa men, many of whom were *ipangava* to his ward. The chief sat down and after he had caught his breath, being a portly gentleman, quietly announced that he was thirsty. His affines knew exactly what he meant and sent two of their number to Bereina to purchase beer and hard liquor which they dutifully presented to him. Then they settled down and deliberately poured out glass after glass of liquor (mixing beer with rum and whisky) for A'oae and soon got him so inebriated that he became a figure of fun, to the quiet amusement of the gathering. It was all conducted with delicate propriety, for A'oae was a respected chief. He had on this occasion satisfied his desire for free drinks at the expense of his *ipangava* who, in turn, derived great satisfaction from guiding him gently to make a spectacle of himself.

This is typical of games affines play at each other's expense. Although these are supposedly lighthearted they are played seriously and competitively with personal or group honour at stake.[12] As superior *ipangava*, the difference between chiefs and ordinary men lies in the range of men upon whom they can impose their institutionalised dominance. (I shall discuss later the problem of hereditary leaders as

12. Much of what people do to each other as *ipangava* is on the surface done with lightheartedness—they play games with each other and enjoy them enormously. Yet I often found it difficult to distinguish between when they were playing and when they were serious. For even though they laugh much while they 'play' they can also become easily angry partly because much of their game-playing is so serious. The Inaufokoa feast described above is a good example of this ambiguity between play and non-play. Even though the feast was a punishment, there was much fun involved, and even the *ipangava* thoroughly enjoyed themselves much of the time. One may perhaps compare Mekeo affinal games with competitive sports such as professional football which, although considered games, are played with deadly seriousness because of the money and honour at stake. But this comparison should not be taken too seriously since in team sports the opposing sides are roughly equal whereas *ipangava* games pitch unequal sides against each other.

inferior *ipangava*.) Ordinary men can and do make onerous personal demands but only upon their closest affines. Such demands and games contribute to irritations and tensions within the village for inferior affines do not normally refuse to comply, and since they cannot make direct reciprocal demands they tend to brood about it, and take it out upon their own inferior affines. Compliance with affinal demands is not merely a matter of adherence to the rules of affinity but, more importantly, it is also a matter of personal pride and honour to be able to fulfill one's obligations manfully. Among the *ipangava* punished in the Inaufokoa feast were the strongest, most influential and certainly the most argumentative men in Beipa'a. Yet most of them took their treatment proudly with the attitude that they could take whatever was meted out to them, and take it without complaint. They suppressed their anger and even at times hatred, voicing their feelings only when they had returned to their wards.

The most practical advantage of the Mekeo affinal inequality is its provision of extra labour. As described in the previous chapter, elder brothers have, from childhood onward, advantages over their younger brothers and this is a firm, supportive factor for the seniority system. One of these advantages lies in the use of *ipangava* of a group of actual brothers. This is best seen in gardening which, as previously noted, constitutes the most common way of laying claims to pieces of land. Although married brothers sometimes have plots in the same gardens, each normally makes his own garden in order to stake his personal claim to parts of the common heritage. The man who makes large gardens, through the use of extra labour, makes claim to big areas of land. 'We use our sisters to get our brothers-in-law to help us make large gardens', was a statement made by one of the more energetic Beipa'a gardeners who was also an eldest sibling. Through the seniority system and earlier marriages relative to younger siblings, elder brothers are best placed to capitalise on the extra labour provided by cognates and affines. An example will illustrate the point.

Three brothers whom I shall call by their Anglicised baptismal names, Adrian, Joseph and Pascal, were born in 1907, 1913 and 1920 respectively. The eldest, Adrian, married in 1927, Joseph in 1936 and Pascal in 1949. The wide spacing in their births and marriages gave the elder brothers good headstarts relative to their youngest brother. Adrian died in 1946 leaving his widow and six young children (three sons and three daughters) in the care of Joseph who raised them to-

gether with his own children, three daughters and two sons. Two of Adrian's daughters have married and are living with their husbands in the village; the other daughter, an unmarried woman of twenty-nine, still lives with Joseph. Only one of Adrian's sons, a married man, resides in Beipa'a in Joseph's house and is therefore still under some measure of Joseph's control. Joseph's eldest daughter is married and lives with her husband in the village. Pascal, the youngest, has fathered two sons and four daughters, all of whom are unmarried.

In 1971 the surviving brothers had adjacent gardens. Joseph made the much larger garden because of his command of the labour of both his and his dead elder brother's families, of the husbands of his and his dead elder brother's daughters, and of his sister's sons and their wives. Pascal, on the other hand, had only his wife and unmarried daughters to work for him. The difference in the size of their gardens and therefore in their prestige is also reflected in Joseph's impressively big garden house *(ufu'ufu)* as compared with Pascal's small uncovered platform. In late 1971 Joseph had expanded his garden, using the same group of agnates, cognates and affines, and in 1972 he shifted and started a new garden elsewhere, while his younger brother was still working on the same spot. Joseph's gardening ventures have caused some ill-feelings, *pikupa*, within his ward, and his wardsmen have tried to limit the size of his gardens (and therefore, the amount of land claimed) by disputing parts of the lands he had cleared for his gardens. Villagers said that Joseph has been encroaching for many years on other people's lands by making gardens. Pascal, on the other hand, is regarded as fairly harmless, but this may be because his elder brother has appropriated for himself all the extra labour available for them.

For those who are short of land, like the Inaufokoa, being inferior *ipangava* can be an advantage, for by working on their superior affines' gardens they receive plots for their own subsistence. Nevertheless, they have no ownership claim to the plots, only to what they have planted. Since they cannot grow any perennial crop on these plots their usufructuary privileges effectively terminate when the gardens are abandoned, usually three or four years from the planting date. The Inaufokoa say that they feel sorry for themselves because they have to work on other people's lands helping them to stake individual claims while they receive no permanent benefits for their labour.

The example given above of the use of extra labour concerns small

family groups who use only their immediate affines for their own personal purposes. At the level of the ward, however, the labour provided by *ipangava* is more than merely practical. It involves pride and prestige of wards and their chiefs in being able to command the subordination of large numbers of men from other wards, villages and adjacent language groups. In this regard the most prestigious wards are the populous ones whose larger female membership provides more men as *ipangava*. Table 12 shows that as one would expect Ongofo'ina, the biggest ward, commands the services of the largest number of *ipangava*, and Inau'i, the smallest ward, has the least. Of the sixteen *ipangava* that the Ongofo'ina have from their own ward, only four are men married to their wardswomen; the other twelve are men who owe secondary affinal obligations to their own ward because of their marriages to daughters of their own wardswomen. The few *ipangava* that Fopafo'ina and Aloaivea have from within their own wards are men married to daughters of their wardswomen. With the exception of Ongofo'ina, perhaps because of its large size, no marriage has been contracted this century between couples of the same ward. Marriage rules prohibit marriage within the subclan and with the mother's subclan. The people of Beipa'a have, in practice, extended the intra-subclan prohibition to cover members of the same ward. Table 12 also shows that more than two-thirds of the *ipangava* come from within the village, and that 83 per cent are from Beipa'a and the two adjacent villages of Aipiana and Amoamo. The reasons for this concentration of affinal ties will be discussed later in this chapter.

The pride and prestige involved in commanding subordination from large numbers of men is best seen during preparations for ceremonials and during the actual ceremonials themselves, when feast-giving wards, through their chiefs, call all their *ipangava* to work. Mekeo have so ordered their ways of doing things that their *ipangava* perform most of the hard physical labour for feasts. The fact that this is quite expensive in terms of feeding the workers properly indicates that their being called to work is for reasons more than the mere assistance they provide. The larger a feast becomes, the more *ipangava* are called upon, the longer is their period of enforced work (sometimes intermittently up to three or more months), and the more expensive it is for the feast-givers. Thus, for example, during the preparations for the Inaufokoa feast described above the feast-givers provided their working *ipangava* with more than ten village and wild pigs, together with

Table 12: The inferior male *ipangava* of Beipa'a wards, 1971

Groups from which services are claimed	Number of *ipangava* for each Beipa'a ward				
	Ongo-fo'ina	Fopa-fo'ina	Aloai-vea	Inau-fokoa	Inau'i
Within the village:					
Ongofo'ina	16	18	7	10	9
Fopafo'ina	20	3	10	10	8
Aloaivea	8	8	2	5	4
Inaufokoa	17	8	6	0	3
Inau'i	10	5	1	1	0
Outside the village					
Aipiana and Amoamo	22	9	2	5	2
Other Pioufa villages	8	4	5	1	1
Ve'e villages	8	2	5	0	0
Adjacent language groups	6	5	2	0	0
Total	115	62	40	32	27

The total number of *ipangava* presented in the table is incomplete since I did not obtain information on those men of other villages who owe the wards of Beipa'a their secondary affinal obligations, that is, non-Beipa'a men who are married to non-Beipa'a women whose mothers are or were from Beipa'a.

numerous tins of fish, beef and mutton. After an installation feast in Inawi in early 1972, the *ipangava* received two fully-grown village pigs with an estimated combined value of $300, together with other meats and vegetables. I have no information on the amount of food they received during the weeks of preparation for the feast. All this is aimed at forestalling derogatory gossip about the *ipangava* being forced to 'work for nothing', and to make them work harder and more willingly. Feast-givers say that the more meat they provide for their working *ipangava* the easier it is to impose their will upon them.

During this period of work, and especially during the ceremonies which may last from one day to a week, the feast-givers, through their functionaries, take almost sadistic delight in asserting their superiority over their affines by making them run, by ordering them around on any pretext, by lining them up in single file and scolding them, and by playing games with them. The Ongofo'ina have a special game for their *ipangava*, in which every so often during their feasts the boss blows a whistle upon the sound of which all *ipangava*, wherever they are, must fall flat on their backs even if some of them are in pools of mud. The primary concern of *ipangava* in situations such as this is to be very careful in whatever they do, for they know that their bosses are often deliberately laying traps so as to extract money or goods from them. A mistake or an offence by one is borne by all.

Having a big chief, a sorcerer, or a very influential man as *ipangava* brings added kudos. Though such men work as any other *ipangava* they are treated with some deference as befits their station in life. Furthermore, these men usually take pride in their work and are often leaders among the *ipangava*. One such chief, Aufo Foisape, while working in Inaufokoa, once poured scorn on slackers and complainers and declared, 'I am not an ordinary man, I am a chief and I know my duties'. Once I accompanied A'afanga Ufa'alai, a sorcerer of Rarai, to Imounga to one of the wards (Ifupaina) of which he was an *ipangava*. The Ifupaina chief gleefully told me that the sorcerer was his 'number one *ipangava*'. When the sorcerer went to work for an Ifupaina feast, in his more youthful days, his superiors gave him the special task of fetching coconuts for the chief to drink. The sorcerer climbed the tree followed by a number of other *ipangava* who stopped at short intervals up the trunk. He picked the nuts and passed them down the line to those at the base who husked them, after which he took them to the chief. The nuts must not at any stage touch the

ground. I was given to understand that there are few sights more comical than that of several fully grown men all climbing up a single coconut tree one just below the seat of another.

In Chapter 4 I showed that in the interest of amity within agnatic family groups and subclans, people suppress their hostile and other ill-feelings towards each other. The account just given of dominance and subordination in affinity is the very reverse of the prevailing rule of agnatic amity. In one we encounter almost excessive suppression, in the other we find almost extreme expression. The relevant question is, 'Why do agnatic and ward groups do to their *ipangava* the kinds of things that they would not do to their own people?' It may be argued that the authoritarian and often harsh treatment meted out to *ipangava* is partly a redirection of the much suppressed aggressive sentiments that people have against their own agnates. It is a regulated release of pent-up feelings upon outsiders who are institutionally subordinate and with whom the value of amity within the agnatic group does not equally apply since they are people with whom one does not share things and sentiments so intimately and so intensely as one does with one's consanguineal relatives. We cannot appreciate fully the underlying factors for the ritual ill-treatment of affines without the prior understanding of the nature of Mekeo local agnatic groups. I do not wish to imply that brothers and other agnates never quarrel openly among themselves; being human, Mekeo have not been able to suppress completely their hostility and aggression. It is a matter of degree and not of the absolute. When feelings cannot be contained any longer and agnates break out into quarrels these are usually very bitter, but open hostility is short-lived, for it is driven underneath where it smoulders or expires.

A good example of this is the Inaufokoa *ipangava* feast described above. This feast may be directly related to factionalism within the Inaufokoa ward itself. Some time late in 1970 the senior and junior chiefs of Inaufokoa openly quarrelled over a piece of land and consequently stopped speaking to each other. During the quarrel the junior chief threw a plate of food at the wife of one of the Inaufokoa men. This action was clearly a redirection of aggression at an outsider, the wife. Nevertheless, after this event the relationship between the junior chief and the woman's husband soured though they neither quarrelled openly nor ceased communicating. The outcome of the episode was that the senior chief banned the junior chief from the *ufu*

until he had paid for his offence. When I arrived early in 1971 there had been no public reconciliation. At the same time relations between two family groups of Inaufokoa had been tense for a number of years due to an initial dispute over the ownership of a particular tractor. Many Inaufokoa had avoided going into their *ufu* where they might face their opponents. The ward was breaking up into little factions. Those who remained neutral found it difficult to maintain their position. And the whole village talked about the sad state of the ward. The Inaufokoa themselves revealed through their conversations that they were aware of their parlous situation, and wanted to do something about it, for the standing of their ward was dangerously deteriorating. But they did not know exactly how to effect the reconciliation. Aisa Maino's insult, which implied that they did not measure up to the standards, shook them out of their stupor.

The announcement of the feast for the *ipangava* was very timely; the ostensible reason for it, restoration of the honour of the ward, was the best possible rallying call for reunification. Here was the issue on which every Inaufokoa who had any sense of 'patriotism' and self-respect must stand in solidarity with his fellow-wardsmen against outsiders who had cast aspersion on the name of their clan. Accordingly, the junior chief paid his due and was publicly and ceremonially reconciled with the senior chief as well as with the unfortunate lady who had had food thrown at her; and the two rival family groups buried their differences, combined and worked together for the feast. Having achieved cohesion, the Inaufokoa descended upon their hapless *ipangava* on whom they unleashed their pent-up aggression and hostility.[13]

In view of the heavy demands and harshness of the affinal system the questions to be considered now are: how is such a system maintained? And, why do men tolerate ill-treatment at the hands of their superior affines? We have already seen that there is a concentration of affinal ties within the village and with the immediately neighbouring communities. This is an outcome of the Mekeo preference for marriage

13. The reconciliation did not last, and by the time I left the field the ward was already split again along the old lines. This brings to mind something an Aipiana chief told me during a feast staged by his ward. Looking at how well his people were co-operating the chief said that feasts given by his people always bring them together behaving as brothers should. After the feast they go back to their unco-operative and quarrelsome ways.

within the village, with adjacent villages, and within the tribal group. The facts, shown in Table 13, that 78 per cent of extant marriages of Beipa'a women are with Beipa'a, Aipiana and Amoamo men, and that 85 per cent are within Pioufa tribal territory, are evidence of this preference. The proportion of men married with 'others', which more and more includes women from far-flung areas of the country, has increased as a result of the growing emigration of young men, many of whom have renounced the onerous affinal obligations of their traditional society.

The principal reason given for the above-mentioned concentration of marriage and affinal ties is the proximity of *ipangava*, making it relatively easy to call on and to control them. In the past when warfare with other tribes made travelling unsafe, it was very difficult, if not impossible, for affines from other tribes to go to Beipa'a and vice versa. Distance was inimical to control of *ipangava*. One Ongofo'ina

Table 13: Extant marriages of Beipa'a men and women, 1971*

		Number	*Percentage*
Groups from which men obtain wives	Beipa'a	94	54
	Aipiana and Amoamo	31	18
	Other Pioufa villages	9	5
	Ve'e villages	3	2
	Adjacent language groups	12	7
	Others	25	14
	Total	174	100
Groups to which women married	Beipa'a	94	62
	Aipiana and Amoamo	25	16
	Other Pioufa villages	10	7
	Ve'e villages	11	7
	Adjacent language groups	7	5
	Others	24	3
	Total	171	100

*See Appendix 5 for further details.

man, now deceased, married a Rarai woman but declined to go to that village to discharge his obligations, not only because of the distance but also because Rarai had a fearsome reputation for sorcery. Since his wife was a descendant of an Inaufokoa, two or three generations back, he discharged his affinal obligations to Inaufokoa rather than to his wife's village. Early in 1973 when a girl eloped with a man from the Roro village of Waima her father brought her back home forcibly because she was marrying too far away for her family to benefit from it.

Because of the complexity of affinal ties, for example within Beipa'a itself (see Table 12), chiefs of every ward, who depend on *ipangava* for their feasts and large scale work, normally admonish their own people to be conscientious with their affinal obligations lest their own *ipangava* retaliate by not working for them. Thus when I asked the Inaufokoa why were they so certain that their *ipangava* would heed their call to attend the punishment feast and to pay the $30 entrance fee, the reply was that their *ipangava's* chiefs and elders would ensure that they complied lest the Inaufokoa refuse at some future date to comply with demands made on them. Non-compliance would start a process which would destroy the intricate affinal networks and the stability of the village. And indeed, when I went from one *ufu* to another during the period leading up to the feast, chiefs were actively persuading those of their people who were *ipangava* to Inaufokoa to attend the feast. They listened quietly to their men's complaints about their ill-treatment, and sympathised with them, but they consistently warned about the consequences in the village if they reneged on their obligations. This was not the only reason however. When the feast was announced it stirred a great deal of interest in the village and in the neighbouring communities. People's curiosity about whether the Inaufokoa could or could not do it was a factor in this interest. Since part of the meat was to be distributed to all the local groups from which the *ipangava* came, it was a matter of self-interest that the feast should be held. Finally, to the old people and to the middle-aged in the area the feast was a revival of an old custom which had been in abeyance for more than two decades.

There are other sanctions against negligence of affinal obligations. When the Inaufokoa sent their demand to Aisa Maino to pay a pig for his absence they told him that if he refused to comply, they would not help with the payment of his sons' bride-price. Mekeo pay their bride-

price in two parts: the husband and his agnates pay the principal part to the wife's agnates, and the husband's mother's agnates pay the minor (though still substantial) part to the wife's mother's agnates. The two payments must be made at the same time and be initiated by the husband's agnates. If the husband's mother's side refuse to pay their part then the bride-price payment cannot be held. Moreover, people consider it essential to pay bride-price else children will not be born, or will die in infancy, or be deformed or otherwise weakened, as the result of sorcery retaliation by the women's relatives. I once met a well educated man who told me that his brother-in-law had better pay his bride-price or he would be forced to use his magic against his sister's children.

A further sanction against non-compliance with affinal demands is the threat of the treatment meted out to offenders when they become widowers. (A detailed discussion of widowerhood is given is Chapter 8.) When a woman dies she is returned to her ward for burial. Her agnates can, if displeased, refuse to let her husband mourn at the wake, thus shaming him. Moreover, because of the custom of widowers spending a period of mourning seclusion in *ngove* in their wives' wards, they could be subjected to severe treatment by their affines. The length of the period of their mourning seclusion, for example, could be unduly prolonged by their wives' brothers.

Finally, the role of wives is of crucial importance. One day in early 1971 a chief, Fakepo Oae, sent a message to his sister's daughter's husband, Aisa Apa'u, to come to work in the repair of the roof of his *ufu* which had been damaged by strong winds. Aisa, who was then mourning the recent death of his mother, told the messenger that he would not go because of his circumstances and because he had a headache. Fakepo promptly sent the messenger back demanding Aisa's presence but the latter was adamant. Aisa's wife, who was sitting nearby, could not contain her anger and told him in no uncertain terms that if he did not comply she would not continue working for him or his chief, and that she might pack up and go home. An argument ensued during which Aisa slapped his wife's face. Immediately two neighbouring wives, who were women from Aisa's wife's ward, descended on him, told him in no less uncertain terms what they thought of him, and gave him some strong advice, upon which the erring husband meekly left his house and went to work for Fakepo.

This is typical of the tactics women adopt to help their agnates and

their matrilateral relatives to coerce their husbands into compliance. They literally threaten 'strike', and sometimes they actually stop cooking, or deliberately cook badly, or desist from going to the garden, or reject sexual advances, in order to show their displeasure and to bring their husbands into line. I mentioned above that when Aisa Maino denigrated the Inaufokoa it was his own wife who reported him to her agnates. When I asked an Inaufokoa man about the woman's disloyalty to her husband he replied that it was a proper Mekeo custom that 'our sisters come and tell us what our brothers-in-law and other people are saying about us'.

As wives, women are dominated by their husbands, but as sisters and daughters, they have a fierce loyalty to their own brothers and fathers, and would inform them of gossip and plots. They are, therefore, often regarded as 'enemies within the camp' and are of vital importance in the politics of affinity. Their split loyalty to their husbands and to their own agnates puts them in an ambiguous position and is a main factor for the men's charge that women are the cause of dissension among agnates. Within their own domestic groups women behave lovingly towards their husbands and children. But at the same time their own agnatic loyalty makes them instrumental in their husbands' compliance with their affinal obligations. Although men are normally fond of their wives—they speak and behave affectionately in private—they sometimes show irritation with them for nagging about affinity, and suspect them of being carriers of intelligence information to their wards. But men cannot be too harsh on their wives because of their economic and domestic dependence on them, and because of apprehension of what their wives' agnates could do to them if they became widowers prematurely (see Chapter 8). Moreover, because of the preponderance of intra-village marriages it is common to find women of the same ward, even real sisters, marrying to men of one ward and living next door to each other, protecting each other's well being. Thus when Aisa slapped his wife's face he was immediately confronted by his wife's fellow-wardswomen who gave him a severe tongue lashing. It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that women have driven men into the company of their own sex in the separateness of their *ufu* and platforms where, in the security of numbers, they are emboldened, become collectively tyrannical and order their women around from a safe distance. The most telling example of Mekeo women's position is seen in feasts. When their husbands' wards make

feasts they, the wives, work ceaselessly under the direction and authoritarian control of their husbands; when their own (or their mother's) agnates give feasts the women attend as sisters and daughters, sit on platforms separate from the men, enjoy themselves, and observe their brothers and fathers making their husbands run.[14]

14. Robert Murphy (1971:220) wrote that women 'are not just "exchanged", as in Lévi-Strauss; they are the connective tissue of the social whole. The male is the significant connective link only *within* patrilineal *segments*. In patrilineal *societies*, the female is the pivotal figure. This little inversion has ramifications that could be profitably explored by ethnographers, preferably female ones, and it was first essayed in an overtly humorous, but covertly serious, paper by the anthropologist Nancy Tanner when she was a graduate student. Taking off on a theme from the Minankabau of Sumatra, she analysed the role of the woman in patrilineal societies as an infiltrator of other lineages and a subverter of the loyalties of their sons. It was a lovely conspiracy theory, reminiscent of science fiction stories that reveal women to be secret Martians, but an incisive example of the insights to be obtained from a reversal of the obvious. When we treat women as "signs", as does Lévi-Strauss, then we can see them as items being exchanged within a communication system, but when they are treated as active people, they are the substance as well as the source of social life.'

6. Friends and equals

In the preceding chapters I stressed the theme of inequality and asymmetry in agnatic and affinal relationships. I propose now to shift the focus of our attention to other types of relationships. The first, *ekefa'a*, consists of symmetrical ties of equality between dyads of distant agnates and among non-agnatic cognates. The second type, *ufuapie*, is a special relationship between subclans which, though symmetrical, emphasises the principle of inequality.

Friendship and equality in *ekefa'a*

In Chapter 4 I suggested that the mythical A'aisa's gift of a pig to his younger brother could be seen as a tacit recognition of the latter's increasingly independent stance. The purpose of the gift was to maintain relationships between them, for Isapini's behaviour was tantamount to a repudiation of A'aisa's seniority. Isapini's equivalent counter-gift shows clearly his desire not to be in a position of subordination to his elder brother. In Mekeo the principle of seniority in everyday life is applicable mainly among closely related agnates. Among the more distantly related the principle is difficult to apply except on formal occasions. The process of segmentation which starts with the breaking up of domestic groups continues with ever increasing gaps into the larger agnatic groupings of the subclans. An important device for holding the members of the subclans and wards together is a formal tie between the distantly related agnates of the same ward known as *ekefa'a* which counters the principle of seniority. The term itself is the combination of *eke* and *fa'a(niau)*; and by placing the word for juniority in front, Mekeo seem to have deliberately reversed the principle of seniority in order to make clear the egalitarian nature of the relationship.

Ekefa'a ties are essentially food exchange partnerships. Each man in the localised subclan has an *ekefa'a* who is an agnate not closely related to him. Where a subclan is divided into senior and junior

sections, the dyadic *ekefa'a* ties are between individuals of the sections. Where there is more than one subclan within a ward, the partnerships are made between individuals of different subclans; there are, however, no *ekefa'a* partnerships between members of different wards. Sons create ties with their fathers' partners' sons according to the order of birth. As shown below, if a man dies or retires from a relationship his son takes over from him.

Mekeo say that *ekefa'a* means 'friend' and indeed the term is used to refer to those who are one's friends. The term is also used generally for non-agnatic cognates (see below) but this usage is not to be confused with the more specific application of the word to agnatic dyads. The man who first informed me of this partnership said that although a person may make friends with people in other places (friendship ties forged at boarding schools or places of work) his 'best friend' is always his agnatic *ekefa'a* partner. Ideally when a man has something that is good, especially food, he sends a portion to his partner. He does this informally and spontaneously as an expression of affection. There is, nevertheless, an element of competition in the relationship when partners make delayed exchanges formally at gatherings. Thus in 1970 an Ongofo'ina man had an exceptionally good harvest of the most valued variety of taro, the giant ones called *ange*. He presented a lot of it together with meats and other things to his partner during a formal ceremony. The giver commented to me, 'Now I have given him a burden.' The receiving partner expects to repay the gift later when he has a good harvest of the giant taro, but it should neither be bigger nor smaller than what he had received lest he shame his partner, or place himself in an obligatory, and therefore unequal, position to the latter. If a man has dogs (and nowadays, shotguns) and his partner has none, then the former will not present the latter with any wild pigs or wallabies because he would not be able to reciprocate.[1]

The time for the repayment of a gift is never specified; it depends on when the recipient of an initiatory gift has in hand exactly what his partner gave him. In fact, the timing of the counter-gift is a minor consideration for the formal delayed food exchange is a convenient way of disposing of perishable foodstuff. If a man has a surplus of a particular crop above his family needs then a profitable and personally satisfying way of using it is through presentation to his *ekefa'a*, who

1. For an elaboration of the concept of equivalence, see Burridge 1960: 81-5.

will share it out, saying that it is part of a gift from his partner. This broadcasts the giver's reputation for gardening and generosity more effectively than if he had merely shared it out among his own close relatives. Even if he had donated it to a feast it would be anonymous because it would be distributed in the name of a particular group (his subclan and ward) and its chief. The man, in the case cited above, who presented part of his exceptionally good harvest of giant taro to his partner also said that one of the reasons for his presentation was to placate his chief. Had he kept all his giant taro for himself, his chief might have been angered and might even have set a sorcerer to work against him for his selfishness. Thus underlying at least some of the formal *ekefa'a* food exchange is fear of arousing envy and its potentially harmful consequences.

The dyadic *ekefa'a* relationship is expressed not only in small and spontaneous sharing of choice foods or in large formal presentations; partners also help each other in many other ways both small and large. An event which informants said occurred in Ongofo'ina ward before the Second World War or soon after it illustrates how these partnerships, and related activities, can involve a large number of men. Ongofo'ina is divided into senior and junior sections, and *ekefa'a* partnerships are between individuals of these sections. One day a man from the junior section asked his *ekefa'a* to build him a house. The latter accepted the challenge and recruited men from his section to assist him. They built the house while members of the junior section occupied themselves with feeding them. At the completion of the project the junior group, under the direction of the house owner, staged a feast for the workers who proceeded to it mimicking the way that *ufuapie* chiefs proceed to feasts for which they are official guests (see below). The men went deliberately slowly, pausing every now and then, and would not move until they received payments in food. Although they did this in the spirit of good fun and humour, their imitation of *ufuapie* behaviour underlined the separation and semi-autonomous status of the two sections of the ward.

Early in 1973 an aged man of the junior section of Ongofo'ina, assisted by men of his group, presented his *ekefa'a* of the senior section with some food including canned meats and liquor. The presentation was accompanied by the giver's announcement of his retirement from the relationship because of his age and blindness; and the elder of his two sons formally replaced him. After the ceremony the senior section

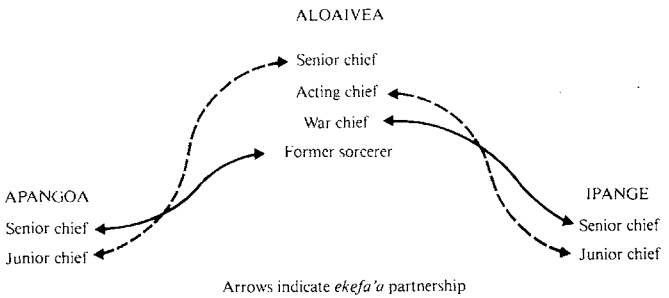


Fig. 6 *Ekefa'a* partnerships among hereditary leaders (Aloaivea ward)

invited the whole of the junior group to the *ufu* where they fed and entertained them. The partnership in this case was between the junior chief of Ongofo'ina ward and his official sorcerer: a very potent partnership indeed.

It is the norm for hereditary leaders (and their immediate families) within wards to have *ekefa'a* ties among themselves. The *ekefa'a* partnership betwen the junior chief of Ongofo'ina and the official senior sorcerer of the ward was, in the pre-colonial past, instrumental in the emergence of this line of chiefs which has for a long time eclipsed the ascribed pre-eminence of the line of the senior chief (see Chapter 8). The current junior chief of Ongofo'ina had two younger brothers: the elder (now deceased) was the *ekefa'a* of the official sorcerer's younger brother; and the younger one's partner is the sorcerer's younger son. The Aloaivea ward comprises three subclans (Aloaivea, Apangoa, and Ipange) each of which has its own chiefs. Of the three subclans only Aloaivea, the founding and senior group, has a war chief and had formerly an official sorcerer. The *ekefa'a* partnerships of the hereditary leaders of the ward are diagrammatically presented in Figure 6. The dyadic *ekefa'a* partnerships among the formal leaders within the ward are important in two respects. First, they help to maintain the status distinction between them and ordinary people; and second, they counter the ascribed differences in their formal status positions. Thus at the institutional level, the status inequality between the senior chief of Aloaivea (who is also the official head of the ward) and the junior chief of Apangoa is countered by their equalising *ekefa'a* partnership.

As mentioned above, Mekeo also use the term *ekefa'a* more generally to apply to relationships other than the dyadic food exchange partnerships within the ward. In Chapter 5 I discussed inequality in affinal relationships, providing some rather dramatic examples to demonstrate the extent to which Mekeo can go in imposing institutionalised superiority over their inferior *ipangava*. Of course, affinity in one generation leads through reproduction to cognation in the next. The general term for non-agnatic cognates is *ekefa'a*, the same equalising word that we have discussed above. Unlike the dyadic *ekefa'a* ties between distantly related agnates, however, cognatic *ekefa'a* is polysemous covering, from an egocentric standpoint, all the non-agnatic cognatic relationships that can be traced. But from a structural-functional point of view the significant cognatic relationships are those between offspring of a brother and a sister between whom there exists institutionalised reciprocity involving specific rights and obligations regarding payment and receipt of bride-price. (No such rights and obligations exist between offspring of real sisters since there are no necessary affinal status relations between husbands of such sisters. A man and his wife's sister's husband do not regard each other as *ipangava*, and they address one another, if not by name, then by sibling terms—people say that because their wives are sisters they call each other 'brother'.) We have seen in the previous chapter that Mekeo pay and receive bride-price in two parts: the husband and his agnates pay the major part to the agnates of the wife; and the agnates of the husband's mother pay the minor part to the agnates of the wife's mother. The payment and receipt of bride-price is phrased in terms of the responsibility of relatives of the same generation as that of the married couple. Thus the husband's brothers organise the major payment for the wife's brothers; and the husband's mother's brother's sons organise the minor payment for wife's mother's brother's sons. The husband gives his own contribution to the bride-price to his brothers and goes himself to work as an *ipangava* both at his wife's and his wife's mother's wards. His superior affines initiate him into the *ipangava* life by sending him on all kinds of errands, and by making fun of him. His brothers set up a public collection, conduct negotiations, and hand over the payment. In this system a man pays the minor part of his father's sister's son's bride-price dues and receives in return the minor part of the latter's sister's bride-price. This is symmetrical reciprocity signifying formal relationships of equality in

cognation as opposed to the formal ties of asymmetry and inequality in affinity.

The informal relationships among principal non-agnatic cognates of the same generation (ego with his father's sister's sons and mother's brother's sons as well as mother's sister's sons) are generally friendly and on equal terms. These relatives are often closer companions than agnates are. Partly because cognates do not compete for the same pieces of land and other inheritable property as agnates do, their relationships are relatively less encumbered by rivalry. One sometimes hears people say that when they want to relax they go to their mother's brothers' homes or to those of their mother's brother's sons where people can show them more affection than their own agnates sometimes do. During feasts, for example, agnates of the feast-giving groups tend to lose their tempers quickly with each other. For besides disagreements about the management and timing of the feast, and arguments about how much each person should donate for the occasion, there is little opportunity for the feast-givers to relax, and they eat nothing of the food they provide. But when their mothers' agnates make feasts they attend as guests and become recipients in food distributions. Such feasts reveal an anomaly in the relationship between father and son since a man attends his mother's agnates' feasts as a guest whilst his father goes as a working *ipangava*. In the Inaufokoa *ipangava* feast described in the previous chapter, a young man whose father was an affine of Inaufokoa donated one of the wild pigs for the feast. In so doing, the son contributed to his father's punishment. Moreover, he attended the feast and observed his own father being force-fed by his mother's agnates with whom he identified by sitting with them on their platform.

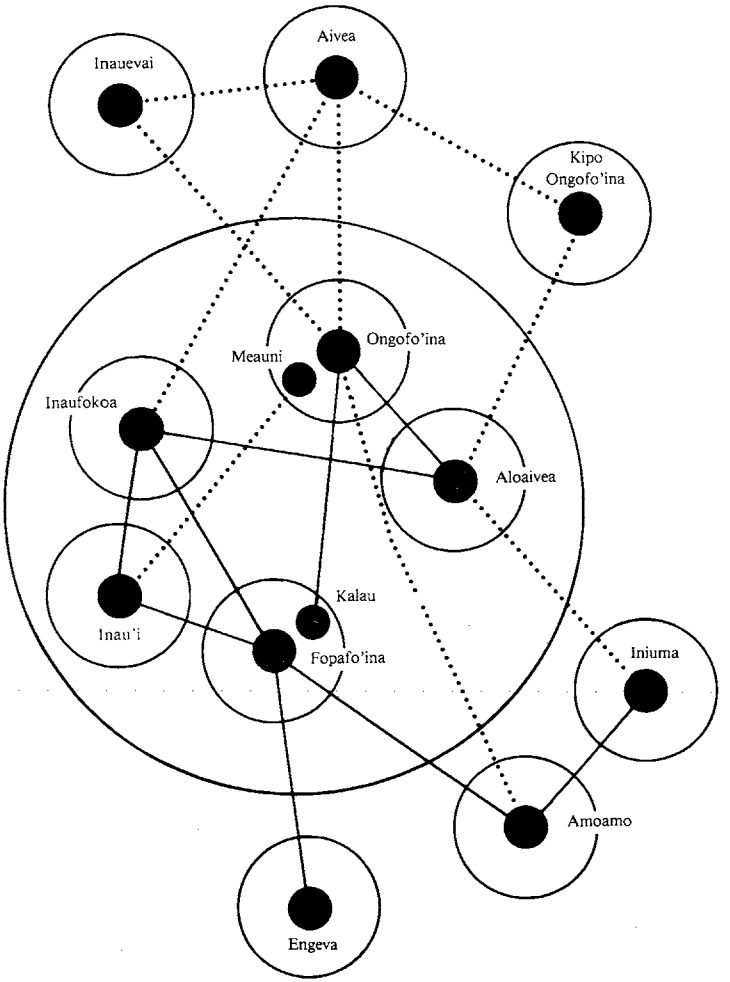
Although men often confront each other as superior and inferior *ipangava*, their sons are generally friends and allies, that is, they are on fully equal terms with each other. Chiefs and ordinary individuals have supporters and allies from wards other than their own recruited from the ranks of their non-agnatic cognates. Chiefs who do not have their own sorcerers use sorcerers of other groups with whom they have cognatic affiliations. Personal cognatic ties across wards and villages bind people to each other in direct reciprocal and affectionate relationships which form a strong countervailing force to the inequality and divisiveness of affinity. Thus institutionalised dominance and

subordination in one generation are countered by equality and friendship in the next.

Symmetrical inequality in *ufuapie*

Beyond the essentially personal affinal and cognatic links across agnatic, ward and village boundaries are special relationships, *ufuapie*, between localised descent groups for political, ceremonial and food exchange purposes. The term *ufuapie*, which literally translates as '*ufu* on the other side', suggests relationships between agnatic groups (subclans) whose social and ceremonial lives centre on their own particular *ufu*.

Ideally each subclan has as its *ufuapie* two or more subclans in the same village or neighbouring villages. In practice, however, some small subclans can maintain relationship with only one *ufuapie* partner, and some are so weak that they cannot maintain any such relationship. *Ufuapie* ties can neither be within the same ward nor between the dispersed branches of the same clan; they can only be contracted between groups which can intermarry, that is, groups not related agnatically. Figure 7 shows only the *ufuapie* of the principal component subclans within each ward in Beipa'a. Although the minor or client subclans within the wards themselves have their own *ufuapie*, the main relationships extant in Beipa'a are those of the principal subclans of the five wards. All but two (Kalau and Meauni) of the *ufuapie* of the principal subclans of the village are themselves principal subclans of their various wards. Although Iniuma of Amoamo village is a very small subclan it constitutes a separate and independent ward of its own, and I have thus classified it here as a principal subclan. Because of the expenses involved in staging major feasts (the mainstay of *ufuapie* connections), of changing attitudes of people towards ancient traditions, and of the emigration of able-bodied men, minor descent groups have increasingly aligned themselves with their principal subclans as far as *ufuapie* is concerned. This process has remoulded the character of *ufuapie* in Beipa'a at least, from being special relationships between localised descent groups into those between the wards. Figure 7 also shows that, with the exception of Fopafo'ina, all the principal subclans in Beipa'a have suspended formal food exchanges *(paange)* with their *ufuapie* partners in other villages. The change has occurred since the turn of the century, partly for the reasons stated above regarding partnerships of minor subclans, and partly because of conflict.



The large circles represent the wards and the small shaded ones the main subclans of the wards. The names of the wards are taken from the names of their main subclans. Kalau and Meauni are minor subclans of their wards. Inaufokoa and Iniuma are single subclan wards. The dotted lines indicate *ufapie* partners who no longer exchange food. The subclans outside the biggest circle are located in other villages.

Fig. 7 The *Ufuapie* partnerships of the principal subclans of Beipa'a

Each subclan has a separate dyadic relationship with each of its *ufuapie* partners. Thus subclan A may be a partner of subclans B, C, D and E; but B is not necessarily a partner of C, D, or E; and so on. *Ufuapie* are, therefore, not closed circles but are interlocking series of dyadic partnerships which ultimately mesh the whole tribe together. If we take the main *ufuapie* partnerships of Beipa'a, we see that Fopafo'ina links with Inaufokoa and Inau'i, Inau'i with Ongofo'ina through its partnership with Meauni, Inaufokoa with Aloaivea as well as with Inau'i and Fopafo'ina, Aloaivea with Ongofo'ina, and Ongofo'ina with Fopafo'ina through its *ufuapie* link with Kalau. Beyond the village, the various principal subclans of Beipa'a, with the exception of Inau'i, had *ufuapie* ties with subclans in the neighbouring villages of Amoamo, Aipiana, and Inawi, which were themselves tied to the remaining Pioufa villages of Oriropetana and Inawae. Fopafo'ina is connected to the village of Engeva which people consider to be part Pioufa and part Kaopo since half of the village consists of a faction that broke away from Inaufokoa of Beipa'a.

There is a personal element subsumed under *ufuapie* relationships. Individuals of subclans in *ufuapie* partnership are referred to as *aua'i*. Father G. Desnoes, the compiler of the only existing Mekeo dictionary, defined the term as *Gens de l'ufuapie* and as *Amis*. Haddon (1901:358) wrote that:

> In the Roro language the relationship between two villages is called *aruabira*, 'part of our blood', and in Mekeo tongue, *ufapie* [sic], *auai*. The former word, according to Father Guis, means 'the other side of the sky', in other words, as they would say 'The *ufapie* are our friends down below; they are like our own souls *(auai)*; we are blood brothers'.

Haddon and Father Guis erred in defining *ufuapie* as 'the other side of the sky'. The error arises from their use of the term *ufapie* (ufa = sky; apie = the other side) instead of the correct word *ufuapie*, the etymology of which has been given above. The term *aua* which Haddon and Father Guis translate as 'soul' (plural *auai'i*) is important. As far as I know the term is no longer used for 'soul' for which Mekeo employ the world *laulau* (which also means 'image'). Nevertheless, since Mekeo refer to those ancestral spirits whose names they incorporate into their magical spells as *aua fa'a* (*fa'a* here means great), it is highly probable that Haddon and Father Guis were not

far wrong in translating the word *aua* as 'soul'.[2] Given this, the closest English equivalent to *aua'i*, as far as it refers to *ufuapie* people, would be 'soul-mates'.

Ideally, each adult man has one or more men from the subclans with which his subclan is *ufuapie* as his special soul-mates with whom he exchanges food during feasts. Thus for example, when A's subclan makes feasts he presents to his soul-mates, B and C, some food (usually balls of sago) cooked by his wife. Similarly, when B's and C's subclans make feasts, they send gifts of food to A. These reciprocal gift-givings are personal affairs which partners conduct independently of the large-scale food distributions and exchanges among *ufuapie* groups as groups. Just as hereditary leaders use agnatic *ekefa'a* to create partnerships among themselves, so also chiefs use *ufuapie* relationships to forge personal soul-mate partnerships with one another. Thus, for example, the soul-mates of the senior chiefs of Aloaivea are the heads of his *ufuapie* groups, the senior chief of Inaufokoa and Ongofo'ina; and the soul-mates of the senior chief of Inaufokoa are the senior chiefs of Aloaivea, Fopafo'ina and Inau'i. These soul-mate partnerships among chiefs not only elevate them above the common herd, but also place them nominally in a position of equality with each other.

Ufuapie and soul-mateship are notionally symmetrical relationships, and it is part of the argument of this chapter that these relationships are devices for countering inequalities between groups and between individuals. Let us imagine two groups of unequal size and strength, A and B. If A has three or four times as many members as B, then A stands to provide more women to B than *vice versa*, and is therefore, actually or potentially, a dominant group as far as affinity is concerned. This inequality in strength is ideally countered by the fact that A and B are *ufuapie* partners co-operating in symmetrical reciprocity in their feasts and ceremonials. The *ufuapie* relationship allows B, in particular situations, to display dominance over A, something which could not have happened had it not been for their special partnership. I return to this point below. Now, let us consider the personal soul-mateship among individuals of the same groups, A and B. A man from group B is an inferior affine of a man from A. The

2. The Roro cognate *auba* refers, according to Monsell-Davis (1974), to those ancestral spirits which are summoned for aid.

Table 14: Ufuapie and marriage (men)

Generation	No. of marriages with ufuapie	No. of marriages with non-ufuapie	Total
A	44	74	118
B	53	91	144
C	40	96	136
D	19	45	64
Total	156	306	462
%	34	66	100

No. of men involved — 377

inequality of their affinal status relationship is theoretically countered by an equalising factor if they are soul-mates. The present senior chief of Inaufokoa is married to a daughter of a woman of Aloaivea subclan. This chief owes his secondary affinal obligation to Aloaivea, and is, therefore, an inferior *ipangava* of the senior chief of that subclan. During my periods of fieldwork I observed, on several occasions, the Inaufokoa chief working as an *ipangava* for the Aloaivea chief. But as we have seen above, the two chiefs are soul-mates and are, therefore, equal on the terms of this relationship. This example of ties between a pair of individuals could be multiplied many times with regard to people in Beipa'a and in the neighbouring villages. This brings us to the question of the relationship between *ufuapie* and marriage.

Belshaw (1951:4) said that Mekeo informants told him that 'in the past you could only marry *ufuapie* people'.[3] Much earlier, W.M.

3. In the same publication Belshaw suggested, on the basis of totally inadequate information, that Seligmann was incorrect in saying that *ufuapie* ties were special relationships between local groups. Similarly Belshaw was wrong in asserting that *ngove* and *ufu* were interchangeable terms, and that an *ufu* could be 'erected by and was the property of a man who did not have to hold a special position in the village'. Seligmann's descriptions of the *ngopu* (see Chapter 2 of this book), the *ufuapie*, the *ngove* and the *ufu* (Chapter 3), which Belshaw dismissed, were substantially correct. Belshaw's essay, which rejected so much of Seligmann's insightful description of Mekeo culture, was based on a fieldtrip of five days.

Table 15: Ufuapie and ipangava

Generation	No. of men with ipangava obligations to ufuapie	No. of men with ipangava obligations to non-ufuapie	Total
A	54	42	96
B	83	27	110
C	67	46	113
D	33	25	58
Total	237	140	377
%	63	37	100

Sample: Four generations of men of the four main subclans of Beipa'a (Ongofo'ina, Aloaivea, Inaufokoa, and Inau'i), and four subclans of Fopafo'ina ward (Lopia, Fai'a, Iso, and Malaila) which constitute a single *ufuapie* unit.

Only those marriages recorded in the Catholic Mission registry are considered here.

Strong and Father Guis both stated the same rule (Seligmann 1910:363). Seligmann, however, asserted that, 'In discussing this matter with natives of Mekeo the impression left on my mind was that it was considered better to marry within the *ufuapie* group, though this was not necessary' Seligmann (1910:364) presents a table of marriages in Inawi village which shows that not only were *intra-ufuapie* marriages 'not predominant, but they occur to only a slight extent'. Table 14 vindicates Seligmann's assertion though intra-*ufuapie* marriages are not as infrequent as he says. Generations C and D in Table 14 cover most of the men who are still alive. Marriages with *ufuapie* in these present generations amount to 30 per cent of the total, whereas the proportion for the older generations (A and B) is higher, with 37 per cent. It is possible that in the more remote past the proportion was even higher. It is also possible that the ideal of marriage with the *ufuapie* people originated in the ancient past when, according to

Seligmann's speculation (based on oral tradition), each of the Mekeo tribes was divided into two exogamous *ufuapie* groups.

If instead of focusing our attention on whether or not people marry with their *ufuapie*, we look into the question of the proportion of affinal obligations a subclan commands from or owes to its *ufuapie*, we find a totally different picture. We have seen in Chapter 5 that each married person owes affinal obligations to his wife's agnates and to his wife's mother's agnates. It follows that even though a man is not married to an *ufuapie* woman he is likely nevertheless to be an inferior *ipangava* of his group's *ufuapie* by virtue of his secondary affinal obligations. The probability for this is high because of the fact that *ufuapie* partnerships are restricted to a small area (mostly within the same village, and some with the closest villages) within which most marriages occur. That is why in the case cited above, although the senior chief of Inaufokoa is not married to Aloaivea, he is still an *ipangava* of his *ufuapie* and soul-mate because of his secondary affinal obligations. Table 15 shows a high proportion, about two-thirds, of the *ipangava* of a subclan being recruited from its *ufuapie*. This raises an important question about Mekeo marriage. Is a man married to a woman of one group or of two groups? If the answer is one group then intra-*ufuapie* marriages are infrequent, although far from being insignificant, making up about one-third of the total. If the answer is two groups then intra-*ufuapie* marriages are very frequent, representing about two-thirds of the total.

In summary, then, *ufuapie* partnerships comprise people who are actual or potential affines and are, therefore, bound together by ties of inequality. At the same time, through generations of marital connections, *ufuapie* partnerships comprise those who are cognatically related to each other, and are therefore, on equal and symmetrical footing. These are not only close cognates bound by institutionalised reciprocity, but are also people related through their grandparents and great-grandparents. Although these distant cognates are not bonded by any institutionalised ties of reciprocity, their relationships with each other are symmetrical, and their interactions depend largely on sentiments which can be affectionate, neutral or hostile.

For the rest of this chapter I shall discuss the functions of *ufuapie*, showing that they highlight the fundamental conflicts between equality and inequality, and between symmetry and asymmetry, which permeate the structure and organisation of Mekeo society. The *ufuapie*

is essentially a projection on to a larger screen of myriads of personal ties across wards and villages. It will be shown that as such, it provides a formal channel for the ritualised and controlled expression of ambivalent relationships and aggression which are generated in part by the coexistence of the principles of equality and inequality at most levels of social organisation.

The first function of *ufuapie* to be discussed is that of bestowing formal recognition upon any new social unit (be it a junior section of an established subclan or a new subclan itself) as a semi-autonomous or fully independent entity, and its leader as a legitimate chief. According to Seligmann, when a localised descent group expands in number, one of its junior branches, perhaps through the ambitions of its leader, starts to assert a certain degree of autonomy or full independence from its parent group. (This is dramatised in the A'aisa myth in Isapini's attempt to become independent of his elder brother.) In order to have its autonomy legitimised the new unit has to select *ufuapie* partners for itself, for it cannot achieve this without their consent. Normally, the *ufuapie* it selects are the same as those of its parent group. However, it sometimes occurs that not all or even any of the chiefs of the original *ufuapie* will comply with its wishes, and when that happens the aspiring group will approach other descent groups with which it has close relationships and will propose that *ufuapie* ties be established between them. Following this the new group provides a major feast to which it invites the chiefs of its *ufuapie.* The ceremonial involved is 'lengthy and extremely grave' in Seligmann's words. Chiefs from all the surrounding villages attend the ceremony and witness the *ufuapie* chiefs presenting the leader of the new group with a special lime gourd called *fa'onga*, formally inducting him into their chiefly rank. At the same time the *ufuapie* chiefs 'acknowledge and make clear to all other *pangua* the social and political status of the newly constituted unit'. If the new unit remains with its parent group then its chief is regarded officially as a junior chief, *lopia eke*, who defers precedence to the senior chief, *lopia fa'a(niau).* Seligmann (1910:336-8, 350-1) also said that 'there is a tendency to use this term *(lopia eke)* in an unofficial sense for the head-man of a strong party in a *pangua* even before there has been official recognition of the new party.' However, unless such a leader has been formally installed, he cannot be treated formally on ceremonial occasions as a legitimate chief; and he cannot perform those chiefly functions which are formal

and ceremonial in nature. Because of the very close association between the legitimising function of *ufuapie* with activities of chiefs I leave further discussion of it for the following chapter.

A second function of *ufuapie* concerns the construction of new *ufu*. We have seen that the term *ufuapie* means '*ufu* on the other side' which implies relationships between *ufu* as buildings as well as between subclans associated with them. It is not surprising then that *ufuapie* partners are concerned with the construction of each other's *ufu*. As a rule no new *ufu* can be erected without prior consultation with the *ufuapie* who expect to render assistance. As Seligmann pointed out (1910:349), however, this assistance 'is by no means always sought, indeed it is often avoided when this is possible, for the *ufuapie* are likely to be exacting in their ideas as to the amount of feasting and entertainment that is their due in return for their help.' Though there are other reasons why most local groups in Pioufa no longer have proper, traditional *ufu* as befits so proud a people as Mekeo, the reason most often given to me by the people is that as soon as a group starts discussing the construction of its *ufu*, the *ufuapie* promptly 'want to have a say'. This 'say' consists mainly of threats to dance throughout the construction period at the expense of the would-be *ufu* builders. Moreover, the *ufuapie* intimate that at the completion of the project a big feast must be held for the official opening of the *ufu*. In such a feast it is the *ufuapie* partners who benefit most from the food distribution. For many years now the Catholic priests have been urging the people to set aside their traditional observances and *ufuapie* politics, and build their traditional *ufu* before the practice of building them dies out altogether; but these appeals have fallen on deaf ears. People insist that if they construct their *ufu* they will have to do it in accordance with the traditions of their fathers; and they will not compromise on this point for fear of mystical retribution. And because they cannot go ahead themselves, they tend to use their *ufuapie* position to block moves by others to build theirs. Hence the summary threats of dance and demands for feasts. The net result has been that most Pioufa subclans have unattractive platforms with corrugated iron roofs as 'temporary' substitutes for their proper *ufu*.[4]

4. There were only two proper *ufu* at Beipa'a during my periods of fieldwork: the *ufu* of the Inaufokoa and Aloaivea wards. Two proper *ufu* were constructed at the time, one at Imounga and one at Rarai. A third, at Inawaia, was probably constructed in 1970.

In addition to the two functions described above, the *ufuapie* of a subclan have the sole right to terminate the mourning periods observed by the unit and release mourners from their various vows of abstinence. When there is a death the ward of the deceased is closed to any form of noisy merriment (singing and dancing), and the close relatives of the dead person take vows to abstain from certain habitual practices such as eating particular types of food, or wearing new clothes, or visiting favoured spots. This state of affairs remains until a special mortuary ceremony called *umupua* is held. All the food in this feast, which the mourners themselves provide, goes to their *ufuapie* whose chiefs ritually terminate the mourning observances. Such feasts are expensive in terms of effort and food, especially meats. If the mourners do not have sufficient food or pigs, they have to make new gardens and purchase extra animals. I witnessed only two *umupua* ceremonies. One of these occurred in Beipa'a in December 1969 while I was very new to Mekeo so I shall describe the other feast, which I observed in Amoamo after I had become more familiar with the society.

The term *umupua* literally translates as 'charcoal carrying' (*umu* = charcoal, *pua* = to carry). A derivative of the word *umu* means 'black' *(umunga)*. When people paint themselves black, they use either powdered charcoal or soot from pots mixed with coconut oil. The colour black is traditionally associated with war, death and mourning. (Red is the colour of life and power; yellow for love and happiness; and white for peace.) In the past, when a person died his or her close relatives painted themselves black and would not wash it off until they had held the charcoal carrying ceremony, usually after about three months of mourning. If several deaths occurred closely within the same ward, then that ward held a single charcoal carrying ceremony for all. Practices have been modified since the Second World War, and present-day mourners do not paint themselves black until a few days before the ceremony which is now held after longer intervals, sometimes up to three years or so. The two ceremonies which I witnessed occurred a few days before Christmas so that the people of the wards concerned would be able to sing and dance during the festive season. Young people going home for their Christmas vacation have put pressure on their elders to clear their wards from mourning so that they can enjoy their brief time with their fellow villagers.

In the middle of 1970 one of the three bachelor sons of Aisa Aivu,

the chief of Iniuma subclan of Amoamo village, died while at boarding school. The subclan went into mourning immediately and after some months started a new garden for the charcoal carrying ceremony. The father went several times to Port Moresby to sell betelnut in order to purchase some pigs to supplement those he had, to give to the *ufuapie*. The Iniuma subclan was a tiny remnant of a once larger group with only four married men, two of whom were in the towns and one in Beipa'a. The only representatives remaining in the village were the chief, Aisa Aivu, his nuclear family, and an elderly widower. Like the chiefs of some small, struggling descent groups, Aisa Aivu was a proud man who insisted on maintaining the autonomy and name of his group by various means including the following. He has avoided the incorporation of his group into another by maintaining a ward separate from the rest of Amoamo, and, as a hallmark of its independent existence, Aisa has a small but well-kept *ufu* in which he dispenses hospitality. In the very fertile, easily worked, soft alluvial soil of Mekeo, the labour of four women is sufficient for an ambitious man to afford to feed friends and supporters. Aisa also gives the necessary prestigious feasts using to the full his cognatic, affinal, friendship and clan connections. When I left Mekeo, he was already planning another feast for the installation of his successor. He had maintained the *ufuapie* relationship of his group, a necessary condition for the continued recognition of a subclan's independent existence. But most important of all for the autonomy of the small group, was the fact that Aisa was a legitimate chief. A chief is the hereditary head of a named group irrespective of size. There are named descent groups which have no chiefs and have, therefore, been partly absorbed by other groups on whose chiefs they depend for their ceremonies and feasts.

Even though Iniuma had one group, Amoamo, as its *ufuapie*, its partner was many times larger than itself, with a membership of about 150 people divided into three sections: senior, junior and warrior. Nevertheless, Iniuma had to provide a feast for its *ufuapie* to get them to terminate formally its mourning period and observances. The whole burden of the feast was carried largely by one man, Asia the chief.

The mourning lasted about eighteen months, for the feast was not held until a few days before Christmas in 1971. Aisa provided five fully grown domestic pigs in addition to several wild ones, and countless tins of fish, beef and mutton. The wild pigs and trade store meats

were for the entertainment of dozens of non-*ufuapie* guests, mainly cognates who had gathered for the ceremony. The *ipangava*, about fifteen of them, had been cooking food all day, and at 5.00 p.m. they brought out a large quantity of raw vegetables from platforms and stacked them on two piles on the central space in front of the *ufu*.[5] Asia then divided the food into five piles, three large ones and two small ones. On top of each two of the large piles he placed a pig; on the third he placed half a pig, and on the two small ones a leg each.

When all was ready, Aisa called the mourners, who were out of sight in a house, to come out. There was complete silence as the female mourners emerged, led by his wife, who was covered from head to foot with a black blanket (in the past the covering would have been tapa cloth). Only part of her face was visible and it was covered with charcoal paint. Weeping plaintively, she emitted an eerie noise which sounded like a little puppy whimpering with pain. Following her down the ladder from the house were two of her daughters, both of whom were blackened and covered with dark blankets. Then came a third daughter who was uncovered. She wore only a very short blackened shredded leaf skirt, her head completely shaven, and her whole body painted black. Behind the primary female mourners were half a dozen classificatory sisters of the dead, who were less heavily painted. After the female mourners were the two surviving brothers of the deceased, one carrying a guitar and the other a transistor radio. The last mourner to appear was the dead boy's mother's brother who was also blackened and wearing a black loin-cloth.

The mourners proceeded slowly and gravely from the house and stood in a straight line in front of the piles of food facing the *ufu*. Aisa Aivu then went to their midst and delivered a short, almost inaudible speech mentioning the purpose of the mourning and the reason for the feast. After that, he proceeded to swat each pile of food with coconut fronds, announcing the name of the recipient. The first pile with the biggest pig was for the senior *ufuapie* chief; the second with a whole pig was for the junior *ufuapie* chief; the third with half a pig went to the warrior section of the *ufuapie*; and the two small piles were given in courtesy to the missionary priests in Beipa'a and to me. After

5. The raw foods came not only from Aisa's gardens—as in most Mekeo feasts, much of such foods (taro and banana) comes from contributions of relatives and friends. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Mekeo are not concerned with vegetable for their feasts; there is normally plenty of it.



VIII Wife and daughter of Asia Aivu of Amoamo village in mourning garb, 1972. Their aim in dressing so is to appear utterly miserable.

naming the recipients the chief ordered the working *ipangava* to convey the three big piles to the *ufu* of the *ufuapie* which was only about a hundred metres away. The *ipangava* promptly complied and as they transported the food they uttered, several times, the traditional shout for such an occasion, *Aaaa, oooo, ei! Aaaa, oooo, ei!* They

took all the food into the appropriate *ufu* where the senior and junior chiefs of Amoamo subclan and their men had gathered.

When this was accomplished, Aisa Aivu instructed the mourners to go to the same *ufu* to 'see' the chiefs. The little solemn procession was headed by Aisa's wife, Mangaiva Ekina, in front of whom were two *ipangava* bearing a pig. Each mourner carried either a chicken or a three-kilogram tin of stewed mutton. The pig, the chickens and the canned meats were presents for the chiefs of the *ufuapie*, for one does not 'see' chiefs with empty hands. The procession halted in front of the *ufu* and the senior chief, Pinongo Munapa, went out and delivered a short speech in front of Aisa's wife saying, 'I remove the blanket from Mangaiva Ekina and thereby end her seclusion. If you see her walking in the open, say nothing [against her]!' Then he removed the blanket and Mangaiva stood revealed with her head shaved, and her body covered with charcoal soot. She wore a very short black leaf skirt, woven fibre armlets, and two string-net sashes, one down each shoulder and across under the opposite arm. She also wore a necklace from which was suspended her dead son's school badge. She had fibre leg bands just below her knees and around her ankles. Two string nets were woven around her lower legs covering them completely. This was the traditional mourning garb.

Pinongo Munapa took a small bag and slung it over Mangaiva's shoulder saying to the crowd, 'If you see her carrying things say nothing!' Then he touched Mangaiva's armbands, feigning cutting movements, and said, 'I have cut her mourning bands and if you see her without them, say nothing!' At the completion of this ritual, a bearer presented a chicken to the chief who sent it into his *ufu*.

Pinongo then performed the same ritual on Mangaiva's daughters, after which he took a choice variety of bananas called *eangua* and passed it over the daughters' heads in a circular motion intoning, 'When you see them eating *eangua*, say nothing!' Then he took some new clothes and bags which they had brought him, and passed them over their heads in a circular motion saying, 'When you see them wearing good clothes and carrying bags, say nothing!' After this the chief received two more chickens.

Next, the chief took the guitar and the radio from Aisa's sons, and passed them over their heads proclaiming, 'When you hear them playing guitars and tuning to radios, say nothing!'

Meanwhile the junior chief of the *ufuapie*, Erico Kape, had been

doing the same with the other mourners (the classificatory sisters and the mother's brother), and receiving presents in return. He touched the heads of two of the young girls and told the assemblage, 'If you see them decorating themselves and wearing flowers on their hair, say nothing!'

When everyone had been released from his or her mourning vows, the ritual was completed and people dispersed. The Iniuma subclan was officially open to merriment and its people resumed the normal lives they had forgone for eighteen months. The *ufuapie*, on the other hand, got all the taro, the bananas, the pigs and the chickens for their service.

According to some Mekeo people, the feast described above was a minor affair compared with the great ones held before the Second World War. Their accounts are almost identical with the description given by Seligmann in 1910. I present the following extract from Seligmann (1910:359-62) regarding charcoal carrying ceremonies and feasts for it shows vividly the ambivalent relationships ritualised in the confrontation between mourning feast-givers and their *ufuapie.*

> When everything is ready for the feast, and a sufficient number of pigs have been fattened and gardens planted specially for the occasion are bearing well, the men of the village that is mourning go hunting, and do not return until they have killed much game. Then invitations are issued by means of messengers bearing a bunch of areca nuts who are sent in all directions. A large number of people from the neighbouring villages are invited to the feast as a matter of courtesy, but strictly speaking the *ufuapie* are alone entitled to an invitation. The ceremony cannot begin before the men of the *ufuapie* have arrived, and these will often delay until they have received sufficient inducements in the way of presents.
>
> The chiefs of the *ufuapie* solemnly leave their *ufu* chewing areca nut, and from time to time making a rattling noise by rubbing their lime spatulae against the neck of their lime gourds. This produces a loud clicking noise, which is a warning to keep the track clear. The chiefs of the *ufuapie* then make a move towards the village whither they are bound but usually stop after a few steps, and rattle their spatulae on their gourds pretending to be too tired to go on. They are immediately given a present of food and begged to forget their fatigue and to remember only the sorrow of the village to which they are bringing relief. When they have received sufficient presents they proceed on their way. They are thus 'refreshed' two or three times every hour until they reach the outlying coconut trees of

the village that is mourning. Then a number of men of the *ufuapie* who have painted themselves for dancing form a compact mass. They are all decked in their best, some wearing the great feather headdresses which are their *kangakanga* [clan-badges]. Each dancer holds a drum in his left hand on a level with his eyes. At a signal from the leader of the dance they beat their drums, then follows a few seconds of silence, then again beating their drums, they advance into the village amidst the shouting of the villagers.

At this the family of the deceased try to stop the dance, saying to the performers, 'It is well that you have come at last to take away the "cold" from our village but do not dance, the noise of your drums still makes us feel sad.' But the dancing continues in spite of the remonstrances of the widow and near relations of the deceased, who, pretending to get angry, feign to attack the dancers and even threaten them with glowing embers. This, too, produces no result and after a while the mourners are appeased, for if the pretence of sorrow were kept up too long the dancers might really retire, in which case fresh presents would have to be given them for their services.

Dancing proceeds all night and on the next day . . .

In the open space in the centre of the village a structure called *kou* has been built. This is made of two or more big bamboos planted in the ground from which the small branches bearing the leaves have been cut off a few inches from the main axis, so that the short pieces left attached form hooks from which all sorts of food including fish and joints of meat are hung.

The whole of this day is given to the preparation of the feast, but late in the evening the village resounds with the clicking of lime spatulae on the necks of lime gourds when suddenly the crowd becomes perfectly quiet. The chiefs of the *ufuapie*, who are often quite old men, come out of the *ufu* decked with priceless ornaments. They are even graver and more dignified than when they arrived, and it takes them several minutes to walk the few paces to the *kou* where they stand motionless amidst the respectful silence of the crowd. The chief who is giving the feast comes forward laden with the limb of a pig and places it at their feet and then brings slabs of pigs' fat and other presents for them. Then he makes a speech which varies little on such occasions. Addressing the visiting chiefs by name he says or rather intones: 'Oh, oh-h-h . . . you have come and we are filled with joy, you have come and our village is once more "warm". We were "cold", but now you have come we are "warm". Take then our vegetables and our pigs, for we have fished, hunted and worked for you. We know that our bananas are poor, our taro watery, our yams fibrous, our sugarcane hard, our coconuts old and dry, our pigs small and thin, and we have killed but few wallaby. All this we know and are ashamed, but pity us rather than be

angry with us, since we are poor and like little children. Deign to eat our food though your teeth ache and your hunger be not satisfied!'

The chief, who speaks for the rest of the *ufuapie*, replies condescendingly: 'The vegetables are bad, the game is poor and there is not much of it, still you cannot give more than you have, but remember that a few months back we—the *ufuapie*—gave twenty pigs and you must not forget to return as many, when you can.'

Seligmann continued to give an account of the final part of the ceremony during which the *ufuapie* chiefs release the individual mourners from their abstinence vows. This description is close to what has been related above in connection with the Iniuma charcoal carrying ceremony. There is an important difference between the Iniuma ceremony and feast and those which Seligmann and present-day middle-aged and old men in Mekeo have described. In the Iniuma ceremony the *ufuapie* was not invited to dance for this would have been far too expensive for the small group to afford. Because of this the *ufuapie* and their chiefs did not go to Iniuma to give them 'warmth'. They remained in their *ufu* and did not venture out to perform the ceremony until the mourners had brought the food. Though Aisa Aivu did not address the *ufuapie* chiefs in the manner described by Seligmann, the very fact that he and his people went to the *ufuapie* with the presentation of food was in itself an act of supplication and of submission. The Iniuma case shows that invitations alone are not sufficient to attract the *ufuapie* to a feast. They have to be brought in with inducements. On the other hand, a group that cannot afford to invite the *ufuapie* to its feasts can still have its mourning observances terminated. But in doing so it has to go itself to the *ufuapie* in a kind of pilgrimage to a foreign territory where it is entirely at the mercy of its partners. In other words, it becomes in that particular situation more dependent on the goodwill of its partners than when the ceremony is held in its own territory. Though it is expensive to secure the presence of the *ufuapie* in one's territory for mortuary ceremonies, at least these are held in the security of the homeground.

The foregoing account of the roles of *ufuapie* in the formal recognition of rising lineages and new chieftainships, in the construction of new *ufu*, and in the termination of mourning periods, indicates the extent of formal dependence of a particular local group on its *ufuapie*. We have seen in the description of charcoal carrying ceremonies how a

mourning group has to expand much energy and resources to provide food to its *ufuapie* so that it may resume normal life. The formal dependence of a group on its *ufuapie* is most explicitly seen in the old charcoal carrying feasts in the standard language of obeisance it adopted towards its *ufuapie*, and the equally derogatory and condescending reply by the *ufuapie*. The weight of *ufuapie* can also be felt, as we have seen, in the area of *ufu* construction. What all this amounts to is a social phenomenon of interdependence in inequality.[6] A subclan may formally exhibit submissive behaviour to its *ufuapie* in some situations, but in others, when its partners have their turns for terminating their mourning periods, it plays the dominant role. The institution of *ufuapie* allows for a tiny social unit like Iniuma to play a dominant role vis-à-vis its much larger neighbour and *ufuapie* partner, the Amoamo subclan. In the final analysis, however, such small groups as Iniuma are perpetually disadvantaged since they always have to strain themselves very much more than larger groups in order to stage feasts and ceremonials. This is a reason for Iniuma to have only a single *ufuapie* partner. When it was numerically stronger, it also had Aloaivea as its partner, but the chief of Aloaivea said that he had suspended its food exchange ties with Iniuma because the latter owed the former so many feasts. This also explains the tendency for minor subclans of Beipa'a to cease making feasts altogether and to combine with the principal subclans of their wards. If we had firm evidence of the precolonial Mekeo society we would be likely to find that activities related to *ufuapie* were contributing factors for the absorption of smaller groups by their larger neighbours.

Ufuapie ceremonials highlight, at the level of relationships between subclans, the fundamental principle of inequality which permeates the organisation of the society. We have seen this principle in our discussion of the spatial organisation within the village, of the seniority system, of affinity, and of the society-wide classification of people according to marital status. We shall encounter more manifestations of the principle in our later discussion of chieftainship and sorcery. By making inequality a reciprocal relationship (among subclans of varying sizes and strength) under highly ritualised and controlled ceremonial situations, *ufuapie* can be viewed as a device for reconciling

6. This phenomenon may be more widespread in Papua New Guinea than is generally realised. Forge (1972:535) said of the Abelam that 'equal exchange is, in fact, a system of alternating seniority'.

social groups with a fundamental principle of their society. But people do not accept the principle entirely and we have seen this projected in Isapini's repudiation of his ascribed relationship with his elder brother, A'aisa. The resistance to inequality is allowed expression in *ufuapie* relationships. This is most clearly seen in the ritualised aggressive behaviour of feast-givers on occasions other than mortuary ones for in the latter the mourners have no alternative but to display submissive behaviour. When relationships become intolerable the partners suspend their relationship or sever them altogether. This flexibility is facilitated by the fact that a subclan's partners are not necessarily also *ufuapie* to each other and do not, therefore, act as a single cohesive group towards it. In the end every subclan has the liberty to suspend or sever its *ufuapie* ties with any of its partners and establish new ones with others if it so wishes. Such fragility is inevitable for *ufuapie* relationships are potentially very tense and, as we shall see below, they can lead to fights and in some cases to death.

In 1925[7] the Inaufokoa staged a feast for the installation of their present chief and invited their *ufuapie* partners, Fopafo'ina, Aivea, Aloaivea and Inau'i, to attend. Fopafo'ina and Aivea were much larger and far more powerful than Inaufokoa. The *ufuapie* showed reluctance to proceed to the feast until they received handsome presents of food, exactly as Seligmann described. Once they arrived in front of the Inaufokoa *ufu* they were 'tied' or 'trapped'. The Inaufokoa lined them up in front of the *ufu* and proceeded to berate them, telling them that they did not know how to make feasts or raise pigs, and they (Inaufokoa) were certain that the food the *ufuapie* were to receive would be consumed and forgotten for they could not possibly repay it. After this tirade, which is the reverse of the obeisance displayed in charcoal carrying feasts, each *ufuapie* chief in turn stepped forward with his assistants to receive a heavy bundle of sago (to which was attached a slab of pigskin and underlying fat) which the Inaufokoa hurled at them from the *ufu*. The *ufuapie* chiefs' assistants had to catch the bundles in mid-air. This ritualised expression of extreme aggression in giving symbolised utmost contempt, for the throwing of food out and down from houses is done only for pigs and dogs. It was a demonstration of Inaufokoa's defiance of its more numerous and stronger neighbours. One of the consequences of this feast was the

7. This date was established from the recorded date of death of the Aivea chief who was an official guest at the feast and who died shortly afterwards.

Aivea suspended their reciprocal *ufuapie* food exchange with Inaufokoa. Some years later the Ongofo'ina terminated *ufuapie* exchange with the same Aivea subclan because of the murder of an Ongofo'ina woman by the Aivea during a similar feast. In late December 1970, there was a feast staged by the whole of Inawaia village for the installation of new chiefs. They invited their *ufuapie*, the whole village of Eboa, to attend. One hundred domestic pigs were reputedly slaughtered for the occasion. However, the relationships between the *ufuapie* villages were so poor that a general fight broke out and the hosts cancelled the feast after only two days instead of the planned week.

In October 1972 I attended a joint installation and opening of a new *ufu* feast held at Imounga. The *ufuapie* held up the occasion for at least a week while the feast-givers kept sending meats, begging them to come. At the food presentation after the *ufuapie* had arrived, the spokesman for the feast-givers delivered a formal speech which consisted entirely of abuse of the *ufuapie* people, and their chief in particular. In addition to being called envious, lying and quarrelsome, the *ufuapie* were told that they did not know how to make a proper feast, that they could not read or write, that their chief had no manners because he never went to school, and that it would benefit him and his people greatly if the spokesman's chief would give him a few lessons. The victims of this torrent of abuse made no effort to reply, for such verbal lashings were but a small price to pay for the amount of food received.

The initial show of reluctance by the *ufuapie* to go to the feast on this occasion, and on the occasion of the Inaufokoa feast in 1925, was motivated not only by a desire to extract as much meat out of their partners as they could, but also, I suggest, by an unwillingness to be placed at the mercy of their hosts once they reached their *ufuapie*'s homegrounds. Mekeo themselves say that the reason for their sending 'inducements' to their *ufuapie* is to bait them to come to their wards so that they can 'tie' them up *(fe ke ngopei'i)*. Thus in contrast to the inequality in the position of mourners throughout a particular charcoal carrying sequence, feast-givers in installation ceremonies play both a subordinate and a superior role in the same feasts which fall into two phases. In the first, the feast-givers are supplicants sending food offerings to and begging their *ufuapie* to come to their feasts. In the second phase, which begins with the arrival of the official

guests, the role is reversed and the feast-givers assume superiority over their *ufuapie*. If a sequence of events is cancelled during or at the end of the first phase, then feast-givers are left in a position of inequality with their partners, and this presents a special problem to be dealt with in the following section.

Mekeo possess a corpus of tales of anthropomorphic creatures in whose erratic behaviour are projected the endemic ambivalent relations, tensions and conflicts of their society. One such story, called *Nie* (a large bush rat), is germane to our present consideration.

Rat and Hornbill: a tale of inequality

Rat and Hornbill were chiefs of their respective villages. They were not only brothers-in-law (for Rat's wife was Hornbill's sister), but were also heads of two groups in *ufuapie* relationship to each other. It came to pass that Rat decided to stage a feast for his *ufuapie* and soul-mate, and sent his people out to hunt for the occasion. Every day after the hunt Rat divided the meat, part of which was smoked for the feast and part sent as a present by Rat through his wife to her brother, informing him of the progress in the preparation for the feast. As time passed and an increasing amount of meat was obtained and smoked, Rat sent his wife with meat for her brother, but this time with appeals to Hornbill not to delay but to come soon so that the feast could be held and be done with quickly. Hornbill kept delaying and the presents of meat continued flowing to him.

While Rat's wife went daily taking messages and meat to her brother's village, her husband's people began to notice that her stomach was growing big, and tongues began to wag in the village. Everyone realised that she could not have been impregnated by her husband, for he had been observing the required sexual abstinence because of the hunt and feast, and concluded that it must have happened on the road somewhere between the two villages. Rat himself was not unaware of his wife's condition but he pretended not to have noticed. He continued to send her daily to her brother with presents and urgent appeals for him to be considerate and come soon for the smoked meat had started to rot.

Eventually, Hornbill agreed to come and to bring his people to dance, and the date was set. On the eve of the feast Rat gathered his men in his *ufu* and talked for the first time about his wife saying, 'We all know that the woman has done a shameful thing. Every day I sent

her to her brother and while she was away she made a fool of me, and now she is pregnant. Tomorrow, we will give them something they will not forget in a hurry.'

On the following morning a big litter was prepared after which Rat summoned his wife to the ground in front of the *ufu* where she was told to sit. Rat went down from the *ufu* and smashed her head with a club. Then he carried her body and placed it in the litter and told his men to fill it up with meat covering her completely from view. He instructed some of his people to carry the litter to the *ufuapie* and to return as soon as they had presented the food. If Hornbill were to inquire after him they were to say that he was following slowly behind.

The carriers dutifully bore the litter to Hornbill's village, placed it on the ground in front of the *ufu*, told Hornbill that Rat was following behind, left the village with unceremonious haste and hid themselves in holes outside their own village. Rat himself had already gone to his hiding place, a house he had constructed on top of a very tall tree.

Meanwhile, back in the *ufuapie* village, Hornbill told his people to get the food off the litter and into the *ufu*, and while they were thus occupied, they discovered the corpse of Rat's wife. With horror they cried out to Hornbill, 'Your soul-mate has tricked you and sent your sister with the meat!' Hornbill reacted swiftly, ordered his men to prepare for war, and invaded Rat's empty village. After some unsuccessful attacks on, and a long siege of Rat's tree-top fortress, Hornbill's warriors finally lured him into a trap on the ground after he had gone down to search for food. Before he was dispatched with spears, Rat told Hornbill about his wife's infidelity. Hornbill replied, 'Why did you not tell me that while she was alive? We could have settled everything peacefully.'

The story shows that the burden of inequality borne by those in subordinate positions can sometimes become so excessively onerous that they react in irrational ways. Rat is Hornbill's inferior affine and the inequality in their relative positions is symbolised by the fact that Hornbill is a creature of the air (high) and Rat is a creature of the earth (low). Although in theory their *ufuapie* partnership is ultimately symmetrical, the fact that food exchanges are delayed and not simultaneous places Rat, the giver of the feast, in a position of inequality. We see this in the daily dispatch of food and appeals from Rat to Hornbill, who asserts his superiority by delaying going to the feast until after the

meat has started to rot. The fact that Rat's wife, the messenger and bearer of offerings of meat, is herself the connecting affinal link between Rat and Hornbill, emphasises Rat's position of double inequality. The meat sent is not only an inducement offering from a temporarily inferior *ufuapie* partner to a temporarily superior partner, it is also a tribute from a permanently inferior affine to his permanent superior. Hornbill's delaying tactics in order to assert his superiority and to extract as much as he can from Rat represent the extreme extent to which those in superior positions can go in exploiting their dominance. We have encountered this in the treatment meted out by the Inaufokoa to their inferior affines.

Hornbill's delaying tactics and Rat's growing exasperation lead to the deterioration in their relationship symbolised by the rotting meat and the illicit impregnation of Rat's wife (Hornbill's sister) on the road between their villages. Thus while the partners play the politics of *ufuapie* and affinity, the double-link between them is being devastated: the meat for the *ufuapie* exchange has rotted; and some unknown agent has defiled their affinal connection. Rat, the disappointed feast-giver and cuckolded husband, blames it all on Hornbill and kills the latter's sister in revenge. He shows his hatred for Hornbill by sending back his murdered wife to her brother in an offering of food. Food is not only a medium through which trust and goodwill are shared; it is also a weapon in competition, and is believed to be a medium through which a person can be poisoned by those who hate him. The term for 'poisoning' is *paani* which is exactly the same as the word for 'feeding'. Thus the return of Rat's wife through an offering of food represents the demise of Rat's relationships with Hornbill which have been poisoned beyond recovery. Rat is so distracted by his position of double-inequality that he terminates the feast sequence at the end of the first phase without giving himself a chance to equalise his position in the second phase. As Mekeo would have said, Rat's 'mind is so ruined' that he is incapable of taking a rational view of his actions and their likely consequences upon himself. For by murdering Hornbill's sister and returning her in the way he did, Rat leaves himself open to the inevitable 'payback' retribution.

Rat's second offence, which could be viewed almost as seriously as the murder of his wife, is his violation of the principle of inequality. He tries to solve his problem by raising himself to the level of his superior Hornbill, through an unsanctioned method. He deludes

himself by building a fortress on top of a tree. Unlike him, Rat's people know their lowly place and are safely concealed in their burrows. We have seen in the A'aisa myth how Isapini brought about his own and his group's downfall by, among other actions, building his house on top of a hill in defiance of the principle of seniority. In Rat's case, the tree is not tall enough, is firmly rooted in the ground, and Rat has no wings to rise higher or escape. He is caught in the middle with nowhere to go but down to his proper level. But he has committed such unpardonable acts that when he descends to the ground he is caught and killed.

The moral of the story seems to be that while inequality may sometimes be intolerable, it cannot be violated with impunity. Without really transgressing the principle of inequality, however, Mekeo have devised ways of expressing their disaffection with its more extreme and onerous manifestations. One of these is the delayed food exchange in which invectives, rather than dead bodies, accompany presentations of food to *ufuapie* partners.

7. Birth and position

In a previous publication (Hau'ofa 1971) I gave a general outline of Mekeo chieftainship to draw attention to an enthnographic case which differs markedly from the entrenched views about Big-Man leadership in traditional political organisations of Papua New Guinea. Rather than repeating in this chapter the arguments and substance of that paper, I shall instead analyse chieftainship in the context of relationships of seniority and juniority which I have already discussed in some detail. The main aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the connections between the traditional political system of Mekeo and the process of segmentation and fission in agnatic groups which is locally expressed in terms of relationships between elder and younger brothers. The tragedy in the A'aisa myth symbolises the extreme consequences of agnatic conflict. What occurs more commonly is the process of junior groups striving for greater autonomy, renown, and even dominance within their localised subclans. It will be argued that this process accounts for the structure of traditional authority in Mekeo.

Since Seligmann's description of Mekeo chieftainship is based on information collected in the early years of encounter with Europeans, I shall use a brief summary of it as the basis of my analysis. Seligmann (1910:342-8) stated that each subclan has or should have two leaders: a high chief, *lopia fa'a*, and a war chief, *iso lopia*, with the former ranking higher in authority than the latter. Many subclans are divided into two sections, *fa'aniau* and *eke'i*, the headmen of the latter being officially called *lopia eke'i*. Seligmann offers no English translation for *lopia eke'i* who, he said, are henchmen and assistants of their superiors, the high chiefs. When high chiefs go to feasts given by their *ufuapie*, their *lopia eke'i* carry the tapa mats for them to sit on, and receive presents on their behalf. Only high chiefs play the prominent roles in *ufuapie* ceremonials; the *lopia eke'i* are mere spectators and assistants on these occasions.

As a rule high chiefs do not take active part in warfare unless their

villages are subjected to surprise nocturnal attacks. In ordinary fights they can stop hostilities by parading unarmed between the combatant lines shaking lime from their gourds. (See also Hau'ofa 1974 for a brief reference to this subject.)

When a new group emerges, said Seligmann, its leader is initially made a *lopia eke* whose office will eventually become that of high chieftainship. Only when its leader has attained the higher office is the group able also to have a war chief. The responsibility for all matters related to warfare rests on war chiefs who can have their own *ufu* for the performance of the functions pertaining to their office.

Succession to the offices of high and war chiefs is strictly hereditary from father to son, with the qualification that only successful warriors can succeed to war chieftainship. A high chief can select a younger son in preference to the eldest as his successor; and adopted sons—treated in every way as if they are real sons—can also succeed to office.

In the course of this chapter I shall refer back to this summary of Seligmann's account while discussing the division of authority between high and war chiefs, the relationships between high chiefs and *lopia eke'i*, and the very important issue of succession to office.

One final point needs mentioning before we proceed. With the exception of Beipa'a, Aipiana and Rarai, each village in Pioufa and Northern Ve'e has a senior chief who is considered the head chief of the village. These are chiefs of subclans which founded their respective villages. The pre-eminence of the head chief of a village is largely ceremonial and symbolic, although a strong and resourceful head chief, like Vitolo Mainonga of Imounga, can use his position to become effectively dominant over the whole village (cf. MacGregor in BNG 1889-90:80; Stephen 1974). A senior chief's primary authority, however, is largely confined to his subclan or ward.

Men of peace and men of war

The distinction made by Seligmann between the 'high chief' and the 'war chief' needs clarification. Properly speaking, the more basic distinction is that between *pangua lopianga*, 'chieftainship of the village', and *iso lopianga*, 'chieftainship of the spear'. This distinction refers to the fundamental division of authority in Mekeo society between the civilian and the military. In a fully grown subclan, the civilian chieftainship is divided between the *lopia fa'a(niau)* and the *lopia eke* (plural *lopia eke'i*). We have seen in Chapter 4 that the terms

fa'aniau and *eke* mean 'senior' and 'junior' respectively. Henceforth, I shall use the terms 'senior chiefs' and 'junior chiefs' in reference to the holders of the top civilian offices. Seligmann's use of the term 'high chief' is correct in so far as it indicates the higher ranking and authority of the senior over junior and war chiefs. The principle behind this ranking will be dealt with after discussion of the probable factors behind the division of authority between the civilian and military fields. The discussion will be sketchy because the long lapse of time since the suppression of tribal warfare in Papua has made it difficult to obtain reliable information on Mekeo warfare and on the extent of the power wielded by war chiefs before the colonial period. The ban on warfare and the consequent demise of rituals and ceremonies connected with their offices have deprived war chiefs and war magicians of their *raison d'être*. Although they are still respected as hereditary office-holders, war chiefs exist mainly as influential heads of their lineages, that is, if they are men of character and ambition.

In addition to the belief that the division of authority was ordained from time immemorial by their deity, A'aisa, Mekeo also have a rationalist explanation for the two roles. In the past when localised subclans were small, there was for each descent group a single leader. But as the group expanded in number, the single chief discovered that it was too difficult for him to manage everything. Consequently he selected one of his younger brothers to take over the responsibility for military affairs and appointed him the war chief.

Although this account is too general in nature it nevertheless has some measure of plausibility. Moreover, the points it raises (see below) are commensurate with the dynamics of fraternal relations and agnatic separation. The account raises two important and related points. First, as local groups increased in size the difficulty of managing them multiplied correspondingly; and second, the hitherto single leaders were compelled by circumstances to share the responsibility for the management of the affairs of their groups with their younger brothers who were appointed war chiefs. It should be made clear here that the younger brothers concerned were not necessarily siblings; they could have been other junior agnates, that is, classificatory brothers. Father Egidi's genealogies confirm the assertion that war chiefs are descendants of younger brothers of senior chiefs. In every subclan in which all the lineages are genealogically connected to an apical ancestor, the war chief rose invariably from a junior line (Figures 9 and 10). In

those subclans whose lineages cannot be traced genealogically to the same ancestor but are believed to be so, war chiefs are still held to be descendants of younger brothers. This belief, this application of the principle of seniority, forms the ideological basis for the senior civilian chiefs' higher ranking and authority over war chiefs.

It can be argued that the difficulties confronted by the single chiefs when their groups expanded in size concerned the maintenance of the chiefs' authority and of the integrity of their subclans against the forces of segmentation and fission. We know that the seniority system confers upon eldest sons authority and responsibility for their fraternal groups, and that senior chiefs are, by a series of genealogical extensions, the most senior men of their subclans. We also know that agnatic relationships are fraught with ambivalent sentiments, love and trust mixed with envy and jealousy; and that these are exacerbated by the frustration on the part of members of the junior lines which arises in part from the ascribed inequality inherent in the seniority system. It is probable that in the old fighting days junior members of subclans, finding themselves restricted by the seniority system and strict hereditary succession to leadership, discovered in open warfare against people of other tribes an avenue not only for releasing their frustrations and aggression, but also for the assertion and demonstration of superiority and dominance based on personal prowess which they could not express within their own agnatic groups. We have seen this projected in the legend of Kaisafa and Ikuafa in which Kaisafa reacted to his elder brother's deception and selfishness by leaving the village to fight the ogre rather than attacking Ikuafa. The ogre is the symbolic representation of the outsider, the foreigner, uncontrolled from inside and credited with great powers, malice and inhuman deeds.

Seligmann's point that civilian chiefs are non-combatants who can stop hostilities is of utmost importance in relation to the ideals associated with their office. A brief account of some relevant incidents which have occurred in Beipa'a since the Second World War will illuminate this point. The people of Fopafo'ina and of the Ve'e village of Rarai have had a long-standing dispute over a stretch of water along their common boundary. No real problem arises as long as no one uses the disputed part of the creek. One day in the late 1940s or early 1950s someone reported to the village that Rarai people were fishing in the disputed area. Under the direction of their war leaders, the Fopafo'ina and their village allies took arms and prepared to

attack and drive off the intruders. Realising the gravity of the situation, the civilian chiefs of Inau'i and Ongofo'ina hastened unobserved to Rarai where they successfully urged their counterparts in that village to recall their people quickly in order to avoid bloodshed. When the Beipa'a warriors reached the spot and found it empty, they returned home.

At about the same period the Fopafo'ina and Ongofo'ina had a serious quarrel (the reasons for which were not revealed to me) and the two largest wards in the village prepared to attack each other. In order to prevent a fight, the senior chief of Ongofo'ina went down from his house, lit a fire in front of it, and sat on the ground near the fire, uttering not a single word. The message conveyed by the chief's action was clear and his people made no move against their opponents. Meanwhile, in Fopafo'ina, some older and clear-headed men entered the house of the war leader, the *fai'a*, and persuaded him not to go out for if he did so it would be the signal for his people to attack. Thus the Fopafo'ina war chief sat unseen inside his house, and the Ongofo'ina civilian chief sat outside his house visible to everyone, until their hot-tempered men were brought to reason.

On a Sunday morning in the mid-1960s the people of Aipiana massed at the Ongofo'ina end of the village ready for an attack in retaliation for the killing of an Aipiana man by the junior war chief of Ongofo'ina, Paulo Afa'isa. The people of Beipa'a likewise took up positions behind and at the sides of their houses ready to defend their village. While the opposing sides were thus deployed, the civilian chiefs of Aipiana entered the village unarmed, walked through the central ground, and stood for a while at the centre where they became easy targets for the defenders. The civilian chief of Ongofo'ina, on the other hand, sat unarmed in front of his *ufu* offering himself as an easy target for the invaders. Meanwhile the missionary priests were doing their best to keep the opposing sides apart until a contingent of police from Bereina arrived and dispersed the people.

In the early 1960s a Fopafo'ina man accidentally shot dead his junior war chief and immediately fled with all his close agnates to another village. On finding that the culprit had escaped, the enraged younger brother of the victim rushed with his spear to kill his senior chief, accusing him of permitting the 'murder' of his brother. When he heard of the commotion outside the chief emerged unarmed from his house, declared his innocence, sat down quietly on his verandah

and faced his would-be assailant. Confronted by the calm seated figure, the warrior relented and returned home. He told me in 1971 that although he was wildly angry he could not bring himself to kill his only chief. He omitted mentioning that had he attacked the chief he himself would almost certainly have been killed on the spot.

Two more examples, of events alleged to have occurred in the pre-colonial past, further illustrate the differences in the roles, and in the expectations of the roles, of civilian and war chiefs. In the past the Aivea people of Aipiana village had special relationships of trade and marriage with the coastal Roro-speaking people of Waima village. Secretly, however, the Aivea coveted some lands along their ill-defined common boundary with Waima. At the same time the Ongofo'ina had some special ties of cognation and friendship with the Kaopo village of Papangongo. Like the Aivea, the Ongofo'ina coveted some lands along their similarly ill-defined common boundary with Papangongo. Under the direction of their war chiefs the two Pioufa groups devised a treacherous plot against their friends. Ongofo'ina and Aivea had separate *ufu* for their civilian and war chiefs. Unlike the *ufu* of civilian chiefs, which are places of refuge and safety, the *ufu* of war chiefs were dangerous places and strangers who inadvertantly entered them were killed. In accordance with the plot the Ongofo'ina invited the Waima to attend a feast which they were making. Many Waima men accepted the invitation and on their arrival the Ongofo'ina deliberately misled them into their war chief's *ufu* where they were all slaughtered. The Aivea issued a similar invitation to the Papangongo, luring them into their war chief's *ufu* where they too were massacred. Having the number of their fighting men considerably reduced, Waima and Papangongo could not withstand the encroachment of Aivea and Ongofo'ina into the disputed territories.

Long ago the Inau'i and the Aloaivea had a fight over a piece of land in which an Aloaivea man of Apangoa subclan was slain. Shortly afterwards the Aloaivea caught an Inau'i man in the bush and took him to their settlement where they intended to kill him in retaliation. The civilian chief of the ward felt pity for the man, and perhaps seeing in him an opportunity to effect reconciliation with Inau'i, took him into the custody of his *ufu*. After he was fed the chief adorned him with his special string-bag *(ipakafukafu)* an item of chiefly insignia, before he escorted him back safely to his ward. Outside the safety of the *ufu* no one dared to molest him while the chiefly badge was on his

person. In gratitude for this magnanimous gesture, the Inau'i chief formally relinquished his people's claim to the disputed land, which went to the family of the deceased Apangoa man, and peace was restored between the wards.

The foregoing accounts show how civilian chiefs can live up to their reputation as 'men of peace' *(ngangao au'i)*. In talking about this category of leadership, Mekeo say that civilian chiefs are good and peaceful men who eschew violence in order to be able to perform their task of maintaining peace and harmonious relations among their people. The word *lopia*, which translates literally as 'good', 'pretty', 'well' and 'properly', is ordinarily used strictly as the word for civilian chiefs. Its application to war chiefs, war magicians and even to sorcerers, is mainly for the enlightenment of inquisitive outsiders such as anthropologists. In practically all other circumstances people refer to and address their war chiefs, war magicians, and sorcerers simply as *iso, fai'a* and *ungaunga* respectively. Thus for example, during a conversation I had with two Aivea men, one of them said, *'lau iso, isa lopia'* (*lau* = I, me; *isa* = he, him). And on large-scale occasions such as installation ceremonies, chiefs preface their formal speeches with the honorifics, *Eu lopia, eu iso, eu fai'a, eu ungaunga . . .* (*eu* = my).

War chiefs, on the other hand, are regarded as 'bad' and dangerous men of anger and physical violence. It is necessary that they cultivate these qualities in order to defend their villages and to kill external enemies. Within the agnatic group, the village, and even within the tribal territory, people disapprove expressions of anger and physical violence which they drive beneath the surface. But Mekeo regarded violence against outsiders, particularly against hostile tribes, as something necessary. They therefore expect their war chiefs and war magicians to be 'bad' men but their 'badness' must be directed strictly against outsiders. Nevertheless, people fear and suspect their war leaders for they could malevolently unleash their dangerous powers against their own groups. This may explain in part the strict exclusion of war chiefs and war magicians from formal participation in peaceful civilian ceremonies and other proceedings. Hence leaders whose official functions centre on the cult of open violence have no formal part in *ufuapie* ceremonials. Although the so-called peaceful civilian sphere of operation is imbued with hostilities and aggression, these aberrations of ideal relationships are nevertheless highly controlled and

can be channelled safely away without resort to physical violence.

Instead of regarding warfare as something normal, Mekeo view it as non-normal and polluting. Thus after battles warriors performed purification rites which included fasting, seclusion, and eating without touching their food with their hands. They must shed violence and the taste for death—which they had developed during pre-battle preparatory rites—before they could resume normal civilian life. Perhaps the best example of the polluting nature of warfare was the practice of some warriors of putting faeces into their mouths before they went into combat. Pollution, then, is associated with the function of war chiefs and war magicians. It is not an aspect of civilian chieftainship.

If we reconsider the stories narrated in the previous pages we will find some illuminating examples of the differences between the 'men of peace' and the 'men of war'. In the first story it was the war leaders who directed and prepared Beipa'a men to attack the Rarai 'intruders'. The civilian chiefs, acting for the maintenance of peaceful concourse, intervened and successfuly prevented bloodshed.

In the second story the Ongofo'ina civilian chief went out from his house and sat quietly on the ground beside the fire. The Fopafo'ina war leader, on the other hand, remained inside his house. These actions and the contrast between those of the civilian chief and those of the war chief, have a number of significations. The visibility of the civilian chief symbolises the desire for the appearance of peace and amity. Though this may only be surface amity it must be maintained. The invisibility of the war chief, on the other hand, signifies the desire for the suppression if not the absence of conflict and violence. The visibility of the war chief on that particular occasion would have meant that hostility could not be contained. The civilian chief's act of sitting quietly beside the fire may be interpreted in two related ways. First, this is an ancient practice of mourners expressing their sense of bereavement. Thus the chief's action may be seen as a registration of his profound unhappiness at the possibility that his people would ignore him and resort to violence. The second interpretation may be seen in the act of sitting itself. The usual sitting position in Mekeo is with the legs crossed, which effectively immobilises the sitter as far as lower limb movements are concerned. It is difficult to be physically violent with the legs crossed. It is, in brief, a submissive and peaceful posture. The act of standing, on the other hand, facilitates mobility

and therefore, physical violence. When people quarrel while sitting down there is relatively little concern, but when they quarrel standing up then there is more cause for alarm. Two of the most frequently heard pieces of advice in quarrels are *komo* (be quiet) and *mo angukipo* (sit down). The civilian chief's sitting demonstration, then, was a symbolic announcement to his people to do likewise instead of running around making noises and getting themselves into trouble.

The stories of the near collision between Ongofo'ina and Aipiana, and of the Fopafo'ina chief calmly confronting his would-be assailant, are examples of civilian chiefs acting out their roles as peaceful, non-violent men even at the risk of losing their lives. The Aipiana chiefs went to the middle of the 'enemy' territory, and the Ongofo'ina chief sat exposed in front of his *ufu*. This helped to create a stalemate which lasted long enough for the police to arrive. Beipa'a people say that the Aipiana could not attack for they, Beipa'a, had trapped their chiefs inside their village. One of the Catholic priests involved said that he was aghast at the action of the Ongofo'ina chief who stubbornly refused to move out of the range of Aipiana bowmen. Again, the Fopafo'ina chief literally checked his would-be assailant simply by facing him quietly without arms. Although his action was submission in a physical sense, it was essentially a moral assertion of dominance and fearlessness. When I asked him whether he was afraid he replied that at the time his life was completely in the other man's hands. Mekeo say that as a rule civilian chiefs should not be touched; which is of course contingent on their not taking arms or becoming active combatants. Given this rule, it could be said that there was not much risk in the chiefs exposing themselves to danger. On the other hand, no one could be so certain, for when people are overly excited with anger, they tend to disregard the rules. For example, in 1971 when an Inawaia chief risked his life by going to Inawabui to negotiate peace between the two villages—which had fought over a headdress design—he was physically assaulted by a young man who was allegedly inebriated. Other Inawabui people quickly rescued the unscathed but shaken chief into an *ufu*.

The two stories of events alleged to have occurred in the precolonial past highlight the contrast in the roles of civilian and war chiefs as symbolised by their *ufu*. In one set of *ufu* we encounter safety, peace and hospitality, the core of the function of civilian leadership. In the other set of *ufu* we saw violence and death, the *raison d'être* of military

chieftainship.

Finally, the Aloaivea chief's action of adorning the captured Inau'i man with an item of the insignia of his chieftainship gives credence to the assertion that the person of the civilian chief is inviolable. The chief's action was itself an extension of his immunity to a non-chiefly person in danger of his life, ensuring him a safe passage home. Some Mekeo say that in the past when strangers passed through their territory and were apprehensive about their safety, civilian chiefs gave the guarantee for safe passage by offering them their special string-bags or their special lime gourds and spatulas, which they had to show when challenged.

Senior chiefs and junior chiefs

The process of segmentation which enabled some junior members to wrest military leadership from their seniors also accounts for the rise of junior civilian chiefs. In some cases, an example of which will be given below, the lineages of war chiefs acquired the junior civilian chieftainship; in other instances it was acquired by a different lineage. As an example, a subclan may have two main lineages A and B with the former holding the senior chieftainship and the latter the war chieftainship. B may bid for a greater autonomy than it possesses and may successfully make one of its leading personalities a civilian chief. This chief is then able to perform those official civilian functions which war chiefs cannot do. When this happens, lineage B becomes relatively independent of lineage A on whose chief it had hitherto depended for such crucial ceremonies as the charcoal carrying. In the instance of a subclan having three lineages, the three essential offices (senior and junior civilian chieftainship, and the war chieftainship) may be divided among them. In a subclan with four lineages we may find that both the civilian and the war chieftainship are split into senior and junior offices each occupied by the heads of the four lineages. Whether or not a lineage is able to have a share of top official responsibility depends largely on its strength and on the ability and ambition of its head, normally the most senior man of the lineage. This implies that as a particular subclan expands, the heads of its constituent lineages demand an official post so that they may have a formal say in the management of the affairs of the subclan. And by having their leaders formally installed as office-holders the lineages achieve a

certain degree of prestige and recognition. Once these official positions have been acquired and made hereditary, they constitute the bases for the further acquisition of authority as the lineages concerned grow bigger and increasingly assertive. This is congruent with what I said previously about the process of segmentation within agnatic groups and the assertion of autonomy by junior members. In its extreme and tragic form, this process is projected in the A'aisa myth in Isapini's attempt to become independent from, and to be the equal of, his elder brother.

Seligmann wrote on the general form which this process takes in Mekeo. I shall quote at some length the relevant passage (1910:336-8), for there is evidence that Seligmann's hypothesis is substantially correct. For the sake of avoiding confusion I shall substitute in Seligmann's text the words 'subclans' and 'lineages' for *pangua* and *ikupu* respectively. I have registered in Chapter 2 my differences with Seligmann regarding the referents of these terms.

> At Inawi, as in most other villages, the lineages of the stronger clans are divided into two groups called respectively *faangiau*, which may be translated 'first born', and *eke'i* meaning 'subsequently born'. This division appears to be the result of the relatively slight feeling of solidarity existing between members of the various [lineages] forming one [subclan]. As the [subclan] ages and becomes more populous the name and qualities of the common ancestor of its [lineage] become forgotten or ignored in the welter of recent migrations and ambitions. Certain [lineages], however, continue to form a group acknowledging their close relationship, and the feeling of unity of origin and purpose becomes more intense within this limited circle until, stimulated by the desire for independence, or perhaps by the ambition of its leading man or by the lustre of some brilliant feat of war, these [lineages] publicly declare their autonomy and invite the chiefs of their *ufuapie* group to come to their village so that by their presence at the appropriate feast they may acknowledge and make clear to all other [subclans] the social and political status of the newly constituted unit.
>
> It by no means follows that all or any of the chiefs of the *ufuapie* group will assent to the request, and should they not do so the emerging group will approach other [subclans] with whom they are on good terms and propose that the *ufuapie* relationship be established between them. In any case it seems that when a numerically strong group feels the advisability of asserting their relative independence they carry the matter through, even if this necessitates prolonged bickering with the conservative party, and perhaps a

struggle with the *lopia faa*, the chief of the [subclan]. Ultimately the new unit gives the necessary big feast, all the chiefs of the district, including their own *lopia faa*, come to it, the leader of the new unit is declared a chief, and the new section, while retaining the old name, is declared free and independent. The dignity of chief being hereditary the chief of the old section retains the title of *lopia faa*, and the old section is distinguished by the name of *faangiau* . . . and the new one by that of *eke'i* . . . the chief of this latter section being officially termed *lopia eke'i*; there is, however, a tendency to use this term in an unofficial sense for the head-man of a strong party in a [subclan] even before there has been any official recognition of the new party.

In those cases in which the new division separates entirely from the section in which it was formed, it takes another name and becomes a new [subclan]. Such new [subclans] have little difficulty in obtaining official recognition for their chiefs as *lopia faa* if they are numerically strong, and above all if they are rich enough to be generous to their *ufuapie* and to secure their wholehearted support. In these circumstances it is only necessary for the men of the new [subclan] to make a feast grand enough to please everybody concerned.

Since the arrival of the colonial administration no new subclan or a recognised section of an old one has been established in Beipa'a. On the basis of the information gathered in the village it seems that one of the two last groups to have established thereby new lines of chiefs was the junior section of Inau'i subclan. I obtained the relevant information regarding this from Faupungu Oaeke, a retired chief of Kolomio of Inau'i ward, who was in 1973 one of the most respected, and formerly one of the most influential, men in the village. Faupungu, born in 1905, asserted that he had obtained his information from an Inau'i man, Anika Ifi'ia, who, according to the Catholic Mission records, died in 1921. Anika was baptised in 1916 at the estimated age of sixty-five. The names which Faupungu mentions in the story below tally with Father Egidi's genealogies. The events appear to have occurred in the 1880s or 1890s. The value of this story is that it provides us with an alleged concrete example of the processes of segmentation and fusion in descent and local groups, and the roles of leaders and *ufuapie* in the rise of new social units. The story also gives substance to the ideal process described by Seligmann and quoted above. When Faupungu narrated the story he did so without being aware of Seligmann's statements, and without guidance from me as to the structure of the narrative. He simply spoke into a tape recorder in response to

a request for information about the origin of Inau'i chieftainship. One final point must be made before presenting Faupungu's story. Inau'i ward presently comprises two subclans, Inau'i and Kolomio, with the former divided into two sections, a senior and a junior.

I shall discuss Inau'i chieftainship relating what I know and say nothing on what I know not. I will examine in particular the Inau'i junior chieftainship. In the days of our grandfathers, our junior section was large while the senior one was small comprising only a few adult men: Eki Ongunga, Aisa Mangaiva, Oaepino Ifangainga, and Aufangau Ifangainga. With them were Fakepo Eko, Aisa Fonge, and Aisa Piapiau, men who looked after the chief. Eki Ongunga was the only chief and he worked for the whole subclan [representing both sections]. During feasts he sent food formally to the senior and the junior chiefs of the *ufuapie*.

This was the case until a woman called Ifangai Ofoina, the mother of Oaepino Ifangainga and Aufangau Ifangainga, became a widow after which she went and married Amengafina Aisama of the junior section. This so enraged Eki Ongunga and his senior section men that they fought the junior side until stopped by chiefs and war magicians.

Some time later a woman of the senior section died and Eki Ongunga told his people to hunt and prepare for a mortuary feast. At the feast Eki distributed food only to the senior chiefs of the *ufuapie* but not to the junior chiefs.

In the those days Lapui Ififunga of the junior section was regarded as a chief though he was never formally installed as one. He was chief in name but not in fact. After the mortuary feast men of the junior section, offended by Eki's behaviour, held a meeting and explored ways of creating their own chieftainship. They decided that first they must build a separate *ufu* for themselves in which they would install their chief. My grandfather, Faupungu Aleaunga, raised the matter concerning pigs and told the meeting, 'I have pigs for the work on our *ufu*. We should leave any discussion about installation of our chief until after we have completed the *ufu*.' In the evening following the meeting, Lapui Ififunga killed a huge pig, quartered and distributed it to *ufuapie* chiefs, to sorcerers, and to the war magicians. They did this at night. Lapui told the *ufuapie* and sorcerers of the decision made by his people and said, 'If you think that what we are planning is wrong, say so and we will desist. If you have no objections to it, tell us so and we will go ahead. Our senior chief is in such a dark mood that he has refused to acknowledge the existence of your junior chiefs. If you allow us to go ahead with our plan and we are successful then rest assured your junior chiefs will be recognised by us.' The *ufuapie* chiefs, the sorcerers, and the war magicians replied, 'It is your own affair.'

Having formally consulted the *ufuapie* and sorcerers Lapui Ififunga gathered his men and embarked on the *ufu* construction project without trepidation. They hunted and smoked the meat, then constructed the *ufu* and planted the central post, *lopia opongo*. Manga Aikau [the leading village sorcerer] presided over the preparation and erection of the *opongo*. The *ufuapie* did not help in the work all of which was done by the men of the junior section with the help of their *ipangava* and their *ekefa'a*. When they completed the *ufu* project they held a meeting in which Lapui Ififunga told his people that since their gardens were depleted because of the project, they had to make new gardens for the feast. 'After this then we will talk about our chieftainship,' he declared. After they had planted the new gardens they made preparations for the big hunt. Then they sent betelnut to the junior chiefs of the *ufuapie* inviting them to attend the feast. They also sent betelnut to the junior chiefs of Oaesaka and of Inaufokoa-Lape. Then the junior section men went out hunting for the feast and tied up the pigs that they caught alive.

When all was ready, they held a meeting in which Lapui Ififunga announced that since he had no heir himself, he had decided that the new chief would be Ainatsia Aisama, his younger brother's son. Then he said, 'Our senior chief is so angry that he has not come to see us and will not help us. We will get the Kolomio chief, Amola, to install Ainatsia'. They held their feast, and Amola made Ainatsia chief. Such was the origin of the Inau'i junior chieftainship.

This story is a direct narrative of events without any interpretative elaboration. Faupungu Oaeke narrated it with a tacit assumption that his audience (which consisted of me and his eldest son) knew the workings of the society, and of the many known relationships within Inau'i and its neighbourhood. As was done with the myth at the beginning of Chapter 4, I shall retell the story interpretatively, adding to it further information obtained in the field.

In about the 1880s and 1890s the Inau'i subclan had two sections, both under the titular headship of the single civilian chief, Eki Ongunga, its most senior male. Upi Ififunga, the war chief, led the junior section, which has larger than the senior one. Three men of the most junior branch of the junior section, went to the senior group to complement their number, or as Faupungu said, to look after the chief. This reshuffling of members of a particular local group was not exceptional for there have been to my knowledge at least half a dozen such rearrangements, made always within and never between wards, benefiting

both the overpopulated and underpopulated groups, especially with regard to land questions.[1]

The Inau'i were renowned warriors whose reputation was earned largely by the junior section under Upi's military leadership. Considering the section's numerical superiority, this must have provided additional motive force in its bid for greater autonomy. However, it could not become independent without a recognised civilian chief, for the war chief could not legitimately perform civilian tasks, especially the crucial mortuary ceremonies. What happened in some cases, such as Inau'i, was that the junior civilian chieftainship originated in the closest family of war chiefs.

Although in Faupungu's story the event that precipitated the rift between the two sections was the 'stealing' of the widow of a man of one section by a man of the other, it must be assumed that relationships between the two groups had deteriorated badly for such an act of 'theft' to be possible. Traditionally, a woman was under contract to the family into which she married, and if her husband died she remained in that family, frequently being inherited by a close agnate, preferably a real brother of her dead husband. Although in the story the widow was merely taken by a junior man, there is a darker implication that this person might himself have killed the former husband through sorcery in order to procure his widow. In the context of tense, competitive relationships between the two sections this would have been part of the allegation which is not unheard of in the area. This makes more sense not only of the fight between the two groups, but also of the drastic action taken by the chief, Eki.

The relationship between the two groups had so deteriorated that at the next mortuary feast (a charcoal carrying ceremony no doubt) Eki sent food only to senior *ufuapie* chiefs. Until then he had always distributed food to both the senior and the junior leaders of the *ufuapie*. In a fully developed subclan, one that has both a senior and a junior chief, it is the latter's responsibility to perform the ceremonial task

1. I mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5 how the most junior men normally find themselves at a distinct disadvantage relative to their senior agnates with regard to land. The example given above of the three men (Fakepo Eko, Aisa Fonge, and Aisa Piapiau) from the most junior branch of the junior section transferring to the senior section supports my contention. These men, being the most junior of the subclan, had little land; they went over to the senior section, which had so much land, to acquire blocks for themselves, in return for which they 'looked after the chief', that is, worked for him.

of dispatching food to the junior chiefs of the *ufuapie*. By refusing to make food available for distribution to these chiefs, Eki was intimating to the junior section that it amounted to very little for it did not have a proper chief to perform the task. At the time, people regarded Lapui Ififunga as a chief although formally he was not. This accords with Seligmann's assertion that there was a tendency for people to use the term 'junior chief' unofficially for the head of a rising junior branch before it had received formal recognition. Because of the unofficial character of his status, Lapui could not perform the ceremonial food distribution. We can see now that Eki directed his action towards shaming Lapui who was a younger sibling of Upi, the war chief (Figure 8).

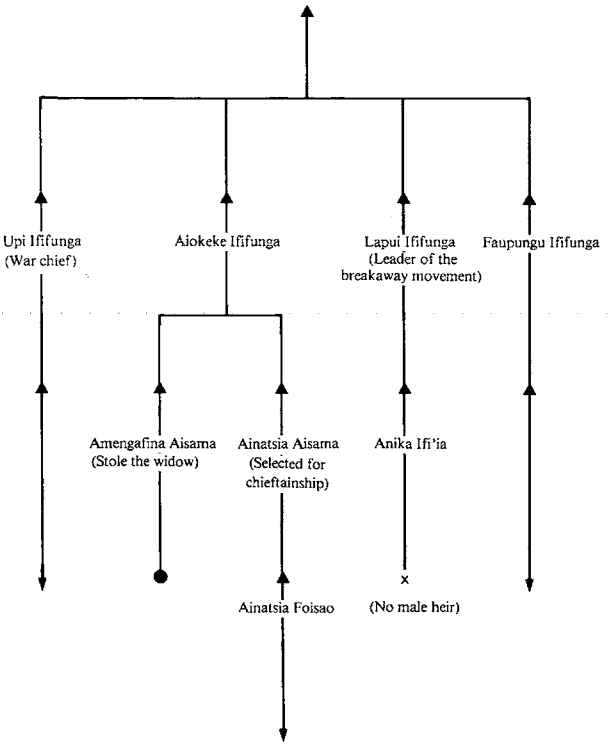


Fig. 8 Major considerations in the selection of a junior chief (Trau'i subclan)

As a consequence of Eki's insult, the people of the junior section met and decided not only to install a chief of their own but also to break away completely from the senior group by building their own separate *ufu*. Henceforth they would meet, socialise and hold ceremonies apart from their seniors. Furthermore, as installation ceremonies take place inside or in front of *ufu*, the junior section had to build one of their own since it was unlikely that Eki would permit a rival leader to be installed in his *ufu*. In both the construction of the *ufu* and the inauguration of the new chieftainship, the consent of the *ufuapie* had to be obtained. As the unofficial chief, Lapui contacted the *ufuapie*. He killed a fully grown pig and distributed portions of it to *ufuapie* chiefs, to sorcerers, and to war magicians. The distribution to *ufuapie* was a formal requirement, and those to sorcerers and war magicians were for the purpose of placating them, of buying their neutrality if not their blessing. In seeking the assent of *ufuapie* chiefs for his plan, Lapui moved to turn the tables against Eki by asserting that the latter had deliberately snubbed the junior chiefs by excluding them from the food distribution. He, Lapui, could restore proper relationships if the *ufuapie* were to agree with his plan.

The *ufuapie* chiefs did not wish to be involved in the Inau'i schism for their reply was a non-committal 'It is your own affair' *(Oi ifomi)*. Lapui and his people went ahead with the first part of their plan. They did not worry about misfortunes or mystical attacks for they had made the necessary placatory overtures to sorcerers and war magicians, and they had formally consulted the *ufuapie* chiefs who did not expressly reject their proposals. The *ufuapie*, however, did not help in the construction work. We saw in the previous chapter that *ufuapie* partners should help each other in *ufu* construction although people often refrain from soliciting such assistance because of the expenses involved. In the Inau'i case, the *ufuapie* did not help, probably because they wished not to offend the established chief and his people. The junior side instead received assistance from their *ipangava* and *ekefa'a* (non-agnatic cognates), many of whom would have belonged to the *ufuapie*. They went as inferior affines and compassionate cognates rather than as soul-mates.

When the dissidents completed their *ufu* they proceeded to prepare and plant the central post, the *lopia opongo* (literally the 'chief's post'). This is the most important part of the *ufu* on which is carved the insignia of the owning chief and the hereditary designs of his

forefathers. The importance of the chief's post can be seen in the following: decisions made inside an *ufu* are phrased as being taken in front of the *opongo* and must therefore be binding; the ceremonial slaughter of pigs on the ground in front of an *ufu* is phrased in terms of the animals being killed 'at the base of the *opongo*'; food sent into the *ufu* is displayed around the central post before being distributed; and anything placed against or left near the central post cannot be stolen. As a phallic symbol, the post stands for agnatic virility and regeneration. Because of the importance of the chief's post, the Inau'i Junior carved and erected theirs under the supervision of Manga Aikau, the head of the leading sorcery lineage in the village. (In Mekeo sorcerers are the custodians of tradition. When in 1972 the people of Beipa'a carved an *opongo* for Bishop Vangeke's church in Port Moresby, they worked in the presiding presence of Manga Kimi'i, the current head of the same sorcery family, and a younger half-brother of the bishop. Similar work done in Eboa village at the same time and for the same occasion, was also supervised by sorcerers who imposed strict taboos while the work was in progress.)

Although the *ufuapie* did not participate in the construction of the *ufu*, the project was sufficiently costly to deplete the junior section's food resources. Thus new gardens were cultivated, after which people prepared for a hunting expedition. In the past, as is still the case today, feast-giving groups relied to a considerable extent on wild meat. In any ceremonial there were usually more wild animals than domestic ones slaughtered for feasts. Lugging specially woven strong nets, hunters went into the bush for about two or three months to catch pigs for a single feast. Today, this period has been reduced to two or three weeks because of the use of shotguns.

Before the hunt, Lapui sent messengers with betelnut to invite the junior *ufuapie* chiefs for the feast. He could not invite the senior chiefs, for that was Eki's prerogative, and Eki was not co-operative. Lapui also issued invitations to the junior chiefs of Oaesaka subclan of Inawi village, and to the junior chiefs of Inaufokoa-Lape in another village. These two subclans were not formerly *ufuapie* of Inau'i, but as we have seen in the passage from Seligmann, a new group could establish *ufuapie* partnerships with subclans with whom it had good relations. The Inaufokoa subclan in another village was probably persuaded because of the Inau'i's old partnership with the Inaufokoa of Beipa'a. Inau'i itself had a prior connection with Oaesaka ward

through the *ufuapie* partnership between Kolomio (a client subclan of Inau'i ward) and Ungo (a client subclan of Oaesaka ward). It appears that in their quest for autonomy and greater prestige the Inau'i Junior decided to have *ufuapie* partnerships for themselves which were not identical with the old ones centred on the senior chief. The addition of two further subclans to the original set may be seen as a declaration by the junior unit of its strength and numerical superiority over the senior group, a boast to the effect that it could easily provide feasts for more *ufuapie* partners than the senior section. It was a case of Lapui getting back at Eki.

When all was ready for the feast, Lapui called a meeting of his people and informed them that since he had no heir he had decided that the person to be installed was Ainatsia Aisama, the son of his younger brother. Here it appears that Faupungu's information is somewhat erratic. According to the Catholic Mission records Lapui had a son, Anika Ifi'ia, the old man who told the story to Faupungu. The error, if it is such, may be attributed to Faupungu's failing memory for the story was told to him while he was no older than sixteen. Furthermore, Ainatsia was the son of Lapui's elder and not younger brother. Figure 8 shows Lapui as the third of a set of four brothers. We already know that the eldest, Upi, was the war chief. The second brother had two sons of whom Ainatsia was the younger. If the Catholic records are accurate, then Lapui must have based the choice of his elder brother's son on the latter's stronger seniority claim over his, Lapui's, own son, Anika. Upi had only one son, his heir to the war chieftainship. Ainatsia's elder brother should have been the most obvious choice. But there were two things which disqualified him. First, he was the same Amengafina Aisama whose 'theft' of the widow had precipitated the schism. There would have been much objection to his candidacy because chiefs are expected to uphold morality. And second, Amengafina had no male heir so that had he been chosen to be the first of a line of chiefs, there would have been more problems later when the question of his successor arose. Lapui could not have decided on his own son for the *ufuapie* were likely to have rejected the choice on the ground of seniority as they did much later on in the case of Faupungu Oaeke, the teller of the story. (For some reason Faupungu's father chose a younger son, Anika Oaeke, to be chief but because of the objections from the *ufuapie*, Faupungu, the eldest of three sons, was installed.) Marie Reay commented, 'In

both cases the *ufuapie* are revealed—in either their anticipated or actual response to an individual leader's nomination of a successor to chieftainship—as a sturdy force of conservatism, asserting the power of consensus over individual decision and protecting the principle of seniority against individual judgments of suitability or unsuitability for office.'

Once Lapui made public his choice of Ainatsia, he announced that since Eki was still angry with them and would not co-operate, Amola, the chief of Kolomio, had consented to conduct the installation ceremony. The feast was duly held with the junior chiefs of the *ufuapie* present, and Amola installed Ainatsia as the first junior chief of Inau'i.

The two Inau'i sections, known simply as Inau'i Senior and Inau'i Junior, existed separately and independently for many years, holding their own functions in their separate *ufu* until the old antagonisms had died out. The new generation of chiefs, Apini Oinina (senior) and Ainatsia Foisao (junior), brought about the reconciliation and reunification of the subclan. This was expressed in the return to the original *ufuapie* ties, and in the construction of a new joint *ufu*. Since Apini Oinina had only a daughter he adopted Ainatsia Foisao's eldest son—significantly named Apini Oinina—as his heir and later his successor. Ainatsia himself was succeeded by his younger son, Aufa Mangaiva, and up until Christmas 1970 when Aufa died, the senior and junior chiefs of Inau'i were siblings. The principle of seniority once again prevailed, for the senior chief is the elder brother.

Although in principle senior chiefs have precedence over their junior counterparts, actual superiority among chiefs depends ultimately on the personality and ability of particular leaders, the numerical strength and unity of their groups, and the kinds of magic they have at their command. The fact that attainment of junior chieftainship was often the result of struggle for power and independence among lineage heads meant that the challengers were sufficiently strong to push their cause through despite the resistance from the conservative senior parties. That the challengers could be stronger than senior chiefs and could manage in subtle ways to acquire for themselves the senior post is seen quite clearly in the case of Inau'i. After the schism the senior Inau'i section continued its decline in numbers. During the schism Eki's generation and the one below it had nine men none of whom had a male heir. The Inau'i today refuse to divulge any information on the subject except to say that the senior section declined because of

pikupa (envy and jealousy), which implies sorcery. Only one man from this section survived into the 1940s (and there were only three in the 1920s). As we have seen Apini Oinina adopted the eldest of the sons of Ainatsia Foisao. The adopted son is now the senior chief (living in Port Moresby) but he is by birth the eldest son of a former junior chief. Inau'i men often pointed this fact out to me. In practical terms, then, the reunification of Inau'i meant the complete ascendancy of the junior section.

In the two largest wards (Ongofo'ina and Aivea) of Beipa'a and Aipiana villages, the leaders of the junior groups presently dominate the civilian affairs of their respective wards. In Ongofo'ina, the line of the junior chiefs has presided over the affairs of the ward for several generations. Aivea subclan has three named sections: Faila (senior); Iso (warrior); and Fanguopa (junior). Backed by one of the most powerful living sorcerers in the region, the Fanguopa chiefs dominate the group affairs of the ward though the Faila chiefs are nominally superior by virtue of seniority.

According to an oral tradition the decline of the senior section, Faila, started in the following manner. One day, long before the European intrusion, the then chief of Faila (and formal head of Aivea) returned with his wife from a feast with some meat which was to be taken to the *ufu* to be shared by the whole group. When the wife presented the meat to the gathering of men in the *ufu* and turned her back to go home, a joint of pork which she had stolen for her personal use fell from her bag in front of everyone. Her husband was so ashamed that he resigned from his office to be replaced by a junior agnate whose descendants still hold the chieftainship. This story is identical to one which Seligmann gave about the changing hands of an Inawi senior chieftainship. Indeed, the same story reappears in at least one other village. It is obviously a standardised explanation which serves to cover the actual truth, the revelation or persistence of which would only aggravate ill-feelings within the local group. The standard explanation serves three other purposes. First, it consoles the senior lineage which lost the office to believe that its chief had acted in the most noble and selfless way and gave up his office voluntarily. Second, it helps to perpetuate the ideal of chieftainship as an office of responsibility and high morality. Third, it shifts blame to a non-agnate, an outsider: the wife. We have already encountered this re-

direction of blame and responsibility for internal dissensions away from agnatic groups to outsiders, the in-marrying women.

Faupungu's story about Inau'i gives us clues to what might have happened in Faila and Inawi. An examination of Father Egidi's genealogies reveals that in both cases the senior chieftainship was transferred from a small, although senior group to a larger, junior one. This was exactly what happened in Inau'i except that in that case the senior section eventually disappeared. It can be inferred from this that far from being a gentlemanly transference of office motivated by a sense of dignity and official responsibility, the events in Faila and Inawi were the outcomes of political power struggles.

Despite the comforting standard explanation, there remains today some residual ill-feeling within Faila about the transference of their chieftainship to a junior lineage. One Faila man said that his group's present weakness stems from the passage of their senior chieftainship to the wrong line; and this is still a cause of regret. Weakened by internal conflict and by numerical inferiority, Faila could not resist the rising strength of the junior section, Fanguopa, whose chiefs pay lip service to the seniority of Faila while they continue to dominate the group affairs. Aivea subclan is different from Inau'i and most other Pioufa subclans in that its sections have distinct names. Had the schism in Inau'i persisted over generations the two sections might also have eventually come to assume different names. The distinctiveness of the sections of Aivea is a measure of their autonomy seen in Faila and Fanguopa having their own senior and junior chiefs. The Fanguopa dominance is symbolised by the location of the subclan's civilian *ufu* on their territory and not on that of the senior section, Faila.

The two examples of Inau'i and Aivea clarify the point made in Chapter 6 about the practical difficulty in the application of the principle of seniority to distantly related agnates. At this level, particularly in the case of Aivea with its named sections and sets of chiefs, the principle of seniority has only formal ceremonial significance. Between the sections of Aivea, actual dominance and superiority is a matter of achievement on the part of chiefs. The agnatic *ekefa'a* partnerships of equality and friendship (see Chapter 6) between individuals of different sections are possible because in reality, although not in ideal relationships, distantly related agnates are equal. In the logic of the system, these formal dyadic ties are mechanisms which help countervail the processes of segmentation and fission.

Seligmann's assertions that junior chiefs are henchmen and assistants of senior chiefs, and that they are mere spectators in *ufuapie* ceremonies, cannot be supported by facts today. Whether this was the case in the past is a moot point. However, the example given above of the rise of Inau'i junior chieftainship which occurred before Seligmann's visit to Mekeo, demonstrates quite clearly that the first junior chief of Inau'i, Ainatsia Aisama, was in no way a henchman or assistant of the senior chief, Eki. On the contrary, the two chiefs were rivals, that is their actual as opposed to their ideal relationship was symmetrical. This is true of the chiefs of Fanguopa and the junior chief of Ongofo'ina. That junior chiefs take no active formal part in *ufuapie* ceremonies is a point that cannot be substantiated. We have seen in Faupungu's story that the junior chiefs of the *ufuapie* were the guests of honour and not the senior chiefs; and that the presence of these junior chiefs gave legitimacy to the independence of the new section, and the formal recognition to the new line of chiefs. In the charcoal carrying feast which I observed in Ongofo'ina in December 1969, the junior chief played the main role. And we saw in the previous chapter that in the Iniuma charcoal carrying ceremony, the junior chief of the *ufuapie* himself took part in releasing mourners from their vows of abstinence.

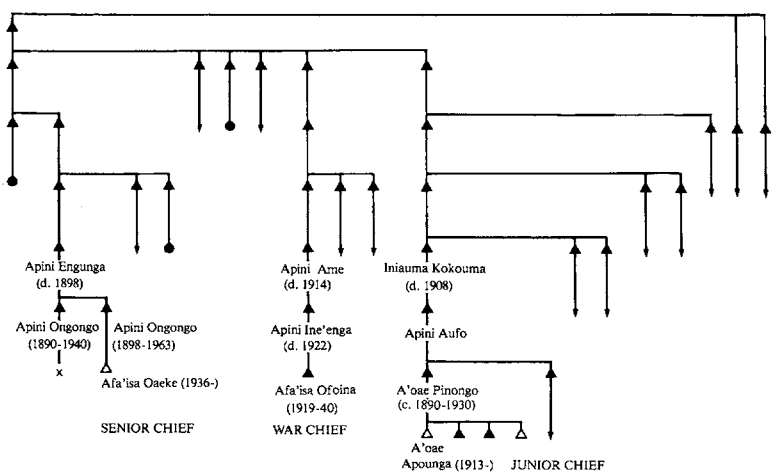


Fig. 9 Seniority and succession in chiefly lines (Ongofo'ina subclan)

Selgimann's error may have arisen from his confusion of junior chiefs with the functionaries of chiefs. I have enumerated these (ideally) hereditary part-time functionaries in my 1971 publication. Very briefly, chiefs' functionaries include: the Spokesman and Adviser *(Apaukini)*; the String Carrier *(Uve Aunga)*; the Food Sharers *(A'iva Au'i)*, the Bosses of *Ipangava*; and in the past, the Taboo Enforcers *(Kaivakuku)*. The assistant whom Seligmann said to be the carrier of tapa mat for the senior chief to sit on, and who receives presents on the chief's behalf, is not the junior chief but the String Carrier (also known as Tapa Mat Carrier, *Unguipi Aunga*). Despite their formal lower rank in relation to senior chiefs, junior chiefs are *lopia* and not ordinary people *(ulalu)*. Functionaries, recruited to perform the menial and routine ceremonial tasks, come from the rank of *ulalu*. Junior chiefs are high ranking hereditary heads of lineages or sections which, in some cases, are more numerous and stronger than groups headed by senior chiefs.

Seniority and succession

Once a particular chieftainship is established, be it senior or junior, succession to the office becomes hereditary from father to son. Seligmann (1910:346) makes an important point in this regard with his remark: 'It is not uncommon for a chief to pass over his elder children and transmit his office to one of his younger sons'. Mekeo today still say that succession is not necessarily from father to eldest son. This would seem to negate the importance I have given to the principle of seniority. As we shall see, actual succession to office is mostly from father to eldest son despite the stated ideal of selection. The principle of seniority is too serious to be ignored in this most important matter. We have seen in the case of the Inau'i junior chieftainship that seniority was a prime consideration in the choice of the first junior chief, and the *ufuapie* succeeded in compelling Faupungu's father to forgo his choice of a younger son as his successor.

But why do Mekeo stress the ideal of selection while they practise primogenital succession? I suggest two possible answers. First, the ideal leaves the chief an option should his eldest son be unfit for the office. Second, and perhaps of more importance, the ideal, when stated as a rule, is a sanction for keeping the eldest sons in line, compelling them to behave properly as heirs to positions of responsibility, and to be conscientious in their filial duties to their parents. I men-

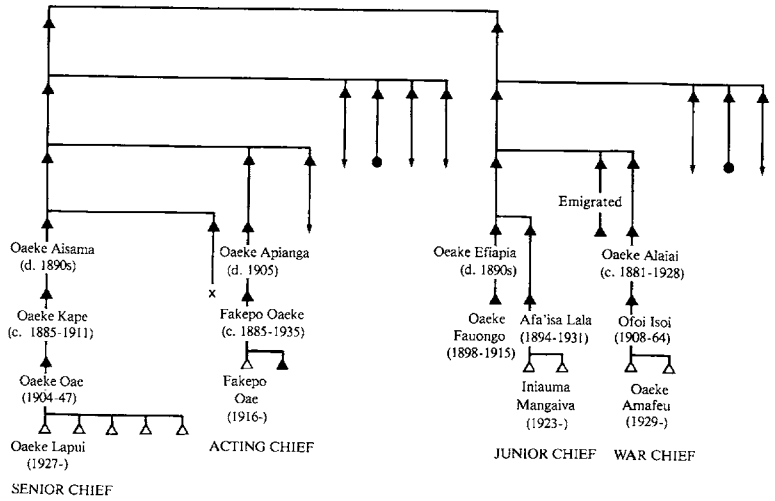


Fig. 10 Seniority and succession in chiefly lines (Aloaivea subclan)

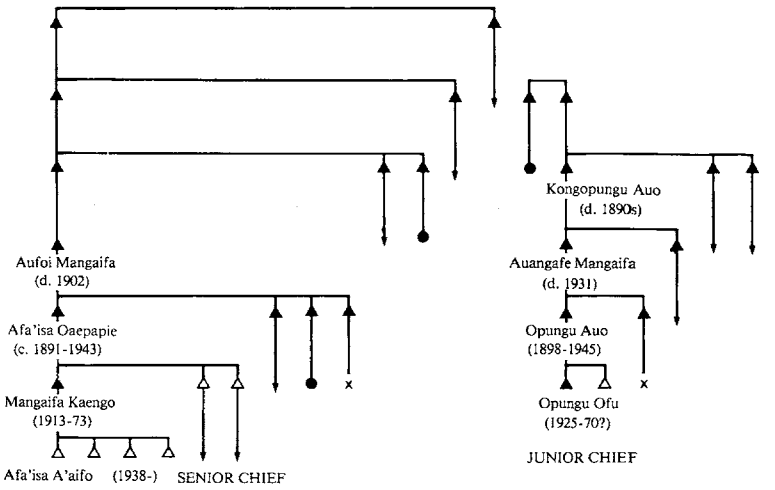


Fig. 11 Seniority and succession in chiefly lines (Fopafo'ina Lopia subclan)

tioned in Chapter 4 that it is the duty of eldest sons to care for their parents, and that their access to magical knowledge and other inheritable things from their fathers is contingent upon their filial piety. Not that most eldest sons of my acquaintance would need such a sanction as threat of being passed over in favour of younger ones. The overwhelming impression I have brought from the field is that the conscientiousness with which eldest sons discharge their duties to their parents stems more from bonds of affection than from fears of disinheritance. Mekeo fathers tend to pamper their eldest sons, especially when they are very young. It is not an uncommon sight, for example, to see young men nursing their two-, three- or four-year-old eldest sons in their *ufu* or on platforms while they socialise with their agnates and friends. Once I saw a father inside an *ufu* fondling his eldest son's penis while the child lay on his lap supine with contentment. All this contributes to the creation of such strong bonds of affection between fathers and eldest sons that many of the latter have resisted the temptations to emigrate to the towns as their younger brothers have done; and some of those who have succumbed have even given up financially lucrative employment to return home because, as they say, their 'fathers and mothers are getting old and infirm'. This sense of responsibility on the part of eldest sons—which, among heirs to chieftainship, is the highest moral qualification—explains in part why succession is mostly from eldest sons to eldest sons. But the main explanation is the firmly embedded principle of seniority which cannot be evaded without extremely good reasons.

Figures 9-12 show the genealogical trees of four of the five ward chieftainships of Beipa'a. Since Inau'i has been dealt with in detail above, I have left it out of this section. The information which I obtained from Father Egidi's genealogies, from the Catholic Mission records and from my own genealogical collections, is accurate for at least four generations from the present office-holders. The diagrams demonstrate clearly that in the instances of chiefs having male heirs their offices were inherited by their eldest or only sons.[2] The exceptions to this form of succession—for example, the senior chieftainship of Ongofo'ina, and the junior chieftainships of Aloaivea, Fopafo'ina and Inaufokoa—are explained by particular chiefs not having male

2. Stephen (1974:390) provides a chart of the genealogy of the Lopia Fa'a section of Oaesaka subclan which shows primogeniture. See also Figures 13-15 in this book.

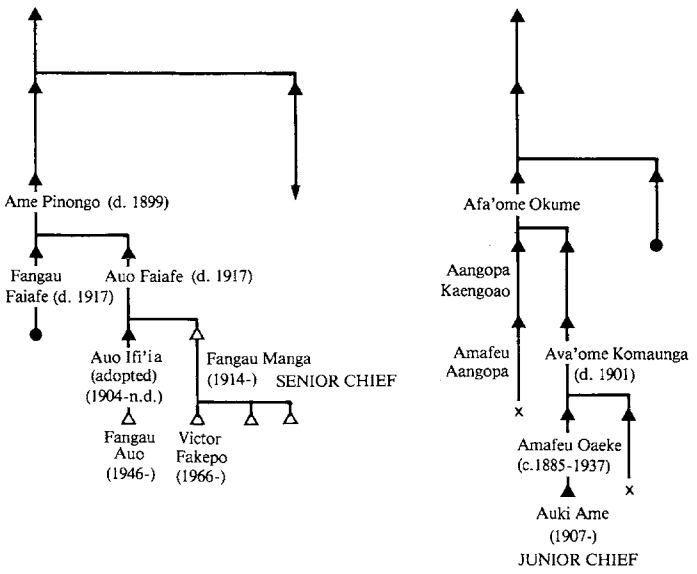


Fig. 12 Seniority and succession in chiefly lines (Luaufokoa subclan)

heirs. Once this adjustment took place, succession by eldest sons resumed. Even if Mekeo have juggled their genealogies in order to show their chiefs to be the most senior men for their posts, the very act of doing so is itself a demonstration of the primacy of the principle of seniority. By examining certain cases we shall see what emphasis they put on seniority in practice.

The Inaufokoa senior chieftainship (Figure 12) raises the problem of adopted sons as successors. Seligmann said that adopted sons are treated in every respect as if they are real sons, and they can therefore succeed to office. This is true, but succession by adopted sons, especially if they belong by birth to lineages not of their adopted fathers, could create difficulties. Petrus (Fangau Faiafe), the senior chief of Inaufokoa at the turn of this century, had two daughters but no sons. His younger brother, Ernestus (Auo Faife), who married a woman who turned out to be barren, had adopted a boy, Pasquale (Auo Ifi'ia), from the lineage of the war chief to be his heir. Many years later Ernestus sired a son, Bartholomeus (Fangau Manga), by another woman. Both Petrus and Ernestus died within two years of each other

without having installed a successor to the chieftainship. The adopted son, Pasquale, had the right of seniority to succeed, and had moreover been named by Petrus as his successor. Most Inaufokoa apparently accepted that Pasquale was going to be their next chief. But Bartholomeus' existence as the real son, as the direct link in the chiefly bloodline, could not be discounted. In the end, the Inaufokoa installed both as joint chiefs. The circumstances under which this decision was arrived at are described in the following chapter. As the senior in age (by ten years) over Bartholomeus, Pasquale quite naturally became the effective chief while he was alive. But he died without having installed his only son, Joseph (Fangau Auo), and thereby left Bartholomeus the sole senior chief of Inaufokoa. Joseph, who is now a married man, has the right to become chief, as his father's successor, but Bartholomeus has taken no step to install him. The Inaufokoa do not hold Joseph in high esteem partly because of his general immaturity. He is a quiet, retiring young man with no demonstrable leadership quality. Though Bartholomeus seems not particularly enamoured of Joseph, he studiously keeps a discreet silence on the subject as well as on the subject of Joseph's claim to co-chieftainship. The tension between the two men surfaced in 1968 when Bartholomeus had a near fatal stroke which permanently unbalanced him. People alleged that Joseph hired sorcerers to attack Bartholomeus. They said that Joseph resorted to sorcery because Bartholomeus had dispossessed him of one of his insignia of chieftainship saying that he could not keep it since he was not officially a chief.

In Inawi village a similar situation arose two generations ago. According to Stephen (1974:8), 'the adoption by a childless chief of an heir [from a junior lineage] who grew into a foolish and irresponsible man prompted several members of the clan to put forward the son of the chief's younger brother as a more suitable candidate, thus creating two strong claimants to the succession.' As in Inaufokoa, both claimants became chiefs. Stephen also cites an example in the same village in which the problem was that of conflicting seniority claims. In this instance 'a childless chief took a third wife in the hope of producing an heir. The young wife bore him a son and a little while later, the senior wife also gave birth to a son. Since the child of the senior wife was considered to have valid claims to the succession, he was eventually installed as a [junior chief] while his elder brother was made the senior chief. This is an interesting example of the function-

ing of the important principle of seniority . . . one heir was thought to have precedence by virtue of being the first born, the other because of the seniority of his mother's position'.

The existence of an acting chief in Aloaivea (Figure 10) is an example of how, through demographic vicissitudes, a junior line can exercise chiefly authority without actually taking the office. According to the acting chief, Fakepo Oae, the exercise of authority vested in the Aloaivea senior chieftainship has been passing to and fro between the lines of the senior chiefs and his own. An examination of the Catholic Mission records gives the clue as to why this situation has arisen. Fakepo's grandfather was the most senior adult man alive in Aloaivea when the chief died while his heir was a small boy of about ten. The grandfather raised the heir and filled the vacuum in leadership while the latter was maturing. Fakepo's grandfather died in 1905 and six years later the young chief died leaving an only son who was seven. Fakepo's father married the widow, raised the child and assumed the leadership until the heir was mature enough to take over. Fakepo Oae is the half-brother of this chief.

The chief died in 1947 while his eldest son, Oaeke Lapui, was a bachelor of twenty. Like many youngsters in the post-war period, Oaeke left the village to seek his fortunes in Port Moresby and other parts of Papua New Guinea, not returning for many years. It therefore fell on Fakepo, the most senior adult male in Aloaivea, to assume the responsibility for the ward as his father and grandfather had done before him. He was more than successful in the role for he is an astute and able leader who has become the most respected and influential man in the village. He so impressed the chiefs of Beipa'a that—during an appropriate feast which he provided—they readily acquiesced to his request that he be empowered to perform ceremonies (especially the mortuary kind) for his people. With this mandate Fakepo became what is tantamount to an acting-chief. It was not possible for him to assume the office because of Oaeke's seniority. Oaeke returned to the village in the 1960s and assumed his position but since he lacks the experience to exercise his official powers effectively, Fakepo remains the undisputed leader of Aloaivea.

From the foregoing discussion we can see that the principle of seniority has different facets: the seniority of line, the order of birth, and the seniority of mother's marriage. These facets can come into conflict and different ones can be emphasised when it is expedient to



IX From right to left: Kafo Lau'a (civilian chief), Aua Manga (war chief) and A'oae Efi (sorcerer) of Aivea subclan of Aipiana village, 1973.

do so. I shall close this chapter with a narrative account of the case of the junior chieftainship of Inaufokoa which is of special interest since it highlights in an unexpected way the ideal of the civilian chiefs being good and morally upright men.

When the direct line of the Inaufokoa junior chieftainship vanished through lack of male heirs (Figure 12), the office lapsed for a while. Amafeu Oaeke, the most logical successor (from a collateral line) to the office, was not brought up to be a chief, and presumably his early moral training was not as rigorous as that of normal heirs to chieftainship. He grew up to be the notorious womaniser referred to briefly in Chapter 5. According to some men, including his own son, Auki Ame, the present junior chief, Amafeu's sexual appetite was insatiable, and became a constant source of scandal and embarrassment to Inaufokoa. One night some people caught him in an Ongofo'ina house trying to seduce a female. They thrashed him thoroughly, and then tied him to a post planted on the central ground where he was ridiculed until the

Inaufokoa paid a small fortune for his release. Thereupon it occurred to his agnates that Amafeu could be saved if he were formally installed, for as a chief he would have to mend his ways and become a good man. This was done and Amafeu was transformed overnight. But with the passage of time his conversion weakened progressively and eventually he reverted to his old ways until, as we have seen, he foolishly deceived his friend, the sorcerer, who allegedly killed him and eloped with his widow. The Catholic Mission records indeed confirm that the Aipiana sorcerer married Amafeu's widow.

A note on figures 9-12

The names of ancestors who died before the colonial period are available but are omitted from the genealogical charts for the reasons given in the text.

I have altered the genealogical positions of the lineages of the war chief and the junior chief of Ongofo'ina subclan (Figure 9). Father Egidi's genealogical collection shows that the lineage of the war chief is the most junior of the three chiefly lines. All my informants, however, asserted that the lineage of the junior chief is the most junior. This assertion is supported by the actual behaviour of the junior chief towards the representative of the war chief. On formal and ceremonial occasions the junior chief defers to the representative of the war chief on the ground of seniority, despite the political dominance of the former. (There is no war chief for Ongofo'ina because the last holder died heirless. The most senior male of the line 'represents' the office on formal ocasions.) On the basis of the importance which Mekeo place on birth order and seniority, I can arrive at no other conclusion than that the villagers are right and Father Egidi is incorrect.

8. Visible authority and invisible powers

The good and the bad

Underlying all positions of authority and all important activities in Mekeo society is the phenomenon of power, *isapu*, and the knowledge and skill in applying it to nature and to man. *Isapu*, which literally means 'heat', is ritual and magical in character. No activity of any significance can be successful without the knowledge and practice of the particular power associated with it. There appear to be two main reasons for this firmly held belief. First, in traditional Mekeo epistemology reality is double-sided: the visible and the tangible on one hand, and the invisible and intangible on the other. Since normal vision and actions cannot perceive or touch on the invisible, a person needs the invisible powers of what we characterise as magic to deal with that aspect of reality. Second, because of the prevalence of envy and jealousy those who harbour ill-will against one are said to use the powers in their command to frustrate one's endeavours. As every Mekeo villager uses one kind of power or another, the person who wishes to succeed in any course of action must employ powers not only to deal with the invisible aspects of the reality he is to cope with, but also to overcome the invisible powers used by those who wish him failure. In this view, man's relationships with his natural environment are intimately connected with his social relationships. For instance, it is not uncommon to see men who have been preparing for a hunting expedition or for a gambling session postpone or even abandon their projects because their wives are angry with them. If they go ahead without their wives' goodwill they are doomed to fail miserably because, some say, their wives or their wives' relatives will employ all their powers against them. Noticing the regularity with which I failed to succeed in gambling (with playing-cards) my friends concluded unjustly that my wife must have been angry with me all the time. Similarly, in late 1971 the construction of a new European-type house was halted for several weeks because the owner and his chief were in disagreement

over the appropriate feast for the project. The owner, who was a man with some 'modern' views, said he did not want to provide a feast because of the expenses entailed. Although the chief countered that he was not obstructing the work, and that, if he so wished, the man could go ahead regardless of customary observances concerning the construction of new houses, the workers were so afraid of the powers at the chief's disposal that they refused to resume work until the owner had presented the chief with some money and housing material, and had staged an expensive feast for the whole village.

The fact of the chief's success through the implied threat of using mystical powers available to him not only against the recalcitrant home-owner but also against the workers, leads to another important view about *isapu*. The man who succeeds does so at the expense of others. The hunter captures his quarry not only because he has used his hunting magic on the animals but also because he has successfully neutralised the powers of his known and secret enemies. The lover secures the affection of the object of his desire partly because his love magic has attracted the woman and partly because his power has overcome that of his rival suitors. The gambler wins because his *isapu* is stronger than that of the other players. It follows from this that the traditional leadership offices of war chiefs, war magicians, civilian chiefs, and sorcerers, are offices with powers stronger than those of ordinary people. We have seen that through the seniority system eldest sons (and thus hereditary leaders) inherit, as a rule, the most important magical powers of their fathers. I return to this point below.

From the foregoing discussion we can see an explanation for the moral views held by Mekeo regarding *isapu*: that the use of power is not morally neutral; it is both good and bad depending on who is practising what powers, and on the alignments of individuals and groups in relation to the practitioner. Thus, for example, the powers associated with military leadership of a particular group are good in so far as these are strictly directed against external enemies. It can be argued that there is a relationship between the widespread use of power and the moral views of it on one hand, and on the other hand, the attitudes that people have to themselves and to each other. One of the most common moral judgments of people and events in Mekeo is 'he (or it) is good, *but* . . .' On a number of occasions I have been told that 'we Mekeo, are very good people, *but* we are also very bad'. Perhaps a measure of the pervasiveness of this attitude is to be seen in

its virtual institutionalisation in debating etiquette in which the usual beginning of a reply to an opposite number in reasonable discussions is, 'you have spoken well, and you have spoken truthfully; *but* . . .', and the speaker proceeds to accuse the other side, ever so gently, of prevarication and fabrication. Such statements are revealing of the ambivalent attitudes that people have towards each other, and I suggest that judgments about the morality of the use of powers are commensurate with the ambivalent relationships among kinsmen who live so closely with each other. Mekeo are sceptics and disbelievers of the spoken word. Behind the words (as for example, protestations of innocence, or declarations of devotion and unselfishness) are motives and sentiments which are not readily observable. During meetings people spend much time on preliminaries: talking seemingly casually while seriously measuring each other up and searching out each other's minds before they enter into the formal part of the meeting. Nothing is accepted at face value. The watchword is *apie apie*: there are two sides to everything.

The division between the civilian and military leadership, as we have seen, is perceived in moral terms as being that of separating powers which are predominantly bad and powers which are essentially good. But true to the logic of the two-sided moral evaluation of things, the military is also good, and the civilian is also bad. This moral ambivalence is evident in a further subdivision within each of the two fields of leadership. These subdivisions may be seen as attempts to resolve the ambivalence by separating still further the good and the bad powers. In the military sphere, the war chief represents the relatively good and less dangerous powers; he operates in the open as the leader of war parties and conductor of public ceremonies and rituals related to warfare. The war magician represents the bad aspects; he operates in secrecy in the darkness of night, and is in possession of the most dangerous powers associated with warfare. The Fopafo'ina say that in the past the war chief of their ward sat at the front of his *ufu* with his warriors and his food was brought to him by daylight. The war magician, on the other hand, sat with his bad powers at the back of the same *ufu* and his food was sent to him at night. In the civilian sphere, the good is projected onto the office and person of the civilian chief, and the bad and dangerous are personified by the sorcerer, who is the power behind the chief and is the chief's execu-

tioner. The sorcerer is to the civilian chief as the war magician is to the war chief.

This introduces us to another important consideration of *isapu*. There are different kinds of *isapu* with varying degrees of potency ranging from the ordinary and universally distributed to the most potent and exclusive. Intrinsic to the potency of powers is the degree of danger associated with them, so that the most potent are also the most dangerous, fearsome and evil. War magic and sorcery are the most potent powers of all, so it is not surprising that they are parts of the military and the civilian orders of leadership. Traditional authority in Mekeo rests on mystical powers of the most dangerous kinds, and succession to hereditary offices of leadership is, in the final analysis, accession to positions of *isapu*.

Finally, I suggested in Chapter 7 that junior members of subclans, taking advantage of their proven skill and success as warriors, wrested control of the dangerous military powers from their seniors. Mekeo say that war magicians descend from junior lines of warrior groups. For example, the most senior man of the Fopafo'ina warrior subclan *(Fopafo'ina Fai'a)* was the senior war chief; the war magician was from a junior line of the same group. The division started four generations ago when two brothers, Kape Aisamaia and Foisao Aisamaia, decided upon it. Foisao, the younger brother, became the war magician. If we consider this in the light of what I have said in the previous chapter about the rise of war chieftainship, then we can say that the rise of war magicians was part of the same process of acquisition of more powerful *isapu* by juniors. Just as junior members of subclans appropriated the dangerous military powers from their hitherto single chiefs, so did junior members within warrior groups acquire at a later date the more dangerous of the powers of warfare from their seniors (or from extraneous sources).

Similarly, in the civilian sphere, it can be said that sorcerers who, as we shall see below, are descendants of junior agnates, took from their seniors or from other sources the dangerous powers of sorcery. Mekeo say that because it is desirable that elder brothers be good men, the more dangerous powers (war magic and sorcery) in their offices were transferred to their younger brothers whom people did not expect to behave like chiefs. This does not preclude another probable explanation—in the light of what has been said about the crucial importance of *isapu*—which is that junior agnates acquired

these powers through devious means including theft. The biblical story of Jacob's acquisition by deception of his elder brother's inheritance is an apt analogy for the Mekeo situation. All this suggests that in the processes of segmentation and fission in agnatic groups junior members achieved their autonomy and official recognition for their leaders by acquiring powers stronger and more dangerous than those of their seniors. Their very success, even at times to the extent of dominating the affairs of their subclans, suggests that this was the case. This may be what Mekeo mean when they say that this or that particular senior chief has only the name and prestige of his office while the real power in the subclan is in the hands of a junior agnate. We have encountered this in the case of the Fanguopa chiefs of Aivea, of the junior chief of Ongofo'ina, and of the acting chief of Aloaivea.

Ultimately, the expectations built into the roles of seniors as men of peace, conciliators, and paragons of virtue, limit the kinds of *isapu* that chiefs can hold. Not being circumscribed by such expectations, junior members are in an advantageous position to acquire strong, dangerous, and bad powers which they can use to assert their independence and even dominance. This is reflected in the A'aisa myth in Isapini's addressing his elder brother by the term 'child'. Although A'aisa asserts his ascribed superiority and wins acknowledgment from Isapini, he still appears to his younger brother as a child, as a man with weak powers. The seniority system is aimed at orderly surface relationships among agnates by prescribing categorically who should be the leader and thereby forestalling potentially divisive competition within the agnatic group. But beneath this visible order are strong mystical powers which junior members can acquire and can use to circumvent the imposed restrictions of the seniority system.

The powers of sorcery

There are, as previously stated, different types of *isapu* with varying degrees of potency and danger associated with them. The most common and universally distributed *isapu* in Mekeo are powers for the promotion of individual success in daily activities such as gardening, hunting, fishing, gambling, courting and personal protection. These powers are relatively harmless except in the sense that success by some means failure by others.

Above these powers in terms of potency are *isapu* for inflicting and curing common diseases such as boils, various types of sores, hae-

morrhage, diseases of the eyes, nose and ears, and so on. These are specialist powers which are restricted in their distribution. Most of these are protective powers for the prevention of theft and trespassing, and although they have individual names, they are also referred to by the general term *ikupu* which means 'forbidden' and 'closed'. (We have seen that the word *ikupu* also stands for 'clan' and 'subclan'.) Since diseases associated with these powers are common, relatively minor, and readily identifiable, they generally evoke little fear of death although they may prove fatal at times.

Kinapui and major types of *ikupu* powers are *isapu* more potent than those enumerated above. *Kinapui isapunga* controls the elements of nature; droughts, prolonged rainfall, and floods are attributed to it. The major *ikupu* powers such as the *okafu* (python) and *faifai* are nearly as strong as *ungaunga* power—the most potent of all *isapu*. The python power is used for the protection of lands from trespassing and other forms of encroachment. *Faifai* power safeguards against the poaching of fish in the cut-off meanders. *Kinapui* and major *ikupu* powers can affect food supplies and interfere with feasts and ceremonies. They are, therefore, jealously kept within a few small descent groups, rarely more than two for each village. The original *kinapui* group, in Rarai village, is believed to hold the strongest control over the forces of nature.

The term *ungaunga* is derived from the name of a particular stone of power, and applies to the most feared types of sorcery *isapu* and to its practitioners. Unlike other (and lesser) anti-human powers, diseases attributed to *ungaunga* are major illnesses of the internal organs; they are not liable to precise diagnosis and they evoke intense fear of death. The uncertainty regarding the nature of these illnesses is consistent with the aura and mystery associated with *ungaunga.* I shall give a detailed ethnographic description of alleged *ungaunga* powers and practices for we can neither understand fully the impact of sorcery and its pervasiveness throughout Mekeo culture and society, nor appreciate the political powers of sorcerers, without the knowledge of the beliefs associated with *ungaunga.* Although what follows is based on oral testimony, it is extremely important for here we are dealing with the belief system. Mekeo belief in the alleged powers and efficacy of sorcery forms a neat logical system which has important implications in everyday life. In certain areas of social life the people are sceptical and disbelieving, but in matters concerning sorcery they

are credulous to the point of gullibility, although far from being irrational in terms of their belief system. The following analysis aims to elicit the pattern of sorcery belief and to relate this to other aspects of social and cultural life.

In the practice of *ungaunga* five ingredients are allegedly present: stones of power; remains of close relatives and powerful sorcerers; medicinal mixtures; special spells; and personal leavings of intended victims. Sorcerers obtain the stones mainly, although not exclusively, from three hilly regions: O'opo, Fa'ingu, and Kaliko. The first two hills are the former homes of the mythical brothers, A'aisa and Isapini; Kaliko, as we have seen, is the place where A'aisa emigrated after the split with his younger brother. These hills are the most sacred sites for Mekeo, and no one visits them without the express permission and company of recognised sorcerers.[1] When properly activated, the powers emanating from the stones attack the victims. The stones are of two types: those that cause sickness; and those that provoke snake-bite.

The remains include those of deceased patrilineal male ancestors and elder brothers, and when possible, of great sorcerers of the past. The most common items from the deceased are the teeth; but bones, hair, and fingernails will also suffice. The possession of ancestral and other human relics implies the recruitment of the spirits of the dead as aides and protectors. A person can summon only the spirits whose human remains he possesses. These spirits are known as *auafa'a*, 'great spirits', as distinct from spirits in general, *isange*, though people tend to use the latter term loosely to refer also to *auafa'a*. I return to this point below.

In most types of sorcery, practitioners use the leavings of intended victims. By acquiring these sorcerers think that they can capture the spirits of their victims. Sorcerers do not normally obtain the leavings themselves; rather these are brought to them by their clients.

The three ingredients described above are harmless without the medicinal mixtures and the spells. These are the most secret parts of sorcery and practitioners guard them closely. Medicines unleash the powers in the stones, and spells are needed to summon the *auafa'a*,

1. Ron Vanderwal, an archaeologist who visited Mekeo in 1970, told me that he wanted to visit O'opo and Fa'ingu to see caves with human skeletons. He could not go there because Eboa sorcerers refused to guide him without time-consuming ritual preparation.

and to instruct them to attack the victims. Sorcerers obtain medicines, *fu'a*, from mixtures of particular leaves, together with blood and organs of animals, and fluids from human corpses which they rob from graves and then boil in pots. Dead children are done whole; but the head, genitals, and sometimes hands and feet of adults are sufficient. Spells, *menga*, are precise formulas which begin with the invocation of the name of A'aisa, the original source of all *ungaunga* powers, and then follow the names of the spirits whose human relic the sorcerer has. The names of these great spirits should not be mentioned outside the recitation of spells for fear that they might be angry and attack those who utter their names in vain. Sorcerers alone have access to the most powerful *auafa'a*, the spirits of great sorcerers of the past, and it is part of their mystique that sorcerers can call the great spirits for as far back as when the forefathers of Mekeo lived in the ancestral villages of Isoisovapu and Isoisovina.

There are at least five types of *ungaunga* powers. Whether sorcerers actually practise them is not as important as the fact that these powers cover just about every possible cause of death and major illness with which the population is afflicted. I discuss this subject further after I have described the powers and techniques allegedly employed by sorcerers when they set out to practise on their fellow men.[2]

Powers for inflicting sickness

The most common technique for causing sickness is known as *mefu*. The sorcerer puts the victim's leavings in a container known as *polo* (a small whole coconut shell), adds medicine to it, and suspends it over the fireplace. The heat of the fire activates the medicine which attacks the spirit of the victim, already held captive in the container, and he becomes ill. If the sorcerer wishes to kill his victim he simply leaves the container over the fireplace until the patient dies. The second technique consists of putting the leavings in a container together with some stones and medicine. The sorcerer then says the appropriate spells which unleash the powers of the stones to strike the

2. cf. M. Patterson 1974-75. The types and techniques of Mekeo sorcery are common throughout Melanesia. Mekeo seem to possess all the techniques or variations of these techniques which Patterson has enumerated for the whole of Melanesia. Patterson's article is probably the first detailed attempt to relate the importance of sorcery and witchcraft in Melanesia to the variations in the structure of groupings within particular societies.

victim. If the sorcerer in this case wishes only to make his victim ill, he places the container in his bag and stands it on the floor; if he wishes to kill him, he lays the bag on its side. (Standing and lying: living and dying.) The third way involves flashing stones at the victim. The sorcerer tracks his quarry to a lonely spot where he confronts him with shining stones;[3] the victim is momentarily paralysed, long enough for the sorcerer to administer medicine and cast a spell over him to erase any memory of the encounter, and the victim goes home and falls sick. Instead of using stones to dazzle his victim, the sorcerer may employ a special stone club obtained from the mountain-dwelling Goilala. He hides in the bush behind the village backyard in the early morning and waits for his victim to come out for his toilet. When the victim squats and is in the process of defaecating the sorcerer hits him lightly on the nape of his neck with his club, rendering him unconscious. He then proceeds as he would have done if he had dazzled him with a stone. The fourth method is for the sorcerer to sit near where his victim is likely to pass. He waits with his container beside him with the stopper off. When the victim approaches the sorcerer calls a greeting; the victim replies and his spirit travels with his voice straight into the container which the sorcerer immediately closes. The stones and the medicine inside proceed to attack the imprisoned spirit.

There are believed to be other ways of causing sickness but it seems that they are mainly variations of the four basic techniques described above. Mekeo say that if a victim intended for death is merely sick and seems likely to recover, sorcerers resort to delivering the death blow. They go stealthily at night to the victim's house and throw specially prepared stones at the roof. This is believed to be absolutely fatal. As a consequence, whenever a person is seriously sick his armed relatives guard the premises until he recovers or dies.

Powers for instigating snake attack

Sorcerers allegedly use three kinds of venomous snakes, some of which they tame for their nefarious purposes: the taipan; the Papuan Black; and the death adder. There are two basic ways of preparing a victim for the snakes. First, the sorcerer puts the victim's leavings in a

3. The use of stones in sorcery has been reported in other parts of the country outside the Central District, for example among the Huli (Glasse 1965:40), and the Kyaka Enga (Bulmer 1965:155). Stones of power also exist among the Hageners who use them in some of their ceremonies (Strathern and Strathern 1971).

large pot which contains a snake. He closes the pot, places it over an open fire, and heats it enough to infuriate the snake but not sufficiently hot to kill it. In its fury the snake repeatedly attacks the objects in the pot, and in the process becomes familiar with the scent of the person to whom the leavings belong. The sorcerer then takes the pot and tracks his victim to a lonely spot where he releases the snake. Guided by scent, the snake rushes at the victim and bites him. Informants say that even if the victim is in a group the snake will not attack the wrong person.

Father Verges, a Spanish missionary who has lived in Mekeo for about 20 years, told me the following story. In about 1960 a daughter of a Southern Ve'e sorcerer, A, died. A accused sorcerer B, and vowed to kill not only him but also a young girl of B's subclan who was of the same age as his daughter. A did not, however, specify which girl would become his victim. Having announced his intention he left the village for the bush where he prepared the course of his revenge. Shortly afterwards, the accused sorcerer was stricken with some illness and told the priest that he was going to die because A had said so. He died. Some time later a group of young girls from B's subclan went to the bush to collect firewood. They were all in the same spot when a snake appeared and they fled. The snake followed one particular girl and attacked her twice, ignoring the others. The victim was taken to the mission dispensary where the nursing Sisters treated her. When Father Verges visited her on the same afternoon, she seemed to have recovered and talked to him fluently. She told the priest that while she and the other girls were cutting firewood, she saw the thick bush in front of her open up and there stood A who looked straight into her eyes. He then released the snake he was holding which proceeded to attack her. She died on the following morning, and her relatives sent a message to Father Verges requesting him to take photographs of the girl lying 'in state' while she was mourned. Verges went and while he was busy photographing he heard excited shouts nearby. He turned and saw the sorcerer, A, entering the village for the first time since the death of his own daughter. He was splendidly decorated, and his relatives gave him a tumultuous hero's welcome. He himself was obviously gloating over his success. Enraged by the sorcerer's effrontery, the grief-stricken relatives of the dead girl rushed over to attack him. But he remained, seemingly unconcerned, on his ground and was given a protective shield by his relatives who surrounded him. The would-be

attackers halted and shouted abuse at him before they returned to their mourning. Father Verges thinks that Mekeo sorcerers did indeed keep pet snakes. One missionary told him that he once lifted the turban off a sorcerer's head and found a deadly snake in it. Father Coltre, an Italian missionary who has been in the area since the mid-1920s, told me that he was once visited by Aufo Afulo, the great sorcerer, who asked him to take his photograph. Coltre declined on the ground that he was too busy at the time, and told the sorcerer to come back some other time. Aufo simply stood outside staring at the priest, who retreated into his office only to discover a deadly snake coiling on his chair. After he killed it, Coltre went outside and found the sorcerer still standing there perfectly still, staring at him silently. To this day Coltre believes that the snake was somehow put there by Aufo Afulo as a warning. The relationship between the priest and the sorcerer improved considerably a short while later after Coltre had taken Aufo Afulo's photograph.

The second technique consists of the use of snakes and stones. The sorcerer tracks his victim to a lonely spot where he suddenly confronts him, holding a stone and flashing it into his face. The victim falls unconscious, and the sorcerer bends over and instructs him to forget the encounter, and on an appointed date to go to a particular spot. The sorcerer slinks away. The victim regains consciousness and proceeds on his way oblivious of what has just happened. On the specified date he goes to a certain spot in the bush where a deadly reptile is waiting.

Snake-bites are not necessarily fatal. Sorcerers say that in many instances their purpose is to teach their victims a lesson rather than to kill them. In order, however, for a snake attack to be fatal a certain poison is needed. Before the attack someone paid by the sorcerer administers the poison to the victim through his food or drink or betel-nut. The poison may also be administered directly into the victim's mouth by the sorcerer after the sorcerer has dazzled him with the stones. Sorcerers and other people are unanimous in their certainty that this is absolutely fatal. The poison by itself does not kill and may remain inside the victim a long time without doing him harm. It becomes active only when combined with the venom from the snake.

Fatality from snake-bite in Pioufa villages has been reduced considerably because of the availability of anti-venene at the Beipa'a hospital. The last death from snake-bite in the village occurred in

1969 when the junior war chief of Ongofo'ina, Paulo Afa'isa, died. He was the person whose killing of the Aipiana man precipitated the crisis described in the previous chapter. Although Paulo spent a number of years in prison for manslaughter, people said that his punishment was not sufficient, and that the Aipiana would not be satisfied with anything less than Paulo's death. Upon his release from prison, Paulo led an abstemious life for the first few months. He never left the village unaccompanied, and was careful about the company he kept and the food he ate. He associated only with his closest agnates. Then one day he went hunting with a group of his own agnates including the junior sorcerer leader of his ward. He was separated from the rest for a while, hunting on his own, and on his return to the camp he complained of feeling weak, lay down, and slept for so long that his companions suspected something was amiss. When they woke him he weakly revealed that he had been bitten by a snake, and he began to foam at the mouth. They rushed him eight kilometres or so to the hospital but it was too late. His friends said that the reason why Paulo did not tell them of the bite soon after it occurred was that he knew and accepted that his time had come, and that if sorcerers did not get him then, they were bound to get him sooner or later. In other words, Paulo accepted the old Mekeo precept that a death must be compensated with a death. There has since been a rumour in the village that the sorcerer who was with the hunting party was in collusion with Aipiana sorcerers to kill Paulo. The sorcerers' aim was to settle the score between Ongofo'ina and Aipiana once and for all.[4]

Powers for causing instant death

Sorcerers are thought to have powers to cause the sudden deaths of those who are apparently in good health. An instance of this is known as *ungo faifai.* The sorcerer places a large stone about forty-five centimetres long in a large bowl. He rubs some medicine on the stone and places a piece of stick about a metre long across the bowl with one

4. Villagers linked the same sorcerer with the fatal shooting of the junior war chief of Fopafo'ina which I described in the previous chapter. At the time of the shooting the sorcerer was living in Fopafo'ina with the gunman who was his mother's brother's son. According to one rumour the sorcerer used his medicine to make the incident happen. I believe that the sorcerer was innocent of this and of Paulo's death. It was a coincidence that he was at Fopafo'ina when the shooting occurred and later with the Ongofo'ina hunting party when the snake bit Paulo. However, Mekeo villagers do not believe in coincidences, accidents or in any other form of chance happening, especially not when death is involved.

end on the stone and the other supported outside on a piece of log. When ready, the sorcerer removes the stick in the middle of the night, and holding it by the end that was not on the stone, he goes to the victim's house and calls him by name in a low voice. The victim responds to the call and instantly the sorcerer runs the free end of the stick along the wall of the house, uttering a weird noise. The victim dies.

Fai'a power

The *fai'a* is the war magician and oracle. The *fai'a* power associated with warfare is quite different from the *fai'a ungaunga.* According to Fopafo'ina men, a good deal of the *ungaunga* power of the *fai'a* has been acquired since the establishment of the colonial regime. Since the most fearsome *fai'a* powers were rendered useless because of the enforced cessation of tribal warfare, the war magicians of Beipa'a started to acquire powers of sorcery in order to maintain their accustomed exalted position in the community. *Fai'a* sorcery powers are associated with all deaths and injuries resulting from falling trees, branches and coconuts; from falling from any height; from tripping over obstacles along the roads and tracks; and from attacks by wild boars. It should be readily noticed that these mishaps are similar to battle casualty: being hit by objects, being felled, and being pierced.[5]

Poison

Though the use of poison is largely associated with sorcerers, it is by no means confined to them since nowadays poisonous substances, especially battery acids, are easily obtainable from urban centres. It appears, however, that in the past poison, *ipaani*, was a virtual monopoly of sorcerers who obtained it from plants, from animals, from fluids extracted from decaying human corpses, and from a well-guarded poisonous spring located in the territory of Imounga village near the foothills of the Owen Stanley Range. People say that sorcerers distribute small amounts of poison to several ordinary people in villages,

5. In the past *fai'a* powers were also directed at softening the hearts of enemies so that they would not be ferocious. This technique is used today by people before they go to court. In 1973 a man from another village went to Beipa'a to hire the local *fai'a* to direct their magic to the Supreme Court judge hearing his case for escaping from gaol and for assaulting an European police officer. He was acquitted on technical grounds.

one of whom will have the opportunity to administer it to the victim through his food, drinking water or betelnut. I was once told, in all apparent seriousness, by a group of young men in Beipa'a that if given sufficient money and valuables no Mekeo would hesitate to poison even his closest friends. Poison is also injected into the victim's body in two ways. Sorcerers possess tiny needles with poisonous tips attached to their wristbands and need only to scratch their victims' bodies for the venom to enter. The needles are so fine that often people do not feel the injection. Sister W.G. Smith, otherwise known as Sister Koska, who went to Mekeo in 1938 where she lived for fifteen years, said that:

> Since Aufo Afulo died another Inawaia man has gradually assumed power. He is Okoa Maino. He is not as strong as Aufo Afulo was—yet he is feared. He wears a leather band around his wrist. Both wrists are deformed and crooked. He used to ask us for ordinary pins. The people declared that he kept poisoned pins in his wrist band. When one woman died her husband went over to Inawae to live as a widower. Okoa Maino visited him, ostensibly to show sympathy. As he threw his arm around the widower to cry, the widower—Heriki—felt a sharp prick in the middle of his back. After a week word reached the mission that Heriki was dying. The sorcerer had poisoned him. Our nurse had him brought to the hospital where she treated him with anti-biotics, opened the deep abscess and drained [it], so he survived. (1969:5).

Sorcerers also go at night under houses and insert fine needles through spaces between the floorboards into the victims' bodies.

The types of *ungaunga* powers and techniques described above cover just about every conceivable cause of death and major illness experienced by Mekeo. They reinforce the belief that sickness and death (apart from that caused by old age) are caused by the wilful actions of man. The various techniques attributed to *ungaunga* practice leave no possibility for chance occurrences. If mystical attacks do not seem to be effective with due dispatch, there is always the resort to pragmatic action: the actual deployment of poison. That snakebite is attributed to sorcery can be explained in terms of sorcerers' attempts to claim for their effectiveness a prevalent and fatal incidence in Mekeo. Sister Smith asserted that when she went to Mekeo 'snakebite was a common cause of death'. She said that there was hardly a family that had escaped the experience. Thus the belief in the mystical

powers of *ungaunga* is bolstered in reality by the non-mystical use of poisonous substances, and by sorcerers' claims to be responsible for actual incidents of attacks by venomous snakes. Sorcerers also use an effective psychological technique. When a victim intended for death falls ill, they hasten his passage by robbing his pigs and garden produce. Realising this, the patient resigns himself to his fate. Sorcerers do not phrase their actions in these terms; they say that since the victim is bound to die they might as well help themselves to things which will no longer be of any use to him.

The origin of sorcery powers

Mekeo believe that *ungaunga* powers were given personally by the deity, A'aisa, to certain men who founded some of their present day sorcery families. They also believe that when A'aisa created their political organisation by an edict he appointed two kinds of hereditary leaders, the military and the civilian. For the civilian leadership A'aisa appointed some men as chiefs and others *ungaunga* to enforce the authority of the chiefs. Sorcery lineages which have risen from these appointments are the most prestigious in the land. The most senior sorcerers in chronological order of appointment are those of Bebeo, Rarai and Inawae villages. Others who have since acquired sorcery from the original appointees possess less prestige since their powers are derivative. Those with the shortest histories—for example, sorcery lines of only single generation depth—are regarded as upstarts by sorcerers and people alike. They tend to be too aggressive and notorious, and they lack the aristocratic self-possession of the descendants of those directly appointed by A'aisa.

The aggressiveness of newly risen sorcery lines is understandable. First, they have to make themselves known and to establish their effectiveness if they are to be feared and respected, and if they are to attract a clientele for themselves. Second, they have to fight for survival against established sorcerers who understandably wish to keep their numbers low in order to maintain their own hold over the people. Old established sorcery families maintain that they are the legitimate *ungaunga* with a strong sense of responsbility for their people and their villages. Mekeo consider new sorcerers who rise from non-*ungaunga* families to be bad, irresponsible, and selfish, and therefore better eliminated before they do much harm to society. The ways in which new sorcery lines can emerge are discussed later in this chapter.

There are only three legitimate sorcery families in Beipa'a today: two in Ongofo'ina, and the *fai'a* of Fopafo'ina. Not surprisingly, these also happen to be the two largest wards in the village. The senior sorcerer of Ongofo'ina, Manga Kimi'i, said that his grandfather fought hard to prevent new sorcerers from rising in the village. The grandfather eliminated sorcerers in Inau'i, Aloaivea and Inaufokoa, and, said Manga Kimi'i, the former two groups now regard him as their *ungaunga*. The acting chief of Aloaivea admitted that much to me; and we saw in the previous chapter that the Inau'i had Mangaiva Aikau, the leading Ongofo'ina sorcerer, to supervise the work on the central post of their new *ufu*. The Inaufokoa say that two generations ago (from the surviving old men), two Inaufokoa brothers attempted to establish themselves as sorcerers but their *fauapi*, in which they practised and stored their sorcery materials, were so frequently burnt down by other sorcerers that they gave up in despair. Rarai people also assert that in the early decades of this century sorcerers in their village waged a kind of warfare among themselves. Established sorcerers attacked the new ones and burnt their *fauapi* and their *ngove* forcing them to stop trying. The result of all this has been that sorcery in Mekeo is confined to a few powerful groups at most, three in the large villages. Most of the small villages no longer have any *ungaunga*.

The origin of *ungaunga* as related in mythology distinguishes *ungaunga* from practitioners of harmful non-*ungaunga* powers. Unlike *ungaunga*, lesser harmful magicians as such have no formal roles in the dual division of Mekeo civilian leadership structure. Individual magicians may indeed become influential men and may occupy posts as lower-rank functionaries, but if they are not themselves high hereditary leaders then they rank as mere *ulalu* or common people. Hereditary leaders, particularly sorcerers, usually acquire one or more kinds of non-*ungaunga* magic which they incorporate in their arsenal of powers. These enhance their prestige and at the same time allow them additional sources of wealth. Finally, sorcerers possess the most powerful love magic, which they sometimes give to bachelors and widowers in return for their assistance.

Henchmen of sorcerers

It is not necessary that sorcerers themselves perform all their work. In fact it is the mark of a truly established and powerful sorcerer to have

in his service a number of assistants who carry out the actual attacks on victims, who procure the appropriate ingredients for medicine, who contact other sorcerers and likely aides in the villages, and so on. If sorcerers accompany their assistants on missions they pause at a safe distance from the scenes of action while their assistants carry out their orders. Otherwise they remain in their *fauapi* making preparations which they give their henchmen to use, or working their long-distance sorcery.

Sorcerers' assistants, *ungaunga e'i ua'engo*, are normally not themselves sorcerers and they rarely acquire the knowledge and skills of the craft unless they are sorcerers' sons on apprenticeship. Sorcerers take great care to ensure that their assistants do not learn the secrets of the preparation of medicines or the spells lest there be a proliferation of sorcery in irresponsible hands. They also fear that if assistants acquire sorcery they might turn it against the sorcerers themselves.

Sorcerers recruit their assistants from the ranks of male mourners, mostly among the young and middle-aged widowers. They also include married men who are mourning the deaths of their closest agnates. Since most deaths are attributed by people to *ungaunga* and other kinds of harmful powers, it is incumbent upon the mourners to seek redress through counter-sorcery. We have seen above and in Chapter 5 that bachelors also at times help sorcerers in return for their powerful love magic. As *ungaunga* is strictly confined to a small group of professional practitioners who jealously guard their secrets, mourners and seekers after love magic enter their service as assistants hoping that sorcerers will help them in their quest for personal revenge or for the affection of women.

Mekeo say that assistantship to sorcerers can be quite lengthy, sometimes as long as five or more years. One Beipa'a man said (after some of his relatives had given me the same information) that when he was a widower he joined a powerful sorcerer in Aipiana village with whom he lived for more than seven years. During that period his own family did not see him and gave him up for dead. The length of assistantship may be a reason why there are few married men as assistants: they are under heavy pressure from their wives and families not to be absent from home for such prolonged periods. Why then do any married men become assistants? There appear to be two main reasons. First, payments for sorcery are high; on this point all informants concur. Second, people are never certain that when hired,

sorcerers will succeed, or even carry out their hirers' wishes. To become an assistant, therefore, amounts to an endeavour to ensure success.

Widowers, on the other hand, have no restraining marital or familial ties. Of more significance, however, is the kind of treatment widowers receive at the hands of other members of the society which drives them into the company of sorcerers. At the death of their wives widowers lose their status as adults; they lose most of, if not all, their movable property; their families are cared for by their brothers, as we have seen in Chapter 4. If they were cruel to their wives in life, then at their wives' deaths they are likely to be beaten by their wives' female relatives. People say that young widowers were, in the past, sometimes facially disfigured by their wives' female relatives accusing them of getting rid of their wives because they wanted to marry others, and preventing them from attracting other women too soon. The harshest expressions of superordination and subordination in affinal relationships are seen in the treatment of widowers. At the death of their wives widowers are banned from ever entering their own houses, and they move from their homes to those of their dead wives' agnates, their superior affines. There, they remain in complete seclusion inside *ngove* for periods ranging from two to six months. They are not allowed to go out of the *ngove* except at night for toilet. In the past this seclusion went on even as long as a whole year (Smith 1969:3). Sister Smith tells of widowers being locked in small houses in the bush. In the *ngove* they eat what amounts to a starvation diet, with one meal a day consisting of two or three roasted bananas. They must not eat meat. The enforced seclusion, *i'ovake*, which literally means 'squatting unseen', is a punishment of widowers by their superior affines for their alleged neglect of their duty to protect their wives while they were alive. Some widowers say that their stringent seclusion is self-inflicted to express their sorrow. At the end of their seclusion widowers may walk about in the village at night, or in the bush in the daytime. At this early stage of their widowerhood they are outcasts shunned by the rest of the society. They cannot return to their own people until they have made a series of payments to their dead wives' sisters. These are payments for permission given by their wives' sisters for them to appear in public, to chew betelnut with other men, to socialise *(la'afou)* with their agnates and friends on platforms, and to dance and court. The final obligation is to plant gardens, the pro-

duce from which they give to their wives' sisters. This is the ultimate humiliation for the proud Mekeo men; for in the condition of early widowerhood they are made inferior to women. Even when they are free to go to their wards they do not regain their adult status until they remarry.[6]

People say that since their married sisters live outside their natal wards and away from the protection of their agnates, their husbands must care for and protect them. The condition of widowerhood is a deterrent to husbands, a threat of what will happen to them if their wives die prematurely.

Because of the punitive treatment that widowers receive from their affines, they often escape their predicament even before the completion of their seclusion. Since there is nowhere else for them to go, they generally seek the company of sorcerers; for, as partial outsiders, sorcerers are the only people in the society who can receive them with equanimity. The harsh treatment widowers receive from their affines, the loss of their adult status, the taint and shame of ostracism, and

6. 'It struck me that Geertz's interpretation of the Balinese cockfight (Daedalus, 1972) whereby social dramas are—as it were—textual commentaries on the existential circumstances of life, might illuminate the themes of subordination and humiliation, symmetry and dominance . . . It seems almost as though the Mekeo dramatise in certain contexts what it is to be totally dominant, what it is to be totally submissive, or shamed—and do so structurally in such a way that the rich and powerful as well as the poor and powerless enact the opposite roles of their normal relationships. Note that just as the Mekeo widower—rich or poor—dramatically enacts what it is to be totally defeated and shamed, so here women are dramatically enacting what it is to be chiefs'. (Keesing)

The treatment of widows is harsh but not as extreme as that meted out to widowers. People do not send widows away but keep them inside their houses. After their mourning seclusion they are reabsorbed quickly into the community, for the society is too dependent on the labour of women to ostracise them as it does widowers. This is particularly so with widows with small children who require care. Sister Smith's description (1969:3) of the seclusion of widows in the 1940s and 1950s indicates the extent of their privations. 'The widow was shut in the house. Even though the interiors of the houses are dark, the relatives generally hung blankets to partition off the widow's corner. Here she remained in silence and loneliness until a feast was made and she was permitted to leave the house. I have known widows to be shut up like this for up to two years. A widow is at the mercy of the people as regards food and attention. When we used to visit one or another they would only answer in whisper. The voice of a widow must never be heard.' The treatment of widows is partly for the reason of compelling them to feel the loss of their husbands as their husbands' agnates do, and partly due to their husbands' agnates taking advantage of their affinal superiority over them to unleash upon them, the outsiders in their midst, their anger and outrage.

above all the death of their spouse, provide them with strong reasons for seeking revenge. They enter the services of sorcerers not only because they wish to make certain that they secure their revenge, but also because the company of sorcerers provides them with an escape from the oppression of their society. This association with sorcerers underlies the fear people have of widowers.

The most feared widowers of all are sorcerers whose wives have just died. Such sorcerers allegedly have little recourse but to practise their craft; at least, since they undergo mourning seclusion and prolonged fasts, people believe that they are practising. Since it is at the death of their own wives (and of their closest agnates) that sorcerers become vengeful and most dangerously disposed, at such times people expect more than a normal occurrence of misfortune in the area. During the second half of 1971 when the wife of Apini Uapaisa, the junior sorcerer of Ongofo'ina, died, there was discernible disquietude and apprehension in the village. People said that most misfortunes from then on would be attributed to the sorcerer not only because of his own desire for revenge, but also because more people would seek to hire his services. Bereaved sorcerers are the most sought after by prospective assistants and by those who have scores to settle with their enemies.

The sorcerer in practice

Before practising his craft the sorcerer undergoes a period of rigorous preparation aimed at transforming himself from the state of a normal human being into that of an *ungaunga.* This is essential because sorcery powers are extraordinary and cannot be handled by an ordinary human being. The *ungaunga* state is achieved by renouncing the world of the mundane in at least three basic areas of normal activity: eating and drinking, sex, and human sociability. The transformation is never complete, partly because sorcerers do not live in a permanent *ungaunga* state, and partly because the pure *ungaunga* state is unattainable since sorcerers still have to eat and drink something, and since they still have to communicate, albeit negatively, with ordinary human beings.

In all Mekeo ventures that require the use of mystical power for success, a certain degree of transformation is necessary, and all involve self-denial in the three areas of normal human life mentioned above. Only in the practise of *ungaunga* is this enacted to its extreme degree.

Not everyone can by renunciation attain the *ungaunga* state because, in addition, knowledge of sorcery spells, medicines, and magical 'histories' of particular sorcery powers is essential; and only real sorcerers have this knowledge. Moreover, in sorcery there is that intimate communion with A'aisa which is not the case with non-*ungaunga* powers. The help of A'aisa, the original and still the main source of *ungaunga* powers, is essential for sorcerers' success.

When the sorcerer embarks on his preparation for transformation he leaves the village (that is, the normal human society) for the bush to live in a special building used only by his kind. This building, the *fauapi*, combines the functions of a retreat, a storehouse, and a workshop. Here he stores all his sorcery materials which are too dangerously powerful to be taken into the village, let alone kept in a family house. *Fauapi* are usually, though not always, located a short distance from the village (see Chapter 3). Here the sorcerer retreats and begins his preparation and his communion with A'aisa and other powerful spirits. He does not handle the activated sorcery ingredients until he has attained the *ungaunga* state.[7]

Once he begins his seclusion he should not be seen by normal people, especially females. He spends the daylight hours inside the *fauapi*, out of sight. The only ordinary people who communicate with him are his caretakers, *i'ima au'i*, that is, a few members of his lineage, mainly young unmarried boys, who look after his daily needs. This task is not normally done by his assistants because they are also in seclusion as he is. The sorcerer eats one meal a day and his fare consists of two or three roasted bananas, eaten hot, and as much chili and ginger as he wants. Ginger and chili are agents which clean the impurities in the sorcerer's stomatch, replacing them with 'heat', *isapu*. Ginger and chili have the common property of 'hotness' which is equated with power as opposed to 'coldness' which connotes powerlessness. Ginger is also widely used as a panacea, and people rub it on their feet and legs for protection against snake-bite when they go into the bush. Thus ginger and chili purify, protect, heal and give power to those who use them. No meat is consumed. The sorcerer has to drink but, unlike ordinary people, he does not drink water. He takes instead the juice of green coconuts, but only after the husked coco-

7. Among the Garia (Lawrence 1952:341) trainees in sorcery—young boys undergoing initiation rites—also detach themselves from society and observe stringent taboos regarding food and sex.

nuts are burnt on a fire to be drunk hot. No normal person drinks coconuts this way unless as a form of cure usually prescribed by sorcerers themselves. The sorcerer avoids coming into contact with water, especially cold water, which is associated with loss of power. For this reason the sorcerer avoids being drenched by rain or walking on wet ground. This is an important reason why the practising sorcerer rarely ventures outside; Mekeo is a rainy area where the wet season often lasts more than half the year.[8] In adhering to the general principle of following the opposite of what normal people do, the sorcerer in preparatory seclusion never washes his body with water, hot or cold. He constantly rubs himself with aromatic leaves, barks, and roots, the smell of which, combined with his unwashed body odour, is quite distinctive and powerful. Sexual intercourse is absolutely forbidden throughout this period (cf. Belshaw 1957:197-8).

All these acts of self-denial are collectively known as *ngope* which means 'set apart' or 'sacred'.[9] Thus in order to attain the state of *ungaunga*, the state of highest *isapu*, the sorcerer has to set himself apart from normal human activities. It may take up to a year for the sorcerer to attain the desired state; and the length of time depends on how well he has conducted his *ngope*. When he has done *ngope* it is discernible to other sorcerers by certain physical signs which include: clear white eyes—with a faraway, other-worldly look; yellow skin—sallow complexion from lack of exposure to direct sunlight; slim waistline—achieved through strict diet and wearing tightly fastened wide

8. Cold water is believed to have the power of neutralising the effects of sorcery, and is studiously avoided by sorcerers, especially those who are in *ungaunga* state and those who are preparing for it. William Tomasetti, a former Assistant District Officer, told me the story about a certain European government official who periodically rounded up sorcerers in Mekeo and Roro and dipped them in the sea believing that by this method he would neutralise their powers. His assumption was based on the fact that it takes time for sorcerers to achieve the *ungaunga* state through *negope*; so if he caught them regularly before they reached this state, and dipped them in cold water, he would always render them harmless. I think that this official overlooked the probability that the sorcerers he caught were those in normal state. Activated sorcerers are extremely difficult to locate, let alone to capture; no Mekeo or Roro would dare lead government officials to these men, or reveal their whereabouts, for fear of visitations upon themselves and their families. Besides, such sorcerers would do their utmost to avoid capture, for dunking in cold water would not only neutralise their powers but would certainly mean their death. I indicate below that the process of deactivation must be gradual.

9. Cf. Groves 1973:101 regarding a similar practice *(helaga)* by the Motu sponsors of *hiri* trading expeditions.

belts; a very light manner of movement characterised as 'walking like the wind' *(ameku koa epea)*; and so on. When the sorcerer reaches the state of *ungaunga* he may then begin his practice. He mixes his medicines, and rubs them on the stones or puts them in his containers; he recites the spells and calls on the great spirits of past ancestors and powerful sorcerers. One sorcerer said that he can tell the presence of the spirits by the sounds of their footsteps as they walk on the floor of his *fauapi* and the creaking of floorboards as they sit down. He presents them with offerings of food, talks to them, and gives them their instructions. Such a sorcerer lives in a world in which the real and the fantastic have merged. Or, as we have seen earlier, the two sides of reality, the visible and the invisible, are now perceived, comprehended, and can be dealt with as one.[10]

On the attainment of the state of *ungaunga*, the sorcerer is stricter in adhering to the rules of the *ngope* for he is a semi-supernatural being dealing with supernatural agents and extremely destructive powers. His body has become a direct source of danger to others as well as to himself. Physical contact with an activated sorcerer, even a chance encounter on a solitary road or at night, is dangerous. Throughout his *ngope* nothing that he touches with his hands may enter his body through his mouth. He eats with a long fork made from cassowary bones.

While practising, the sorcerer takes many other precautions. He is careful not to have his left arm across his body while working, and he constantly spits when he recites spells, believing that by swallowing his saliva he also swallows the potent spells that he utters.[11] On occasions he covers every orifice and extremity of his body in order to prevent powers of certain materials from entering his body. He keeps out of sight from normal people not only because this might affect those he does not wish to harm, but also because he himself might be harmed if seen by normal eyes without being prepared for it. This is one reason why sorcerers flash stones on their victims' eyes when they confront

10. A famous non-Mekeo example of this psycho-physiological state is found in the Christian tradition of Christ going into the desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights, just before he embarked on his miraculous career. Christ's fast made him (as it must have made Mekeo sorcerers) see things and develop a sense of omnipotence. In our own times, Carlos Castaneda and his sorcerer, Don Juan, using hallucinatory drugs, provide further examples of the same state.

11. Sorcerers always carry their dangerous materials with their left hands. The whole of the left arm is therefore considered dangerous.

them. It is also why people say that a sorcerer will not confront a victim if he is in the company of another person, even a little child; the sorcerer runs the risk of being seen by the other person. Since he does not have the other person's leavings and has not had the opportunity to cast spells over him, he does not have the control over him that he has over his intended victim. Moreover, if the sorcerer is seen unawares in the bush or in or around the village at night, he might be attacked; for in their fear of sorcerers people are quick in resorting to arms to protect themselves. The sorcerer has to be so alert that he sees other people before they see him and can conceal himself if necessary. Mekeo say that if a normal man creeps up behind a sorcerer and shouts at the top of his voice just behind him the sorcerer will lose his sanity forever. Perhaps this may also be a reason for sorcerers remaining in their *fauapi* and operating through their assistants. On the other hand, since the most extraordinary powers are wielded by the invisible, the sorcerers' hiding from normal human beings is an attempt to attain a semblance of the invisibility of supernormal beings. Physical visibility is normal in human life; and since the *ungaunga* state belongs to the realm of non-normality, the antithesis of visibility is one aspect of that state. This state is of the same order as that which Victor Turner (1969: ch. 3) characterises as 'liminality'.

The *ungaunga* state is not permanent; sorcerers enter and leave it voluntarily.[12] But the sorcerer who is in the *ungaunga* state cannot simply return to normal life. He must, through special process, shed all the supernatural and destructive powers that have possessed him before he can resume the state of a normal human being. The first step in this process is to gather his sorcery implements, carefully wrap them up in a bundle, put them away, and not touch them again. He continues his fast and seclusion but he now begins to wash his body, not with water but with the shredded soft trunk of a banana-like plant heated on an open fire. The ritual cleansing of his body may continue for up to about a year before he returns to the village, stays in a *ngove* and begins eating normal foods. He gradually increases his intake and diversifies his diet according to the physical effects it has on him. If he is a married man he may, after a period, approach his wife, talk with

12. I first became aware of *ungaunga* as a state when a certain sorcerer told me that he was no an *ungaunga* but a normal being like myself. He becomes an *ungaunga* only after he has done *ngope*.

her or accompany her to the gardens. But he does not have sexual intercourse with her until, as one sorcerer says, the smell of her skirt ceases to cause him headache and dizziness. The cardinal rule in the process of the resumption of normal life is temperance and gradualism; for the returning sorcerer is aware that, for all he knows, there may still be traces of *ungaunga* powers remaining in his body. There are tales of impatient sorcerers who suffered terrible consequences because of the weakness of their resistance to carnal temptation.

A hasty resumption of normal relations between the returning sorcerer and other people is not possible because for a long time the latter avoid coming into close contact with him. In any case, the usual relations between sorcerers and others, on the surface sometimes amicable and even easy, are marked by wariness and avoidance of intimacy on both sides.

A number of sorcerers who are leading a normal life appear to be on partial *ngope* at the same time. In contrast to most Mekeo men, they eat little, including hardly any meat, and sleep apart from their wives. Most men live with their families in the family house but these sorcerers sleep in their own *ngove* in the village backyards. When asked the reason for his small intake of food, one sorcerer replied that he was an eminent person concerned more with providing food for his people than with taking it himself. This is an indication of rank in Mekeo society. In any gathering, chiefs eat only token amounts of food and give most of it to ordinary people, to whom they refer sometimes as 'the eaters', *aniani au'i*. (They go later into their houses and eat food their wives have set aside for them.) As sorcerers are men of high rank they also appear to live up to this ideal, and indeed they phrase their eating habits precisely in these terms. Another sorcerer, however, said that he was so accustomed to *ngope* that he would not discard the habit completely. The normal fare of Mekeo, oily vegetables (cooked with coconut cream) and fatty meats, seemed to him to weaken the body and was therefore not conducive to good health.

When we consider the dietary habits of sorcerers in the light of their professional life, it becomes evident that, whatever the reasons they themselves give for these habits, the diet amounts to a perpetual state of partial *ngope* in preparation for a quick and, therefore, less arduous resumption of the *ungaunga* state when it is called for. This may be why people do not really believe sorcerers when they claim that they are normal like anyone else. People tell an inquirer that this or that

particular sorcerer is normal in appearance only; he may at any time disappear, and in a very short while resume his nefarious work. People are wary and distrustful of sorcerers. They do not welcome them into their own homes unless they are closely related; they avoid being seen to have much to do with them, and they rarely accept anything from them, especially food. When outside sorcerers visit villages other than their own for feasts, they are billeted in the local sorcerers' *ngove*. Unless sorcerers are closely related, they are apprehensive of each other: when they gather in a *ngove* hosts and guests alike converse throughout the night, not daring to close their eyes lest their colleagues ensorcel them while they are asleep.

The foregoing account of sorcerers and the *ungaunga* state raises the problems of what drives sorcerers to undergo the severe experience of *ngope* before they practise their craft, and why they strive to become supernormal beings. The belief about *ungaunga* is part of the general Mekeo belief regarding magic and the attainment of power, *isapu*. The *ngope* that sorcerers allegedly undertake is an extreme form of the kinds of acts of self-denial and withdrawal that people go through when they deal in any kind of *isapu*. Most men have ancestral relics, a knowledge of medicine, and can through spells summon ancestral spirits for assistance. This is related to the most common kinds of magic which anyone can acquire. When they practise these, Mekeo go through *ngope* but with much less rigour and in a far shorter span of time than sorcerers do. The more potent powers are specialised and confined to a relatively small number of what Seligmann called 'departmental experts'. In this category, which includes practitioners of harmful magic of all kinds, specialists can summon stronger spirits than non-specialists, and are in command of more powerful medicines. *Ungaunga* differ from other specialists in their command of the most potent powers in the society. Since anyone who performs magic has to undergo *ngope*, it follows that those who claim to have greater powers than others have to go through more rigorous *ngope*. As practitioners of the most potent *isapu*, sorcerers' *ngope* is therefore the most stringent. This is why their services are costlier, and their stature greater than that of other specialists. This is the practical basis for the sorcerers' alleged readiness to experience extreme privations. It would, however, be cynical and mistaken to view it merely as a kind of confidence trick; for through many generations now a thorough and complex institution—with its associated myths, beliefs, apparatus,

and personnel—has developed and has permeated the whole culture and society.

Second, I have said that the sorcerers' preparatory *ngope* is a transformation process, and that the *ungaunga* state is supernormal and associated with extraordinary powers. But why, we may ask, do sorcerers endeavour to become supernormal beings? Why do they express their separateness in this way? In order to answer these and other related questions we have to consider which part or parts of the victims are attacked by way of *ungaunga* and which by means of non-*ungaunga* powers. Most harmful non-*ungaunga* powers attack the external body, the physique of the victims. That this is so is evident in the kinds of ailments they inflict: diseases of the hand, the skin, the nose, the eyes and the genitals. They are easily identified and have specific names. Specialist practitioners of powers associated with these minor diseases are known generally as *menga au'i* ('prayer men') whom people regard more as curers although they can also inflict the very diseases in which they specialise. *Ungaunga* attacks, on the other hand, are experienced as great pains inside, in the internal organs of the victims. Since it is inside the person that his spirit or soul resides, it is clear that *ungaunga* attacks are assaults on the spirits of the victims. With the exception of the *fai'a ungaunga*, all the types of sorcery described above involve techniques of attacking the spirits of the victims. This is true even of the rather ambiguous snake attacks. For in these sorcerers use the leavings of victims, the possession of which entails the capture of the victims' spirits. The method for fatal snake attack involves the pre-poisoning of the spirit before the assault.[13] The spirit of living persons cannot be attacked by people in the state

13. It was mentioned above that with some exceptions most non-*ungaunga* powers attack the exterior of the body. These support the argument advanced here. Mekeo characterise the exceptions *as ungaunga enga ke lao*, meaning, 'they tend toward sorcery'. People say that these powers are so potent that they are almost *ungaunga*. Two of these are the python and the *faifai* powers. The python power, *okafu*, involves putting the spirit of the python inside the victim's body causing intense crawling pains and weakness. The feeling has been described by some as that of a snake moving inside the body. The *faifai* are invisible, amphibious human-like beings who occupy underwater villages, and who emerge and steal the spirits of victims and take them to their watery homes. *Faifai* specialists are those who have relations with these spirits; they can provoke them to action, and they can negotiate with them for the restoration of the victims' spirits. Both the python and the *faifai* powers are, therefore, concerned with spiritual attacks and I think that this is why people categorise them as powers bordering on *ungaunga*.

of normality because of their insubstantiality and invisibility. It appears therefore, that as attackers of spirits, sorcerers have to transform themselves into something akin to the spirits, something that is invisible but at the same time more powerful than the spirits. Sorcerers' own spirits will not suffice since they are always normal and vulnerable, as is evident in their meticulous care not to fall victim of their own *ungaunga* powers. The closest thing to normal spirits, but yet non-normal and much more powerful and dangerous, are spirits of dead people and spiritual entities without human origin. Thus the liminal *ungaunga* state which an activated sorcerer must attain is a spirit-like state. I present the following as evidence of this assertion. The physical signs of a well-conducted *ngope* are characteristic of something non-normal, of ghostly appearance: fixed white eyes (normal eyes are yellowish and bloodshot because, sorcerers say, people eat meat); sallow complexion symbolising lack of blood; and light bodily movement equated with weightlessness. Another characteristic of spirits, the possession of extraordinary powers, is evident in the belief that the body of the sorcerer in the *ungaunga* state is a direct source of dangerous powers. As spirits are dangerous to those who see them—unless they are controlled by possessing the remains of their dead bodies—so are sorcerers in the *ungaunga* state. A friend of mine, a sorcerer from Rarai, once led a group of his villagers through Beipa'a on their way to a guitar-music dance at Aipiana. Normally he would stop at my place for rest and refreshment before he continued on his journey. On this particular occasion he ignored me completely. Some people told me—and later he himself confirmed it—that my friend was in a rather dangerous state and would neither look at nor talk to me fearing that he might inadvertently cause me some harm by doing so. He had undergone a short *ngope* and was carrying some magical materials to protect and to promote the success of the dance. He was in a potent but non-*ungaunga* state which I shall discuss below. Again the general invisibility of spirits is approximated by sorcerers' consistent attempts to conceal themselves from normal eyes. Finally, my first experience with what Mekeo consider as non-normal beings was at a feast during which my interpreter (I was then very new to Mekeo) directed my attention to a group of men—sorcerers and widowers—standing at the edge of the village watching the proceeding with stony faces. The interpreter said of them in English that they were devils.

In summary then, the answer to the question why sorcerers undergo the stringent preparatory process of *ngope* before they practise is three-fold. First, *ngope* is a general practice in any kind of magical performance, and the more potent the powers a specialist claims to possess the greater is the stringency of his *ngope*. Since sorcerers assert that they are in command of the most potent powers, their *ngope* must necessarily be the most arduous process in order to convince others of their powers. People are convinced. This enables the practitioners of *ungaunga* to demand greater remuneration for their services than specialists with less potent powers, to perpetuate the belief in their powers, and to maintain their exalted stature above lesser mortals. Second, *ungaunga* powers are so dangerously potent and extraordinary that they can be handled safely and effectively only by those who possess complementary powers. Third, since sorcery attacks are assaults on the spirits of victims rather than on their bodies as such, and since spirits can be reached and dealt with only by spirits or their more potent equivalents such as, for example, the spirits of the dead, sorcerers have to attain a state of the non-normality of the invisible world and its beings in order to communicate and associate with them effectively.

The process of sorcerers' *ngope* is a symbolic attempt at self-negation, and the *ungaunga* state is a condition of both symbolic death and spiritual life. The human body is weak and mortal and must, therefore, be transcended through *ngope* for the immortal, all-powerful life of the spirit.

The attacker is the healer

Mekeo believe that those who are capable of inflicting harm are also capable of undoing it; thus sorcerers are not only practitioners of dangerous powers but are also specialist curers. A fully-fledged sorcerer is one who is versed in the techniques of attack and healing. It follows that Mekeo should also believe that the most effective curer for any particular case of misfortune is the very sorcerer who has inflicted it. A number of other sorcerers might be involved in any one case and it is incumbent upon the relatives of the victim to determine who they are and to secure their co-operation by paying them, first, to stop practising against the victim, and second, to cure him.

Since sorcery depends so much on secrecy and uncertainty, few sorcerers would ever admit responsibility for harming anyone, least of

all to the relatives of the victim. The sorcerer described in the account of the use of snake bites, who announced his intention to attack, was a rare exception, and in this case it was a matter of personal revenge on his part. He was not acting on another man's behalf. Everyone knows the identity of all sorcerers, and the problem is to locate those responsible for particular attacks. This is solved through the use of specialist diviners of whom there are at least six in Beipa'a. Four are magicians of one kind or another but not themselves *ungaunga*; two are chiefs; and all but one are men of influence and high social standing. Although divination is so important and necessary for its linkage between sorcerers and people, yet it is not in itself considered an occupation that confers high status. An indication of the degree of confidence that people have in divination is that no single diviner is considered infallible. For any particular attack a number of diviners may be consulted to detect the responsible sorcerer or sorcerers. Because diviners are fallible, people are never quite certain, especially in instances of prolonged or fatal illnesses, whether the right sorcerers have been identified.

There are at least three kinds of divination: finger-drawing, *imaonge*; standing bones on cowrie shells, *longu*; and dreaming, *fauapi*. The finger-drawing method involves the diviner's eating raw ginger, reciting spells silently, pulling each digit until it cracks while enumerating by name all the known sorcerers in the area and even beyond. When the diviner mentions the correct name the utterance activates the ginger inside making him produce a noise, somewhat like burping, at the back of his throat. He repeats the process to ensure that the right sorcerer has been divined. The *longu* method involves the placing of a cowrie shell on the floor with its curved back up. The diviner then utters the names of sorcerers while attempting to stand a piece of human bone on the back of the shell. When he mentions the correct name, the bone stands upright on the back of the shell; it falls every time a wrong name is uttered. The diviner repeats the experiment before he makes the decision. The *fauapi* technique involves the diviner sleeping at night (after he has performed the appropriate rites) while his spirit proceeds to sorcerers' *fauapi* searching for the patient's spirit. The right sorcerer is the one in whose *fauapi* the spirit of the patient is seen or heard captive. Although the services of diviners are professional and paid for by their clients, they can be rendered free for relatives and friends.

When the right sorcerer has been divined the relatives of the victim take valuables and, nowadays, money to him, preferably at night and through the bush tracks just behind the village so that no one will see where and to whom they are heading. There are two reasons for this furtiveness. First, people do not want their enemies to discover what they are doing; and second, sorcerers do not want their clients to deal with them openly; secrecy must be preserved. If the sorcerer is in the *ungaunga* state, the clients approach his *fauapi* and beat a piece of bamboo suspended outside for this purpose. One of the sorcerer's assistants emerges to ascertain their identity and intent. He notifies the sorcerer who invites them to the verandah. While remaining inside, the sorcerer talks with them through the closed door. If the sorcerer is supposedly normal he personally greets the visitors. Whatever the sorcerer's state, he listens to the visitors first and then proceeds to proclaim his innocence, denying any responsbility for, involvement in, or knowledge of the case. He does not, however, decline the offering of valuables and money—and by accepting it he negates his declaration of innocence and at the same time he saves himself from the imputation of desiring to kill the patient. He then gives the visitors a cure which may consist of a slice of medicated ginger, or some burnt green coconut juice, or a mixture to be applied to the victim's ears and eyes. On the following day the relatives of the patient return as instructed to the sorcerer and report on his progress; the sorcerer may then give them more medication or he may himself go and administer it, saying spells over the patient and passing a piece of smouldering tapa cloth over him. In the case of *mefu* sorcery (p. 222), the practitioner—after giving medicine to the visitors—removes the container from the fire, opens it and throws the contents into cold water. The water cools the victim's spirit and he recovers. When a sorcerer is in the process of curing a patient he remains awake until the patient recovers. This may continue for a week or two; falling asleep would result in the death of the patient. When asked how such prolonged sleeplessness is possible, sorcerers reply that because of the kind of dietary practices involved in the *ngope* their stomachs are empty, clean, and strong. Normal people's stomachs, they say, are full of all kinds of impure foods, especially meats and fats, which weaken their bodies and thus reduce their capacity for endurance.

If the patient recovers it may not necessarily be the end of the sorcerer's involvement. The victim's relatives may seek vengeance and

decide to hire the same sorcerer. Mekeo say that if conflicting parties hire the same sorcerers to assist them, the sorcerers act for the side that pays them more. When the sorcerer accepts the payment his hirers then proceed to mock and to belittle him; they tell him that he is not a real sorcerer, that he is a little boy without powers, and cannot do a thing. They conclude their tirades by spitting at him before stalking out.[14] This ritual abuse is called *pakefe* and its stated purpose is to enrage the sorcerer and to stir him into action. Under no other circumstances would a sorcerer take such insults from ordinary people; nor would they offer them to him. He has, of course, accepted payment without specifically committing himself, and may or may not do anything. Once a payment is offered and accepted it is not returned, unless a sorcerer gives it back voluntarily out of consideration for his clients. This is rare. Similarly, the payment for the sorcerer's curing services is not refundable, even when the treatment fails and the patient dies.

If the sorcerer fails to cure and the patient's condition deteriorates, this becomes a subject of intense speculation in the village. For although people try to be secretive about which sorcerers are involved, word spreads so that in a short time most people know what is happening. These things become open secrets which people discuss in low voices in small intimate groups. The secrets leak through the patient's close relatives who tell their friends in confidence; and these in turn tell their friends. Married women in the patient's lineage reveal the secrets to their brothers and sisters who pass them on, and so forth. Moreover, the whole village shows a keen interest in the patient's condition, so that people take note of the movements of the patient's relatives and friends. They put things together in intimate conversational groups, arriving at speculative conclusions which they often spread as the truth. The probable reasons for the patient's worsening condition are discussed and all kinds of explanations offered. The failure of the curer may be attributed either to the inaccuracy of divination, or to insufficiency of payment to the sorcerer, or to counteractions by the enemies who may be paying the same sorcerer increasing amounts of money to keep him on their side, or

14. In my thesis I wrote that the hirers conclude their tirades by spitting into the sorcerer's face. Mekeo use the term *maanga* to mean 'his face' and 'in front of'. After some reconsideration I have decided that 'spitting at' is the correct English rendition.

to the probability that more sorcerers are involved than have been divined, or to the probability that the chief has, for some reason, decided that the patient must die. People evaluate these and other views, and consult an increasing number of diviners for confirmation. They engage the curing services of more and more sorcerers and magicians until the patient recovers or dies.

An event which occurred in Beipa'a during my fieldwork period illuminates the points made above. In late 1971 a woman with leukemia was returned to the village from Port Moresby hospital to die among her people. Father Diaz, the parish priest, pleaded unsuccessfully with her husband and relatives not to waste their money and valuables on diviners and sorcerers because she would never recover. The attitude of her relatives was that as long as she was alive there was hope, for they believed that she was ensorcelled.[15] Accordingly, the husband consulted all the diviners in Beipa'a including the woman's own father, the junior chief of Inaufokoa. He hired a famed dream diviner, *feuapi*, from the Kaopo village of Papangongo for a week to identify the sorcerer or sorcerers concerned, after those at Beipa'a and Aipiana had failed. He consulted sorcerers in Beipa'a, Aipiana, and even as far away as Southern Ve'e and Bereina and paid them for their services. He even went to a remote Kaopo village to see one of the most renowned living *mefu* specialists in the region. Rumour spread rapidly in the village that he asked the specialist whether someone had given him his wife's leavings. In reply the sorcerer allegedly showed him a long list of names of people from Mekeo, Roro and Kaopo whose leavings were in his possession, but his wife's name was not among them. Some of the people on the list had died and some, including a number of Beipa'a inhabitants, were still alive, and awaiting the sorcerer's attention. Of course, this was pure gossip, but it is indicative of the desperation of the woman's family, and of the interest which her case aroused, that people fanned all manner of stories and rumour throughout the village.

As the patient's condition deteriorated, the relationship between her husband and her father also worsened. The husband had exhausted his wealth and had started to believe what Father Diaz had said. His father-in-law, on the other hand, began to accuse him bitterly

15. Ironically, belief in sorcery gives people hope. As long as a patient is alive he can be cured if the right sorcerers are located. Mekeo villagers refuse to accept that some diseases are incurable, especially when the patients are their relatives.

of negligence and meanness—of withholding much of his money and valuables which should have been expended, for the sorcerers, he contended, had not been paid sufficiently. One day the husband was seen relaxing on a platform with a group of men instead of being with his wife or out in consultation with sorcerers. His father-in-law was so outraged at his behaviour that he threatened him with extremely harsh treatment should he become a widower. He duly became one a short while later, on Christmas day. At his wife's funeral he lay beside her crying, but the woman's female relatives accused him of feigning grief, and worked themselves into such a pitch of emotion that they attacked him—beating, scratching, and trying to drag him off his dead wife. After the funeral, the widower was first put in a *ngove* located inside the village, but because he was too close to temptation and because he could hear people talking or enjoying their Christmas festivities, his father-in-law sent him to a *ngove* further away from the main part of the village so that his grief would not be alleviated by unmournful thoughts. The movements of his closest relatives were closely scrutinised by his in-laws so that no one would sneak in any good food to him. He disappeared after only about six weeks of seclusion, and according to one rumour, he escaped to join a sorcerer in a Kaopo village. He told me months later that he went away to visit a friend.

As stated above, the most effective curer for any case of sickness is the sorcerer who inflicted it. Father Verges related the story of a victim of sorcery whose family refused to hire the curing services of the two sorcerers known to have been responsible. Instead they went to Aufo Afulo with their valuables, thinking that since he was the most powerful living sorcerer his *isapu* would overcome that of the lesser sorcerers and thereby cure their stricken kinsman. But they had misjudged Aufo Afulo, who rejected their plea angrily. He told them that they had violated a hallowed tradition of their ancestors by trying to hire his services instead of those of the sorcerers responsible. They must never do it again. Then he sent them with their valuables to the right sorcerers who allegedly cured the patient successfully.

Sorcerers are professionals who carry out the work expected of their vocation. The real malefactors in most cases of sorcery attacks are the hirers rather than sorcerers. The diviner's role is not merely to detect the sorcerers but also to confirm the identities of the hirers. They divine these from the names of people whom the accusers have

reasons to suspect of harbouring grudges against them. In the case of the cancer victim narrated above, the hirer identified was the husband's own chief, and the sorcerer responsible was a close agnate of the same chief. Some seven years before the tragic event the husband had constructed a new house of his own using the special black palm boards *(ava)* as flooring material. We have seen in Chapter 3 that the *ava* belongs to chiefs, and that ordinary people have to pay their chiefs for the privilege of using it.[16] The husband killed a pig for the payment but he inadvertently kept it so long that when he presented it to the chief it had already strarted to rot. The chief was so incensed that he unwittingly threatened the house-builder. When the latter's wife was stricken and no enemy could be thought of or divined, her relatives recalled the chief's threat of so many years past. The accused chief denied any responsibility, declaring that his hands were empty.[17] He countered that the woman's sickness was her husband's fault—that the husband had kept some bad powers in the house which attacked his wife; he should have known better and had them stored in a *ngove* away from the main part of the village. The chief's retort is a typical counter by those accused of hiring sorcerers: blaming the victims or their relatives for carelessness. The accusation against the chief was not made publicly; it reached him through gossip. Similarly, his reply reached me through gossip before I had it confirmed by the chief himself. His sorcerer was hired to cure, and although he declared his innocence, he accepted the payments which, according to the woman's husband, included a pig, and he visited the patient on a number of occasions.

The foregoing account of the curative powers attributed to those who possess dangerous and destructive *isapu* is a vivid example of the deep ambivalence which lies at the heart of Mekeo culture. We have seen manifestations of this ambivalence in agnatic and affinal relationships, in the give and take of *ufuapie* partnerships, in the divisions and subdivisions of public authority aiming at separating the good and the benign from the bad and the malevolent, and in the two-sided philosophy. I take this analysis further in the next three sections where I

16. In 1971 a Fopafo'ina man paid his chief $50.00 in cash and a fully-grown pig for the privilege of using the *ava*. He also supplied a small feast for his ward. The pig was distributed to the chiefs in the village with the announcement that the giver was now allowed to have the sturdy flooring material.

17. When I mentioned this to another chief he exclaimed that 'It is no use his declaring his hands empty if he has no control over his mouth.'

discuss the relationships of chiefs and sorcerers in the context of civilian leadership.

Sorcerers and chiefs

In replying to questions about the structure of civilian leadership, Mekeo willingly make statements in accordance with the ideals they hold. They tell the inquirer that chiefs are backed by sorcerers. 'The *lopia* stands in front and the *ungaunga* is always behind him.' The sorcerer, they say, is the chief's policeman and bodyguard. When someone becomes a nuisance or a public menace, the chief instructs his sorcerer to discipline or to kill him. The sorcerer does not attack anyone unless instructed or permitted by the chief. Both work together to protect their people and to keep their village in good order. If an outside sorcerer wants to attack a person he asks the permission of that person's chief first. We saw in Chapter 7 how the outraged brother of the victim of fatal shooting nearly assaulted the Fopafo'ina chief. The brother thought that it was a case of deliberate homicide, that the chief had decreed his elder brother's death. We also saw that the junior sorcerer of Ongofo'ina who was then living with the gunman, his close cognate, was implicated in the incident. There was a rumour in the village that the victim was an adulterer and that his chief had conspired with the sorcerer to direct his powers towards inducing the gunman to shoot the offender. This rumour and the victim's brother's action show that Mekeo hold the belief that sorcerers attack under the direction of chiefs. This is a legitimate function of sorcerers and although the immediate relatives of the victims may dispute the justice of measures taken against them, most people will admit that chiefs and sorcerers have tasks to do however unpleasant they may be.

Mekeo do not, however, divulge willingly the iniquitous and baneful deeds of sorcerers and chiefs, and the ethnographer discovers them only after he has witnessed cases of prolonged illness and sorcery allegation. People are reluctant to discuss such things since sorcery and its associated beliefs arouse in most villagers strong emotions, especially fear. Actual power relations between chiefs and sorcerers, sorcerers and sorcerers, and sorcerers and ordinary people, have to be discovered through observation of how versions of past events are resurrected in the context of present relationships among groups and categories of people, and through the observation of everyday behaviour in the village.

The powers of sorcery are not, however, confined to regulating social life (legitimate) and attacking people on the behalf of individuals and groups for pecuniary reasons (illegitimate). Traditional leaders use the fear people have of sorcery in political struggles within agnatic groups. Instead of fighting with spears, bows and arrows, conflicting individuals and groups employ the mystical weapons of *ungaunga* to achieve their objectives. We have seen this projected in the A'aisa myth.[18] For the rest of this section I discuss some events in which *ungaunga* played a prominent part. The significance of these events with regard to chieftainship and sorcery is discussed within or at the end of each story. In only one of the narratives (fourth story) do I use the real names (mostly baptismal ones) of the participants because the events in this story occurred fifty years ago and because there is little in it that would damage the reputation of the characters who are still alive. For the others I have invented English names for the actors and their descent groups so as not to embarrass them or their relatives unduly.

First story: Sorcerers and the rise of new leaders

I gathered the information for the reconstruction of the following 'history' from the junior chief of the Casuarina subclan; his archfoe, Michael; the senior sorcerer of Casuarina; and many other people in the village where the Casuarina live. I have checked the names and dates in the story with the Catholic Mission records and with Father Egidi's genealogies.

18. That sorcery does not loom large in the Inau'i schism (see Chapter 7) as told by Faupungu Oaeke, is due largely to Faupungu's choice of what to emphasise. Like many good and proud Mekeo leaders, Faupungu was very careful not to provide what he thought were bad impressions of his people. Some aspects of the Inau'i story, however, point to the probability that sorcery played an important role in the conflict. First, the death of the senior section man whose widow was 'stolen' by a junior man and thereby precipitated the schism, was undoubtedly attributed to sorcery. Second, Lapui Ififunga, the leader of the junior section, had to give some meat to the *ungaunga* and the *fai'a* to buy their goodwill and neutrality. Third, Manga Aikau, the senior sorcerer of Ongofo'ina, presided over the carving and erection of the central post *(opongo)* of the new *ufu*. Manga Aikau's willingness to assist the junior section indicates his partiality toward it. His action contrasts with that of the *ufuapie* which took a neutral position with regard to the Inau'i schism. Fourth, according to Faupungu Oaeke, who supplied this information after he had told the story, Eki's granddaughter died from snakebite as a punishment for his behaviour towards the junior section and to the chiefs of the *ufuapie*. Finally, the heir of the late junior chief of Inau'i said that the population of Inau'i has declined this century because of envy and jealousy, by which he meant people ensorcelled each other.

The Casuarina subclan comprises three major lineages (Figure 13) each founded by a separate brother: Andrew, the eldest and founder of the senior major lineage (A); Ben, the middle brother, founder of the sorcery major lineage (B); and Charles, the youngest and founder of the junior major lineage (C). Major lineage A provides the senior and junior civilian chiefs (minor lineages A1 and A3), and the war chiefs (minor lineage A2). Major lineage B provides the official sorcerers for the whole group. Members of minor lineages B2 and B3 were, according to a well-informed source, the 'ginger and food men'. The practising sorcerers had been from minor lineage B1 (the senior branch of major lineage B); and from the minor lineages B2 and B3 came those who looked after the practising sorcerers, cooked their food, brought them ginger and chili, and attended to their other daily needs. The senior minor lineage of major lineage C is the line of the junior war chief.

The first of the present line of junior civilian chiefs to have attained that office was David. Although opposed by most members of the subclan, he had formidable support from the official head sorcerer of his day, and from the ranking functionary, the chief's spokesman, a post held hereditarily by the most senior male of minor lineage B2. The creation of the junior chieftainship for the subclan appears to have been the culmination of a series of political moves on the part of the head of the junior minor lineage A3 of the major lineage A, for a greater share in the leadership of the subclan; and in this he had the support of the heads of the two senior minor lineages of the sorcery major lineage B. People say that it was the sorcerers who made him chief. One of the moves he made was to take into his care the traditional decorations and carved boards of the subclan's *ufu* from the custody of the senior chief. Some Casuarina people say that he forcibly appropriated them by theft, while others maintain that he salvaged them because the senior chief had so neglected the *ufu* as to let it collapse, and had not taken the trouble even to save the decorations. By taking these symbols of his subclan's identity into his custody, David made it virtually impossible for the senior chief to construct a new *ufu*. The senior chief, who was a weak man, could not afford to pay for new decorations to be made, nor to stage a feast sufficiently impressive for the construction of an *ufu*.

Before becoming the junior chief, David was the official assistant of the war chief of Casuarina. The post was of the functionary rank,

and on David's accession to the higher office, it went to his younger brother, Edward and his descendants.

David's son, Francis, who was chief when the first Catholic missionaries arrived in Mekeo, had the reputation of being an even more ambitious man than his father, and the senior leaders accused him of excessive greed for power. A strong and effective leader, he had allegedly wanted for himself the complete domination of the subclan and ward. This gave rise to a conspiracy for his removal. His rivals approached the *fai'a* sorcerers and hired them to destroy his family. As a result, his only son, Ivan, was killed by a falling tree. We have seen that people attribute incidents of this type to *fai'a* power. Fortunately, Ivan had already sired two sons in 1890 and 1892, John and Daniel, who were small children when their father died. Francis went into mourning seclusion, and set out to avenage his son's death. Like other male mourners, he sought out sorcerers, and in his sojourn among them he acquired skills in sorcery and obtained some stones

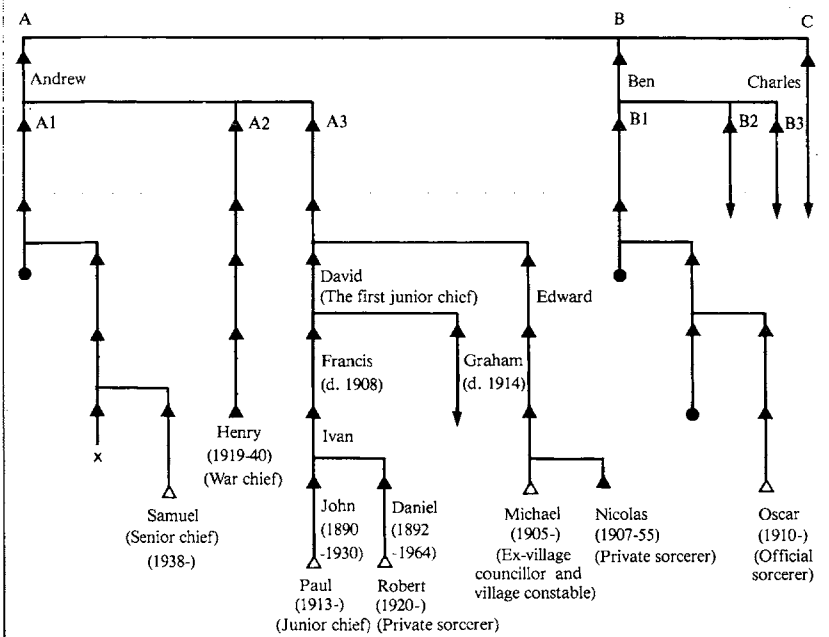


Fig. 13 Sorcerers and chiefs (Casuarina subclan)

from Kaliko Hills. The stones are known to be among the most potent of the snake-bite powers.

Having acquired these he returned to his village and resumed his chiefly role, so that he had to stop practising sorcery. Before this, he negotiated an agreement with the official sorcerers of his subclan that he would give them some of his stones if they let him keep others for the protection of his threatened family. Francis did not completely trust the head sorcerer, for although the latter was his *ekefa'a* partner and next door neighbour, he was sorcerer for the whole group and was officially more subordinate to the senior chief. Francis had suspected that his rivals, the senior civilian and war chiefs, had consulted with the head sorcerer, instructing him to approach the *fai'a* and seek their help in destroying his family.

The sorcerers agreed with Francis's proposition, for they coveted the Kaliko stones, none of which they had ever had in their possession. Since as a chief he could not himself practise sorcery, Francis gave his stones to his younger brother, Graham, and made him his own and his grandsons' sorcerer. When Francis died in 1908, his elder grandson, John, succeeded him. The new chief's younger brother, Daniel, inherited his grandfather's stones and sorcery, and began to accumulate more powers from Waima sources. He became the family sorcerer. (Elder brother and younger brother: chief and sorcerer.) Paul succeeded his father, John, in an installation ceremony in which Robert, Daniel's adopted son, became Paul's deputy chief. At the same ceremony Robert was also proclaimed a sorcerer in the traditional way. No one uttered a word: Robert simply went and stood between the then two most prominent sorcerers in Mekeo, Aufo Afulo and Kafo A'iso, in full public view—and people knew the exact significance. Robert himself told me how he was proclaimed a sorcerer. (Some months before his revelation, a member of an Aipiana sorcery lineage described to me the traditional way of installing a head sorcerer; his description fits perfectly with Robert's story.)

With the acquisition of sorcery to its own immediate family the junior chieftainship consolidated its powers and has since become the effective formal leader of the subclan and ward. The present senior chief, Samuel (aged thirty-three in 1971), is weak; he is also a widower barred from the congress of men. The war chieftainship has lapsed with the death of Henry in 1940 and the surviving members of its lineage, with the exception of two domestic groups, have dispersed.

The junior chieftainship of Casuarina has not enjoyed power uninterruptedly. In the 1950s it was involved in a similar kind of struggle to that which Francis waged but in a different context and from a different position. This time the challenge came from the rising junior branch of its minor lineage led by Michael, the head of the branch. I mentioned above that when David became junior chief his younger brother, Edward, replaced him as assistant to the war chief. Michael is Edward's great-grandson. Unlike the present junior chief, Paul, who is not literate, Michael was educated in the vernacular and spent much of his youth employed by the Mission. Although he was sixty-seven in 1972, considered very old by Mekeo standards, he is an articulate and garrulous man with little indication of senility. During the war and for about a decade afterwards he was the village constable and later village councillor who rose to a powerful position in the community. Chiefs and people alike envied him, but at first they could do little since his influence was derived from the much more authoritative colonial source outside the village.

Michael had a younger brother, Nicholas, who, at the death of his wife in 1939, entered into assistantship to sorcerer Daniel, his junior chief's private sorcerer. Daniel, whose wife had died some years earlier, was then practising. He returned to normal life and remarried in 1941. Nicholas, on the other hand, remained a widower and, though he never became a real sorcerer, he was a first class assistant. He acquired skills in several types of harmful powers, some of which Daniel taught him, and was an expert in poisoning and killing infants. It was at this time that an influenza epidemic which swept through Mekeo killed twenty-five people in Beipa'a within a period of nine months. Such disasters provided sorcerers with great opportunity to increase their reputation or rather, notoriety, and Nicholas built up a name almost equal to that of real sorcerers and even constructed a *fauapi* for himself. This was later razed to the ground by two *fai'a* brothers when their sister fell victim to a snake. She survived, but one of the brothers was gaoled for the offence, and soon after his release he fell sick and died in 1948; in the same year the other brother lost his wife through death. The villagers attributed these deaths and misfortunes to Nicholas's powers, and his notoriety increased. Because he was an upstart people did not accord him any of the virtues of legitimate *ungaunga*. Some said that he had learnt only to do harm but not to heal. A fully fledged sorcerer is one who has learnt the techniques

for healing as well as attacking. An Inawi man once told me that a particular sorcerer (not of a legitimate *ungaunga* family) in his village learnt only one side of the profession and not the other. The implication here is that upstart sorcerers are so bad that they do not care to learn how to undo their evil deeds.

Nicholas' growing infamy as an illegitimate sorcerer coincided with his elder brother's rising influence as a village official; and people inevitably suspected that the brothers had colluded to raise themselves to positions of power. This brought them into direct confrontation with their junior chief, Paul, and his sorcerer, Daniel, the legitimate leaders of the subclan. Daniel went into seclusion and resumed his practice upon the death of his second wife in 1947. He accused his erstwhile protégé, Nicholas, of causing his wife's death. When the wife of his son, Robert, died in the following year, the relationship between Daniel and Nicholas deteriorated so much that people attributed misfortunes in the village, of which there were many, to the rivalry between the two sorcerers, each of whom had vowed to wipe out the other's family.

The rivalry intensified in 1950 with the death of Paul's younger sister. Four days after her death, Michael's eldest son was killed by a snake. Three more deaths in Michael's family followed the tragedy: a daughter aged twenty; a sixteen-year-old son; and a younger brother. Nicholas himself died in 1955 at the age of forty-eight, allegedly from a prolonged and painful illness. This followed the death five months earlier of an infant grandson (son's son) of Daniel. People say, with awe and admiration of Daniel, that Nicholas lost the struggle because he was not a real sorcerer. A lull in the feud followed the removal of Nicholas; the next death was that of Daniel in 1964 at the ripe old age of seventy-two. Michael himself became a widower in 1966, contracted some sickness, and fled to Port Moresby in 1968. He did not visit his village until late 1972. The Mission records show that also in 1968 a younger brother of Paul died. This and Michael's departure could have been more than mere coincidence.

When villagers talked about the rivalry they did not say that it was one between Paul, the traditional chief, and Michael, the village official backed by the colonial regime; but rather between two sorcerers, Daniel and Nicholas. It was towards the end of my major field-trip, in the context of a struggle between Paul and a surviving son of Michael that the rivalry between Paul and Michael, that is between

the formal leader of the group and the leader of its rising junior branch, flared again and the connection between this and their sorcerers' rivalry became clear to me. I have referred to the incident briefly at the beginning of this chapter. Michael's son was the house-builder compelled by his chief, none other than Paul, to provide a feast. Although Michael's son said publicly that he could not afford an expensive feast, there went through the gossip circuit the revealing story of the real reason for Michael's son's obstinacy, that is, the long-standing feud between his family and Paul's. One of Michael's ways of climbing the status ladder was his attempt to build for himself the biggest Euopean-type house in the area. Paul had already constructed a ramshackle house alleged to be the first European-type house in the village. Because of the feud and the near destruction of his family, Michael abandoned his scheme after he had erected the cement posts. These stood useless for about a decade until his son resumed the construction in 1971.

In the struggle narrated above, and the way it was related to me by the villagers, the myth of chiefly neutrality in disputes was preserved, and the struggle was phrased in terms of a rivalry between two sorcerers to prove who was the stronger.

In all this, the official sorcerers of the subclan and ward (major lineage B) remained neutral. Their position was secure. It was an internal rivalry left to the private sorcerers of the minor lineages concerned to settle. This was beneath their dignity as official sorcerers; but it was also that the official sorcerers saw themselves in the role of *ungaunga* for the whole ward, protecting it from the machinations of outsiders. There is in this a difference between official and long-established sorcerers purportedly functioning for the group as a whole, and private (new and therefore, over-assertive) ones attached to particular leaders. When an inquirer asks members of this ward (or any other villagers) who is the ward's sorcerer, they point out the official one, Oscar, but not Robert, the private sorcerer of the junior chief. People maintain this secrecy even during the ceremonies held by their ward: only the official sorcerer performs the ceremonial functions of *ungaunga* on such occasions. The private sorcerer of the chief is always there but in his other official capacity as deputy chief.

The 'history' of this particular local group reveals significant aspects of relationships between chieftainship and sorcery. The genealogical chart shows that at a certain stage in the past the founding ancestor of

major lineage B, that is the official sorcerer, was in fact the younger brother and probably personal sorcerer of the founder of major lineage A, the chief. I suggest that with the numerical expansion of the group as a whole the process of lineage segmentation made it impossible for chiefs to manipulate their official sorcerers, who had by then become heads of a major segment of their group and had thus been able to operate with a greater degree of autonomy. This is the inevitable process of segmentation that we have seen in previous chapters. With the accumulation of expertise and renown through generations, and with the forging of kinship and affinal ties with other powerful groups of sorcerers and chiefs, the official sorcerers had secured a position for themselves which could rival that of chiefs. As sorcery depends on secrecy, the lack of intimacy provided by close blood connections between chiefs and sorcerers makes it difficult for chiefs to trust them very much or to manipulate them easily. Thus by Francis's time the need for closer relationship between the chief and his sorcerer was evident; and Francis was able to make his younger brother, Graham, his personal sorcerer, and, appealing to intimate blood ties and to his seniority by birth, he used him in ways he could not use the official sorcerers. This sorcery was passed down to Francis's younger grandson, Daniel, who became his elder brother's personal sorcerer. The relationship today between Paul and his sorcerer, Robert—Daniel's son—is a degree removed and there has already been some formalisation of these relationships through Robert's having an official position of his own as Paul's deputy chief.

That Francis obtained his sorcery powers not from within Mekeo but from outside is a fact of singular importance. According to oral tradition, Francis went to the Roro-speaking village of Waima where he joined a sorcerer of that village who eventually took him to the Kaliko Hills, where a very old man gave him the stones and the knowledge of their use. Francis's younger grandson, Daniel, increased his arsenal of sorcery powers from Waima sorcerers. James, whom we shall encounter below, also allegedly obtained his sorcery powers from Kerema during the war. These stories indicate that *ungaunga* powers within the society are scarce resources which have been allocated to a few families which keep them jealously for themselves. A man, not of an established sorcery family, wishing to become a sorcerer, has to go outside and bring new powers with him. Some of these would be powers not available within the society. We have seen this in the official

sorcerers' willingness to negotiate with Francis for those stones of power which they did not have. The trouble with Nicholas was that he got his powers, albeit incomplete ones, from within his own village and society. He was taught by Daniel who, according to village sources, gave him, as a precaution, partial and not full knowledge of *isapu.* Thus Daniel had the advantage over Nicholas in knowing most of what the latter knew, and in possessing the more potent powers. In other words, right from the beginning of the contest Nicholas had no chance of winning against Daniel.

The idea that what is or what originates from outside the village and the society could be more powerful than what is inside is very important in Mekeo cosmology. Power, at least extraordinary power, is external. Thus the sorcerer has to go outside his village into the wilderness to obtain power. A'aisa the deity and source of all powers lives outside Mekeo. The external world is unfamiliar, uncontrollable from inside, and is liable to have attributed to it dangerous and uncontrollable powers in unlimited supply. Aspiring sorcerers therefore have to go outside Mekeo to bring in new powers. It is also very easy to go out and return claiming to have in possession things that one does not have; no member of one's society has seen what did or did not happen to one.[19]

Finally, there has already grown a legend of how Francis acquired sorcery powers. People say that the very old man in Kaliko who taught Francis sorcery and gave him the coveted Kaliko stones was the immortal A'aisa himself. A'aisa followed Francis back to his village in the guise of a cassowary and was seen to go under Francis's house by the official sorcerers, who pestered him about what A'aisa had told and given him. This legend is important because Kaliko is the current residence of A'aisa, and the giving of sorcery powers to Francis by A'aisa places his sorcery on the same legitimate footing as that of the great sorcery families who received their commissions directly from the same sacred source. The legend is, therefore, an obvious attempt by the new sorcery unit to achieve legitimacy for its own position and at the same time to secure immediately the dignity, respectability and prestige of long-established sorcerers.

19. Likewise, an anthropoligist is not a professional until he or she has gone to a foreign country to conduct fieldwork. He returns charged with *mana*, writes his stories which are difficult to check, and may become very famous. Carlos Castaneda's writings on the teachings of Don Juan, the sorcerer, is a good example. We are not very unlike Mekeo sorcerers!

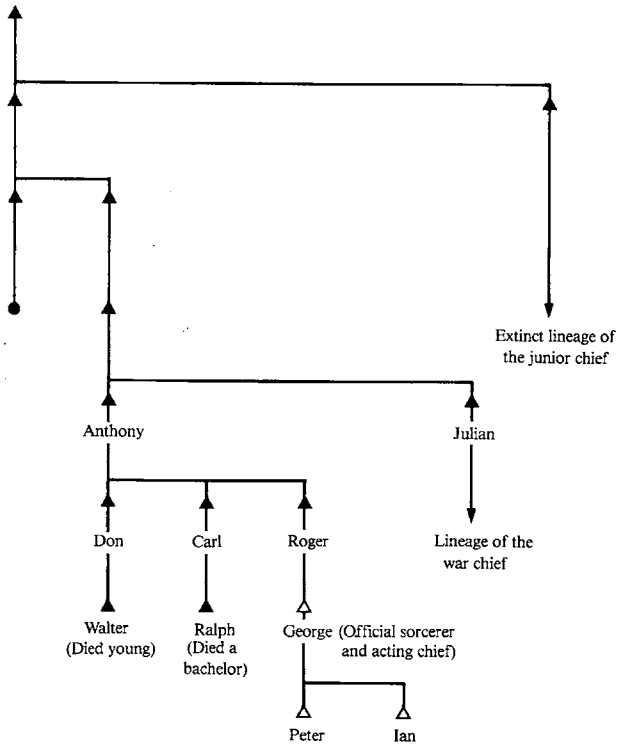


Fig. 14 Sorcerers and chiefs (Kapok subclan)

Second story: sorcerers as guardians of vacant chieftainships

The Kapok subclan of a Northern Ve'e village comprises two lineages (see Figure 14): the senior lineage which has both the (civilian) chiefly and sorcery offices; and the warrior lineage. There was a junior lineage in the past headed by the subclan's junior chief, but it disappeared two generations ago reckoned from the surviving old men. According to the subclan's official sorcerer, George, who is in his mid-sixties, his grandfather, Anthony, held the senior chieftainship and the sorcery offices concurrently. Anthony passed on his chiefly office to his eldest son, Donald, and made his second son, Carl, Donald's top functionary. He gave his sorcery powers to his youngest son, Roger. Donald's only son, Walter, died young so that the chiefly office went

to the eldest surviving brother, Carl. Similarly, Carl's only son, Ralph, died while he was a bachelor, and the chiefly insignia went to the care of the most senior surviving male, George, who had inherited his own father's sorcery. This man is now the official sorcerer and acting civilian chief of Kapok. He has two adult sons, Peter and Ian. George plans to pass his sorcery office to his elder son by the rule of primogeniture. He also wishes to make his younger son the chief of Kapok.

George's designs are being frustrated by the warrior group who, he says, want the civilian chieftainship transferred to their lineage which comprises most of the adult men of Kapok. The senior lineage consists of only three men: George and his two sons. Although George has the undoubted claim to seniority, the rest of the subclan can block any move he makes by not supporting him. George needs an expensive feast to install his son as a chief but cannot make one on his own. On the other hand, the warrior lineage cannot take the office forcibly because of their juniority, and because of what George can do to them with his powers. For although his family is vastly outnumbered, George's possession of the destructive powers of sorcery is a sufficient deterrent against rivals. People still remember the reputation he made in the 1940s and 1950s when he was practising. As a friend of mine, George visited me frequently in Beipa'a, causing a great deal of concern in the village about my intentions. One day a young and well educated man from another village visited me while George was in my house. He borrowed my motor-cycle from which he fell and received a few nasty bruises. He later said that it was the first time that he had come face to face with George of whom he had heard so much before, and that his mother had attributed his accident to his meeting with such a dangerous man. The point is that George's reputation is widespread in Mekeo, and it is clear that this renown is a factor in his standing within his agnatic group.

The guardianship of chiefly offices by sorcerers is not exceptional. In fact, since sorcerers are the powers behind civilian chieftainship, it is expected that when the question of succession arises sorcerers, in those subclans which have them, take the office in custody until the matter is resolved. Of course, sorcerers may themselves put forth their own sons as candidates. George's position is strengthened by the fact that he is the most senior surviving male of his subclan. The position of the chieftainship of Possum subclan of the same Northern Ve'e

village is not as clear-cut as that of Kapok. When the last Possum chief to have lived in the village died, his widow went back to her village in Pioufa with their child, the heir to the office. Being brought up in his mother's village, the heir refused to return to his own village to assume his high responsibility despite countless entreaties from his agnates who sent him tributes and presents. The heir died and his son, who was born and brought up away from his agnatic village, similarly refuses to take heed of his people's call. He told me that his agnatic home is foreign to him.

During all these years the Possum chieftainship and *ufu* have been under the custody of the subclan's sorcerers, the present one being Stanley. Unlike George of Kapok, Stanley's grandfather was not a chief and he belongs not to the senior but to a junior lineage which has been the sorcerer group. Being accustomed to his dual responsibility, Stanley has plans to transfer the chieftainship to his lineage by making the son of his deceased elder brother the chief of Possum. His sorcery will go to his own son. Unfortunately for him, the senior lineage still survives with men who have stronger claims to the office by virtue of their seniority. Atlhough the Possum pay deference to Stanley, a noted sorcerer now in his declining years, they have so far been unresponsive to his wish to install his own nephew as their chief.

Third story: The sorcerer who made his son a chief

The two examples of Kapok and Possum show that although sorcerers are powerful and feared they do not necessarily get what they want. In Kapok the sorcerer's powers and even his seniority are countered by the numerical strength of the junior warrior group. In Possum the sorcerer's plans are countered by the seniority claims of his rivals. Nevertheless, the following two stories show that sorcerers can be so powerful that they can wield more power than any other leader of their groups and can, on occasions, impose their will and dominance over chiefs and ordinary people alike.

One such sorcerer is James of Cockatoo subclan of a Pioufa village, who is also one of the most powerful living *ungaunga* in Mekeo today. Although his reputation is not as great as that of Aufo Afulo, he is feared and respected. A man of considerable ability and notoriety with a violent disposition during his youth, James has been gaoled twice for homicide: once for the murder of a woman with an axe, and another time for holding a man while another stabbed him to death. Some

people say that he was innocent on both counts and was taking the blame for others. Whenever a death or a serious illness occurred in the area, James was almost invariably suspected of involvement. Early in 1973 a Beipa'a man died after a prolonged illness which the nursing Sisters said was tuberculosis of the throat. Before his death one of the prevailing rumours was that a man from his own ward, whose mother was from James's village, had hired James to ensorcell him for reasons not quite clear to me. The accused hirer fled to faraway Lae just before the victim's death; James, on the other hand, brazenly attended the funeral and even went into the dead man's *ufu* for the post-funeral gathering and dinner which he dominated with stories about his own achievements. The dead man's agnates treated him respectfully, and listened to his stories quietly although the general feeling was that these were out of place on such a sad occasion. I am certain that James was innocent but his audacity is still impressive. In January 1972, Professor Andrew Strathern, who was then my supervisor, visited me in Mekeo and the villagers gave him an official welcome and later a feast as befits an anthropologist's chief. In the evening after the feast, the village men sang their traditional songs on a covered platform. In the course of a song the singers suddenly stopped and looked apprehensively at something outside. No one moved in the fearful silence that followed, for standing outside in a spotlight was James who was watching the proceedings inside with what my wife characterised as reptilian eyes. I eventually broke the silence by inviting him onto the platform; and as he started to ascend the ladder at the side, everyone who was sitting on that side of the platform jumped up in unison and rushed to the other side. It was an instinctive reaction of terror because no outside sorcerer, let alone one with James's reputation, enters another village at night just for an innocent walk. James took a big risk with his life just to pay homage to my 'chief'. People say that under other circumstances the sorcerer would have been pursued with arms. The singing resumed not long after James's entry and he characteristically took the leading role for the rest of the evening. As one of the best song leaders in Pioufa, James was followed enthusiastically by the whole gathering.

James, who is in his mid-sixties, is the younger brother of a former senior chief of Cockatoo, Bruce (Figure 15), who died in 1925, allegedly from snake-bite. On his death, Bruce's widow took their two very small sons to another village where she remarried. The boys grew up

in that village and did not return to their own until they were married. The elder brother, Roger, who was the heir to the chieftainship went to Port Moresby where he remained for many years even after he had become a chief.

Following the death of his elder brother, James gradually assumed the vacant leadership of Cockatoo. But he never usurped the office for the heir and his brother were alive. In consolidating his unofficial hold over his group James learned the craft of sorcery, informants say, from the Kerema people of the Gulf District, during the Second World War, and soon established himself as a feared sorcerer. In the 1940s and 1950s Cockatoo had two chiefs: Roger, the senior; and Alfred, the junior. Neither of them has the forceful personality of James. They are good, kindly, and soft-spoken men well liked by their people. In the early 1950s James staged an impressive feast in which he had his son, Alan, installed as a chief despite the unorganised opposition to this unorthodox undertaking. At the same ceremony Alfred's only son was also installed as his father's successor to the junior chieftainship. Soon afterwards Alfred's son died mysteriously and people suspected foul play although they are still too afraid to air their views in public. The situation in Cockatoo today is that officially Roger is the senior chief and Alan, James's son, the junior chief. The effective power rests with James, whom I have observed on a number of ceremonial occasions to order around not only the Cockatoo chiefs (his son and his nephew) but also the other chiefs of the ward. Roger's only son is away in another part of Papua New Guinea where he has married a woman of that region. If he does not return, and it is most likely that he will not, then Alan will, by default, be the sole chief of Cockatoo when Roger is gone.

Fourth story: The sorcerer who restored a chieftainship to its proper bloodline

The best example of a powerful modern sorcerer was Aufo Afulo who is still talked of as the greatest of all Mekeo sorcerers. Father Egidi's genealogies show that Aufo Afulo's ancestors were originally the most junior lineage of the Inaufokoa subclan of Beipa'a. This branch emigrated to the Southern Ve'e village of Eboa where a sizable Inaufokoa subclan resides. Aufo Afulo's renown was such that people throughout the region feared and respected him. It is said of him that he would send word to a village a few days before his arrival so that

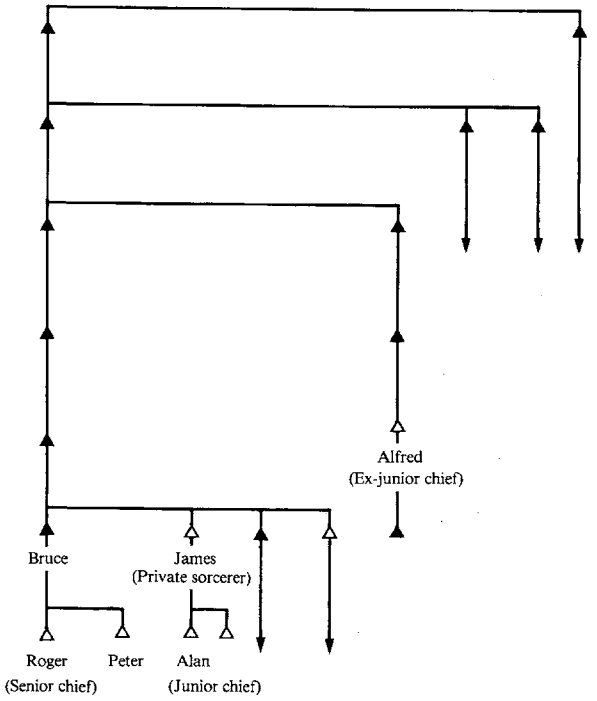


Fig. 15 Sorcerers and chiefs (Cockatoo subclan)

people would be at home when he entered their settlement. Villagers believed that those who were in the bush were liable to be bitten by snakes. The Inaufokoa asserted that each time Aufo Afulo visited them in Beipa'a two or three people died soon afterwards. Father Verges related an experience he had in Beipa'a before he was transferred to the Inawaia Mission station. While having a rest one afternoon he became aware of a sudden stillness which befell the normally noisy village; no sound emanated from Beipa'a, not even of animals. Suspecting that something was afoot he went to the village to inspect. There he saw the villagers standing quietly on the central ground waiting for something. A short while after Verges' arrival, he saw a procession entering the settlement from the river; it was Aufo Afulo on one of his periodic excursions. The visit was short—Aufo remained

only until the villagers had paid him tributes of animals and valuables. Father Verges and other long-term missionaries in Mekeo maintained that Aufo was the last of the great sorcerers in the region. Father Diaz, who performed the Christian rites at Aufo's funeral in the mid-1950s, informed me that on the occasion people told him that because of the great sorcerer's death two people in Eboa, a man and a woman, would die within a week. This indeed happened. The Beipa'a Inaufokoa, who had no resident sorcerers, considered Aufo Afulo to be their *ungaunga* also.

Aufo was the central figure in the incident which changed the course of chieftainships in two subclans in Beipa'a earlier this century. In Chapter 8 I told how Petrus (Fangau Faiafe), the senior chief of Inaufokoa at the turn of the century and a contemporary of Aufo Afulo, named his younger brother's adopted son, Pasquale (Auo Ifi'ia), as his heir, and later on the younger brother, Ernestus (Auo Faiafe), sired a son, later to be known as Bartholomeus Fangau Manga, by another woman (Figure 12). While pregnant this woman, a widow, was taken by Ernestus as his second wife. The first wife, who was barren, behaved with such hostility towards her that soon after the second wife gave birth to a son she returned to her first husband's ward, Inau'i, which was also her mother's agnatic ward. The infant was adopted by Akaina Ame, the childless chief of the Kolomio subclan of the same ward. Akaina named the child Amola after his own father, and made him his heir. No one in Inaufokoa seemed to have given further thought to Amola who was accepted by everyone as his adopted father's heir. Similarly, people also regarded Pasquale as the next chief of Inaufokoa. Petrus and Ernestus died, as we have seen, before the successor was installed. The Inaufokoa made preparations for the installation of Pasquale as their new senior chief, and as is customary (Hau'ofa 1971:164) they invited the chief of Eboa Inaufokoa to come and perform the ceremony. The chief consented and proceeded to Beipa'a accompanied by his famous sorcerer, Aufo Afulo, who was then at the height of his power.

On the day before the installation, Aufo was talking with the Inaufokoa about Petrus, and he expressed regrets about the latter's not having sired a son. At this point the Inaufokoa told him about Amola. Aufo was most probably aware of Ernestus' natural son, but he immediately demanded complete information about the boy, and then announced to the astounded Inaufokoa that Amola was the

rightful heir to the chieftainship, for the blood of their chiefs was running in his veins and not in Pasquale's. Since, however, Pasquale had been designated by the deceased chief as his successor, he had to be installed; but in addition, Amola was also to be installed, at the same ceremony, as Pasquale's co-chief so that the proper bloodline be maintained. When the Inaufokoa told him politely that Amola had been adopted by another chief as his heir, Aufo declared that he would deal with that chief himself. On the morning of the installation day Aufo dispatched two men to Amola's adopted father to demand the child's return to his people. The father protested vehemently, but he surrendered quietly when Aufo sent him an ultimatum. Amola was led to Inaufokoa, presented to Aufo who changed his name to Fangau, after the previous chief, and was installed with Pasquale as joint-chief. Through this action Aufo Afulo demonstrated his power by imposing his will successfully on the people of Inaufokoa, depriving a hapless chief of his heir, and restoring the Inaufokoa chieftainship to its proper bloodline. As we saw in the previous chapter, Fangau is currently the sole senior chief of the subclan.

Inequality in power

The four stories just narrated demonstrate the role which *ungaunga* men play in traditional politics. The junior chieftainship of Casuarina rose only through the employment of the weapon of sorcery and the manipulation of the belief in its efficacy. The junior chief's defeat of the rising leader of his subclan's junior branch was again perceived by the people as due to the superior *isapu* in the command of Paul and his sorcerer, Daniel. The success of the sorcerer of Cockatoo in making his son a chief, and the attempts by the *ungaunga* of Kapok and Possum to take the highest offices of their groups into their immediate families, sustain the assertion made by Mekeo that sorcerers sometimes usurp the chieftainships of their subclans. There are two important points which arise in the stories. First, the sorcerers in three groups (Casuarina, Kapok, and Cockatoo) were very close junior agnates of their respective chiefs. In Kapok the senior men died without any male heirs, leaving the official sorcerer as the most senior surving male. In Cockatoo the sorcerer, who was a younger brother of a previous senior chief, made his son a junior chief and the real junior chief died soon afterwards. The senior chief's son seems to have abdicated by marrying and residing outside Mekeo. This will

leave the sorcerer's son the most senior male in Cockatoo after his father and the senior chief have died.

Second, in no instance did a sorcerer try to seize the chieftainship for himself; it was done for a close agnate of the first descending generation. The reason behind this shyness of sorcerers probably lies in the fact that they are too tainted and too feared to be accepted by their people as men of peace and love. We have seen that in Casuarina Francis brought home his Kaliko stones but, being a chief, he gave them to his younger brother, Graham. Moreover, sorcerers are constrained by conventions from being too obvious in their ambitions; nevertheless, in the long run, those who succeed achieve their objectives by making their closest agnates chiefs, and thereby raising the social position of their immediate families.

So far we have been dealing with sorcery and sorcerers in terms of the belief system and of internal politicking at the highest level; but what are the implications of sorcery for the ordinary people who constitute the bulk of the population? We may begin our exploration of this problem with a brief discussion of the definitions of 'ordinary people'. Chiefs often refer to their people as *aniani au'i*, the 'eaters', which implies their dependence for their sustenance, and therefore their lives, on their leaders. Ordinary folk are more commonly referred to as *ulalu* which literally means 'wretched', 'poor', 'deprived' and 'pitiful'. One area in which ordinary people are *ulalu* is the field of *isapu*; they have few or weak powers in contrast to their leaders who monopolise the most potent *isapu* available in their society.[20] Since those with greater powers tend to dominate those with lesser ones, any analysis of relative powers must deal with the issue of social control and the relevance of sorcery in this field. The specific aspect of social control with which we are concerned is coercive control, that is, the deliberate regulation of behaviour to keep people within certain limits by making 'transgression difficult or impossible' (Berndt 1962:11).

Malinowski (1926) was probably the first anthropologist to recognise the importance of sorcery in Melanesia as a form of coercive social control. He wrote that in the Trobriands any undue prominence and outstanding personal achievement unwarranted by social position is bitterly resented and punishable by chiefs employing the services of

20. Modern education has provided an increasing number of ordinary people with an avenue for improving their lot. However, most of them are living outside their villages and have thereby reduced the impact that they would otherwise have on village life.

sorcerers. Sorcery is also used to enforce the exclusive privileges and prerogative of chiefs, as well as to maintain the 'traditional inequalities' and to prevent the 'formation of new ones' (1926:91-4).[21] What Malinowski says of the Trobriands is also true of the Mekeo.[22] In Table 16 I present thirty-two instances of sorcery allegations. Despite Marwick's advice (1964 and 1972) for fieldworkers interested in sorcery to collect systematically and exhaustively cases of sorcery and witchcraft allegations, and to use these as a 'means of detecting tension points of a social structure' (1964:280), I found the task most difficult to undertake since Mekeo are reluctant to divulge information on specific instances of allegations. After some futile direct attempts at getting people to provide me with the relevant information I gave up and recorded only those which were given voluntarily without my initial prompting, or those which I myself witnessed. There is value, nevertheless, in this approach to data gathering. First, had I persisted with my initial line of inquiry I doubt whether I could have made much progress and people would probably have deliberately ceased telling me anything about other aspects of sorcery. Second, many of the cases that I recorded were initially raised by people in conversations among themselves so that when I asked for further details, in an unobtrusive fashion, the replies came as part of the conversations rather than as information solicited by interviews. Third, and most importantly, what people choose to reveal voluntarily and at their own leisure may lead the ethnographer into an awareness of certain aspects of their anxieties and fears, their conscious perception of sorcery, and their reasons for selecting to reveal particular types of allegations and suppress others to which they refer, if at all, in the most general terms. I return to these points below.

More than three-quarters of the total number of sorcery allegations presented in Table 16 are concerned with the maintenance of 'traditional inequalities' between hereditary leaders and the ordinary people. Cases 1 to 11 are about the casualties in the struggle between the

21. In Dobu (Fortune 1932:176) sorcery is also used 'to cast down the mighty from their seats'. Of the Kalauna villagers of Goodenough Island, Young (1971:90, 111) says that fear of sorcery prevents local leaders from growing too powerful and from competing for followerships.

22. The Mekeo ethnography in fact provides the only evidence from Melanesia for Malinowski's general statements about chieftainship and sorcery. Malinowski himself provides little evidence from his Trobriand material for his statements on the subject; his treatment of it has been cursory and has been pointedly criticised by Patterson (1974-5:212-13).

Table 16: Analysis of 32 instances of alleged sorcery attacks

Category of reason given for sorcery attack	Case	Details and relationship between accuser, accused, and sorcerer
A. Rivalry between leaders	1-11	Accusations and counteraccusations between a subclan chief and his private sorcerer on one hand, and the rising headman of a junior branch of the same subclan backed by his private sorcerer on the other. This rivalry is described on pp. 255-7. All parties were agnates.
	12	A senior chief had a stroke and accused the son and heir of his dead elder brother who was his co-chief. The sorcerer responsible was an unrelated outsider. This episode is reported on p. 211.
	13	A senior chief contracted chronic bronchitis and probably tuberculosis soon after he installed his own successor. He and his wardsmen accused the uninstalled junior chief charging that the latter had his superior ensorcelled out of spite because he was not installed at the same ceremony. The sorcerer was not known to me.
	14 + 15	An ex-local government councillor was poisoned on two occasions during his terms of office. He blamed his chief and sorcerer saying that they were displeased with his outspokenness and his attempts to modernise the village. He gave up his office as a result. All parties were agnates.

B. Chiefs' jealousy of successful businessmen	16	*A man accused his village chiefs and sorcerers of attacking his wife because of the success of his trade-store. He eventually closed his business. The accuser and accused were agnates and fellow-villagers.
	17 + 18	*Two brothers accused their chief and sorcerer for attacking one of them, and later of killing their sister because of the success of their trade-store. They did not give up. The accusers and accused were fellow-wardsmen.
C. Offence against chief's privileges	19	A man blamed the death of his son on his chief and sorcerer because he used the *ava* flooring without the chief's permission.
	20	*A husband accused his chief and sorcerer of ensorcelling and killing his wife because of a dispute stemming from the use of *ava* flooring. The accuser and accused were fellow-wardsmen. This case is discussed on p.249.
D. Accidental meeting with sorcerer	21	A man blamed his illness on encountering his sorcerer at night while the latter was carrying some dangerous materials. They were agnates.
	22	After he was bitten by a snake, the victim blamed it on his encountering his father-in-law, a noted sorcerer who was practising at the time. The sorcerer cured him.

	23	*A mother attributed her son's accident to his meeting and talking with a dangeous sorcerer in my house. The accuser and accused were unrelated and belonged to different villages. This incident is referred to on p. 261.
E. Sorcerer's malice	24	Parents blamed the abortive birth of their child on a sorcerer who was practising. The sorcerer did this to enhance his reputation as he was said to be competing with another sorcerer to show who was stronger. The sorcerer was an agnate of the mother.
	25	Two brothers blamed their sister's non-fatal attack by a snake on a sorcerer who was practising. In retaliation the brothers razed the sorcerer's *fauapi*. Accusers and accused were fellow-villagers. This instance is discussed on p. 255.
F. Sorcerer's revenge for personal affront	26+27	Brothers blamed the deaths of their brother and one of their wives on a sorcerer (see page 255) who attacked in retaliation for the burning of his *fauapi*.
G. Settling dispute over homicide	28	Men attributed the death of their agnate to the collusion between their own sorerer and outside ones. The victim had killed a man from another village during a brawl. This case is presented on p. 226.
H. Adultery	29	A man accused his chief for the death of his brother who was alleged to be an adulterer. The sorcerer was from another ward of the same village. This incident is dealt with on p. 188, and in footnote 4 on p.226.

	30	*Men accused the husband of a woman with whom the victim was having an affair for their agnate's death. The accused was from another ward of the village, and the sorcerer responsible was from another village. The accused died a few months after the death of the adulterer.
I. Marital tension	31	*A husband publicly voiced his suspicion that his wife had the intention of killing him. She was from the *fai'a* sorcerer's group. At the time of the revelation the wife had left her husband for a few weeks, but soon afterwards she returned to him.
J. Non-payment of bride-wealth	32	*A man accused his wife's father, his wife's father's agnates, and his wife's mother's agnates, that is, all his superior affines, of causing his wife to abort several times. The man had not paid his bride-wealth dues and charged that his affines were exerting undue pressure on him.

* Indicates accusation made during my fieldwork period. There were eight such accusations. Another eight accusations were made in the 1960s and the rest (16) were made in the late 1940s and in the 1950s. I left out all accusations made before the Second World War as the details are not clear. Similarly I have left out other cases made in the post-war period and after because they are so incomplete that it is not possible to include them in the table.

established authority of Casuarina and a rising leader within the subclan, which has already been discussed. Mekeo say that no one who is not entitled by birth can act like a chief and it is a common complaint among the well educated commoners and among business entrepreneurs that as soon as they start anything they are subjected to sorcery attacks by their leaders. This does not prevent people from embarking on their businesses (or other ventures) but as soon as something happens to them or their close relatives, even if their businesses fail through mismanagement, they tend to blame it on their leaders. Stephen (1974) also talks of the bitter complaints by some people of Inawi about the obstructionism of their chiefs. The fear of sorcery is also seen in the general attitude of people to their wealth. Instead of displaying or boasting about them they hide their traditional items of wealth and money and will not talk readily about them. Since pigs, an important item of wealth, cannot be hidden, people do not, on the average, keep more than three or four in the village, although they may farm some out to other people and even villages till they are required. One Beipa'a man said that he once kept about thirty pigs in his pen but because of *pikupa*, sorcerers made most of them jump the fence and disappear forever. Sorcery, then, is a powerful weapon for keeping ordinary people at their ascribed lower level; it prevents the rise of big-men as a force in the traditional political arena. The instances (Cases 21 to 25 in Table 16) of misfortunes befalling individuals through accidental encounters with sorcerers, or as victims of sorcerers competing among themselves, on the other hand, are obviously projections of fear of punishment. These fears help to perpetuate the social distance between ordinary people and men of power. When someone violates this, or does damage to the property of the mighty, as in Cases 27 and 28, he could be dealt with harshly.[23]

The status differences between ordinary people and their hereditary leaders are such that there has been no case mentioned to or witnessed

23. One man, a bachelor teacher, went into an *ufu* in January 1970, and scolded the chief, sorcerers and other men who were entertaining me, for being too noisy. Everyone listened quietly, and when the teacher left, the feeling expressed by the gathering was that the young bachelor had committed a grave breach of etiquette. Two months after the incident the teacher went mad, ruined his trade store and had to be sent to the psychiatric wing of the Port Moresby hospital. His elder brother returned from Tapini where he held a government position and restored the business; but in 1973 one of their sisters died. I did not include these in Table 6 because although there were rumours about their chief's involvement, I was not able to obtain any reliable information.

by me in which sorcery is alleged to have been used by an ordinary man against his or any other chief. The example of Michael of Casuarina is exceptional in that Michael was the head of a lineage, a traditional office-holder, and an agent of the colonial government. Moreover, as Michael perceived it he and his family were innocent victims of the jealousies of his chief and sorcerer. The war was not waged by him but by his younger brother who had become a sorcerer. In the normal course of events all alleged sorcery attacks across the status line have been perpetrated by those above upon those below. This does not mean that men of power can do whatever they like. Mekeo chiefs are not despots despite what some of their people may say. They are heads of kin groups and their positions and authority are defined in terms of the responsibilities of elder brothers and fathers rather than as rulers lording it over their subjects. If they become too authoritarian their people show passive resistance. They cease going to the *ufu* for relaxation; they perform their duties perfunctorily; and even quarrel with their chiefs. Word spreads to the effect that they are bad and selfish chiefs. Such chiefs soon become isolated and lonely and lose prestige. At the back of their minds they know that if they overstep certain limits they will be dealt with by other chiefs and sorcerers who keep a close watch over them. Moreover, chiefs and sorcerers have a genuine sense of responsibility for their people and for the welfare of their villages. From early life they have been instructed in their responsibilities and in what is expected of them. Ordinary people, on the other hand, may fear sorcerers and get angry with their chiefs, accusing them of all kinds of misdeeds and shortcomings; but they also have a genuine affection and respect for their institutions, and despite their obstinacy, they normally look to their leaders when things go wrong. Thus although there is a gap between men of rank and ordinary people, a gap maintained to a large extent by fear of sorcery, there are strong ties of kinship and residence sentiments and of mutual interdependence which collectively act as a powerful check to the process of schismogenesis.

In addition to the maintenance of traditional inequalities, the fear of sorcery is a strong sanction against wrong-doing or against lagging in meeting one's social and economic obligations. When misfortune falls upon an individual or his family one of the first things he does is to ask himself what wrong he or a close relative has committed and to whom. If, however, illness is prolonged or if it results in death then

either the chief has decreed a death sentence or the victim or his family has internal enemies who are envious or jealous of them. The majority of allegations of sorcery presented in Table 13 were made by agnates or by fellow-wardsmen against one another. When allegations made against fellow-villagers are added to these we cover just about all the cases. It should be noted that none of these have been made between siblings, agnatic first-cousins, parents and children. In Beipa'a at least the relationships between these very close relatives are so intimate and so valuable that people suppress their tensions and hostilities so that they rarely make allegations so close to home. Although these relatives are sometimes suspicious of each other, even to the extent of voicing their doubts to their other relatives and friends, when there is tragedy in the family they almost always close ranks and look for a scapegoat among the not so closely related kinsmen or among non-agnates. There must be sufficient space of safety and security for people to move around fairly freely. When the husband in Case 31 voiced his suspicion about his wife in a village court the people were so shocked by his behaviour that they told him to be silent for he was out of his mind. If such allegations were allowed to prevail the most intimate 'security circle' would be violated and there would be no safe area for an individual except his own self. Although in real life people rarely make allegations against their closest relatives, it is revealing of the ambivalence in the relationships among close kinsmen that Mekeo do not hesitate to project their suspicions in their myths, for example, that of A'aisa and Isapini.

Most allegations, as seen in Table 13, have been made against chiefs or sorcerers themselves. This is partly in conformity with the belief that sorcerers attack only under the direction of chiefs. But I suggest that since most allegations are made within the ward and the village, the units within which amity and harmony must prevail if people are to continue to live together, people cannot afford to accuse each other constantly for this will lead to the destruction of community life. For the same reason people rarely accuse each other publicly; rather they do it through gossiping, which can be refuted with relative ease. Explanations for sorcery have to be found, albeit subconsciously, to redirect allegations safely. Since in the course of an individual's life he or his relatives are bound to offend chiefs or sorcerers at least once, it is not too difficult to find a safe explanation, and the incidents are attributed to the will of chiefs and their sorcerers. Thus, in the example

already discussed of the woman who died of cancer in 1971 (see p. 000), after much soul-searching and divination, suspicion fell on her husband's chief because of an offence committed by the husband against the chief some seven years before. Such allegations aim to take the heat off the relationships among the villagers themselves, and to soothe the feelings with the knowledge that chiefs may have legitimate grounds for inflicting punishment. Nevertheless, when a tragic event occurs most of the initial talk is about some internal enemies. But those who are concerned with the welfare of their groups, that is, people who are relatively neutral in particular situations, do their best to direct the public opinion toward the accepted dogma that sorcery attacks are just punishments by chiefs expressing the will of the community. It does not always work.

On the other hand the Mekeo tendency to talk in general terms about using sorcery against each other (illegitimately) and their reluctance to be specific about it may be seen as an expression of guilt in committing or thinking evil. As stated in a previous section, when tragedy strikes people suspect each other of hiring sorcerers and of competing with each other in paying more and more to sorcerers to attack or to heal. No one admits to hiring sorcerers to attack his foes, and no sorcerer admits to attacking any particular individual. But people admit to paying sorcerers to cure, and sorcerers admit to accepting payments for their curing services. If Mekeo really do hire sorcerers to attack, an act which is criminal according to the rules of both their traditional society and the central administration, then their reluctance to talk about specific instances is based in part on guilty conscience. It is all very well to say that chiefs are responsible, but chiefs always deny involvement in particular cases. Moreover, people have rivals and enemies who could have instigated the attacks. No one admits to anything. In the final analysis the dogma serves merely to blunt feelings or to cover up without really solving anything. Thus uncertainty remains, and people are compelled to resort to the illegitimate measure of self-help which they will not reveal to anyone—least of all to an ethnographer to whom they give mostly those incidents allegedly perpetrated by their leaders.

An old and retired sorcerer once told me that, in his active days, when there were disputes, chiefs would inform him of them and give him instructions that should disputants attempt to engage his services to attack their enemies he should accept payments but not act on his

hirers' wishes. Upon receiving these instructions he would then contact other sorcerers and request their neutrality on similar terms. The reason for the chiefs' instructions was that they did not want their people to kill each other through sorcery. I was also told by the main chief of Oriropetana where a family from Beipa'a had fled for refuge, that sorcerers used to approach him seeking his permission to let them ensorcel the members of the family in retaliation for what they had done in their village before their flight. The chief consistently refused permission and sent the sorcerers away. Whether or not the two stories are true, and there was no way I could check on their veracity, the fact that they were told voluntarily by a sorcerer and a chief is revealing at least of the ideals concerning the responsibility of chiefs and sorcerers, specifically in protecting their people against themselves.

The civilian order in ceremonies and feasts

Public ceremonies and great feasts are the kind of occasions which allow the formal demonstration and reaffirmation of the structure of traditional order in the society. In these ceremonies chiefs, sorcerers, functionaries, and ordinary people in their appropriate social categories, set aside the actualities of their everyday relations and play their formal roles, enacting for the duration of the occasions what they conceive to be the ideals inherent in the organisation of their society. Sorcerers play their roles as protectors of their chiefs and people, and as guardians and overseers of ceremonies and feasts. Through a number of symbolic actions they also assert their claims first to be the force behind chiefly authority, and second, to be in possession of extraordinary and destructive powers. Conversely, certain aspects of the behaviour of chiefs and people show the essentially ambivalent feelings they have towards sorcerers; for although the latter have valid claims to legitimacy and respect, their virtual monopoly of the most extraordinary powers and their alleged propensity for misusing these powers for their own personal interests arouse both fear and contempt. This ambivalence is compounded by the fact that sorcerers' corruption arises not merely out of their own venality and malice but also (and perhaps mainly) from the evil within ordinary members of society who hire them to do what they themselves cannot do. Putting it in other words, sorcery is a projection of evil as well as of supernatural power—and that power comes partly from an alliance with the spirit world and partly from the projected malice of humans.

Before I enter into further discussion of these points I shall describe briefly and in general terms the role of the sorcerer in the major ceremonials of Mekeo. When a feast is decided upon—normally by a meeting or a series of meetings of all adult men of the feast-giving ward presided over by the senior chief in whose name the decision is announced—it is the responsibility of the sorcerer to use his magic to ensure its safety and success. He sees that there is no death in the group, as such an event entails the postponement and even the cancellation of the feast. He contacts other sorcerers in the area, seeking their co-operation and inviting them to attend the feast. On the day of the feast sorcerers from surrounding, even from distant, villages gather at the local sorcerer's *ngove* and the latter acts as their host throughout their stay. At the commencement of the feast the guests proceed to a central gathering in the *ufu* of their hosts where they are entertained. Sorcerers attend the gathering sitting separately from the people, usually at the rear. Thus, for example, during a feast at Imounga in 1972 the host chiefs sat at the front of the *ufu*, the guests and ordinary people in the middle, and the sorcerers at the back. The hosts brought boiled meats and vegetables into the *ufu* to be eaten largely by the chiefs and ordinary people; they brought in separately the sorcerers' fare which consisted of roasted bananas with ginger and chili. At an installation feast held by the Ngangai subclan of Inawi in January 1972, the hosts made a special extension at the back of the *ufu* to accommodate the sorcerers and a few widowers who were also powerful magicians not of the *ungaunga* type. When asked for reasons about their segregated seating, sorcerers replied that it gave them a vantage position to observe and to protect the gathering. Ordinary people's replies concurred with that of sorcerers but some said that sorcerers sat separately because they were bad and dangerous.

When the ceremony connected with a particular feast begins, sorcerers stand in a group and observe critically the feast-giving chief performing his tasks. I have seen this on at least three occasions. If the chief deviates seriously from traditional procedure sorcerers, Mekeo believe, will punish him later; it may even cost him his life. The awareness of this can become an unnerving experience for the chief. At an installation ceremony in Aipiana in December 1969, I saw a performing chief, who had made several mistakes, so overcome by the intimidating presence of the sorcerers that he collapsed on the floor and his task was completed by another chief.

In the great feasts of the period before the Second World War *ufuapie* chiefs proceeded slowly to feasts, showing utmost reluctance to advance until they were paid handsomely with meats and vegetables (see Chapter 7). The procession, a very solemn affair known as *pealai epea*, could take a whole day to complete. During the procession no noise was allowed except for the sound of the *ufuapie* rattling their special gourds *(fa'onga)*. No one walked in front of the chiefs or in any way interfered with them. To ensure that people observed the strict solemnity of the procession the *ufuapie* chiefs carried two things given to them on loan by sorcerers. One was a small stone called *mafu* which they carried in their string bags. Chiefs fasted for some days, sometimes for about two weeks, before they could handle the stones. It was the power of the *mafu* which struck anyone who walked in front of the chiefs. The second was a powdery mixture, made from the remains of certain creatures, which sorcerers put in the chiefs' gourds during special ceremonies held on an evening shortly before the procession took place. The sound produced from these *fa'onga* commanded complete silence while the chiefs, dressed in their official costumes, proceeded to their hosts' *ufu*.

At dances associated with big feasts, sorcerers lurk in the background allegedly plotting the fall of particular individuals. Mekeo say that sorcerers achieve this by means of leaves that have been charged with the power of the stone *mafu*. Sorcerers wear these strong-smelling leaves on their armbands and when they direct the smell toward particular dancers or spectators the latter fall unconscious on the ground.[24] This does no more harm than merely making people faint. Needless to say, during dances people studiously avoid coming too close to sorcerers.

Public food distribution is an integral part of feasts, and in great ceremonials shares are presented to *ufuapie* chiefs in full public view. As men of high rank, sorcerers are also presented with their shares, but not normally in public. Such shares are kept out of sight to be sent to them secretly in the darkness of night.[25] The traditional shares

24. My friend, A'afanga Ufa'alai, the sorcerer from Rarai, habitually wears scented leaves and puts strong-smelling pieces of bark, roots and leaves in his betelnut bag. One can occasionally smell him yards away. He used to give me some of this stuff to put in my shoulder-bag, but the smell was too much for me.

25. Nevertheless, I have seen in a feast sorcerers' shares displayed and given to them in public. This might have been a result of the changing attitudes in the society today, or an example of the disjunction between what is said and what is done. But, for the

for sorcerers are the lower jaws of pigs. The jaw, *ake*, which also means 'mouth', is one of the three most important pork sections, the others being the head *(kania)*, the senior chief's portion, and the rump *(iukefekefe)*, which goes to the junior chief. When there are more sorcerers attending a particular feast than there are appropriate cuts, the host chief presents the available jaws to those sorcerers who live closest to him; sorcerers from the more distant villages receive such less important sections as legs and ribs. The chief does this in the belief that since neighbouring sorcerers have the best opportunities to harm him, they deserve more consideration than distant sorcerers.

In the preceding paragraphs I have described briefly some prominent aspects of the relationships between sorcerers, chiefs, and people in the context of major ceremonials. It remains to consider the structural significance of these relationships.

Sorcerers give chiefs the stones, *mafu*, which the chiefs use to enforce social distance between themselves and the people. In everyday life, there is relatively little obvious distinction between chiefs and their people, and provided that certain behavioural conventions are observed, the interactions between them are generally on the basis of familiarity. But the ideal distinctions are enforced on formal occasions, and are striking during grand ceremonies. To preserve the solemnity of the ceremonies, which are chief-centred, and to establish and maintain distinct social distance between chiefs and ordinary people, and thereby enhance their eminence and dignity, chiefs resort to the use of the power of the *mafu*. These stones do not belong to them but are borrowed from sorcerers. Sorcerers also put power into the special gourds, *fa'onga*, which chiefs use to command prompt attention from the milling and noisy crowds in festive mood. On other occasions chiefs use another kind of gourd, *apu*, to bring about similar effects. These gourds are symbols of chiefly authority which they receive at their installation. Just as ingredients of sorcery are harmless without proper medicine and spells so the *fa'onga* is of little potency without being charged with the sorcerer's medicine. These two acts, of giving stones to chiefs and of charging their gourds with medicine, are clearly symbolic of the fact that sorcerers are the force behind chiefly authority.

The jaws of pigs are the expected portions for sorcerers. The head,

purpose of eliciting the logic of sorcery belief, it is of utmost significance that Mekeo persist in saying that the proper way of giving sorcerers' shares from feasts is through secrecy and at night.

being the more important, goes to the chief. Since these two detachable bony structures are at the forefront of the carcass, they are the most appropriate portions for those who stand at the apex of the authority structure. The lower position of the sorcerer relative to that of the chief is indicated by his share, the jaw beneath the head. I am not certain as to the significance of the inclusion of the unsevered windpipe, the lungs and the heart in the jaw section. But when Mekeo hunt or fight they aim their piercing weapons at the diaphragms of their quarries and enemies. I suggest therefore that the inclusion of these vital organs in the sorcerers' shares is an acknowledgment of their power over life and death.

Chiefs assume the prominent and public roles in ceremonies. As hosts, they receive the official guests, entertain them, and present them with food. As official guests in charcoal carrying ceremonies, for example, chiefs conduct the ritual of releasing mourners from their abstinence vows, and terminate mourning periods. Sorcerers, on the other hand, play the background role of directing their powers to protect the ceremony so that nothing untoward happens to spoil or ruin it. The chief performs, and the sorcerer ensures the success of that performance.

Sorcerers use *mafu* to strike dancers and spectators. In the torrid climatic conditions of the region, people are liable to faint. Whether or not sorcerers' *mafu* contributes to the incidence of fainting is of less importance than the fact that people think that they are 'out to get someone'. They enhance their reputation by making people believe that fainting is the direct result not of exhaustion and long exposure to direct sunlight, but of their powers. They do not bring into the village their deadly *ungaunga* powers; instead they bring the relatively harmless *mafu* and use it to reinforce the belief in their more lethal powers. The *mafu*, as used in this context, is a token demonstration of the *ungaunga* powers which cannot be displayed safely in public.

Earlier I discussed the mysterious, non-normal bodily condition of sorcerers in the activated *ungaunga* state. In this state sorcerers scrupulously conceal themselves from normal people. In direct contrast to this, sorcerers on ceremonial occasions and at other public festivities flagrantly display themselves and their powers. Before they go to ceremonials they undergo a short *ngope* but not dangerously so. In contrast to ordinary people who deck themselves gaily, the ways in which sorcerers adorn their bodies and conduct themselves are cal-

culated to overawe people. It is not uncommon to see at the edges of crowds of dancers and spectators (or in the open-air Catholic ceremonies, at the edges of the congregations) sorcerers standing still, looking sternly ahead with fearsome appearance, and people giving them a wide berth. For these occasions sorcerers rub their bodies with various kinds of aromatic leaves, roots, and barks, and they wear scented leaves on their armbands, all of which give them a strong and distinctive smell. Obviously, smell is used here as an expression of radiating power. Just as the stone *mafu* stands for the lethal *ungaunga* powers, so does the sorcerers' physical appearance and smell at ceremonials stand for their dangerous physical condition when they are in the *ungaunga* state. Both contribute to the perpetuation of belief in the efficacy of sorcerers' alleged powers.

Sorcerers receive their shares of food secretly. In food distributions the shares for chiefs are displayed on the ground for public admiration before bearers convey them through the central ground to the recipients' *ufu*. The sorcerers' shares are dispatched secretly much later in the night, not through the central ground but along little tracks which skirt the bush just behind the village. Given the sorcerers' rank and the legitimately high position they occupy in the authority structure, this furtiveness appears insulting and demeaning. The explanation for it seems to be rooted in the ambivalent feelings that people have towards them. Though they are respected for their position, they are feared for the very powers they possess and are despised for their alleged readiness to connive with people in deliberately breaching the rules for pecuniary reasons. However much they may be paid, there is no guarantee that they will do what they are paid to do; and because private action against one's adversaries is proscribed and is a cause of serious rift if discovered, sorcerers are not bound to act although they accept payments. Again, since adversaries often live longer than desired by their enemies, and may even prosper, and since patients often die despite treatment, sorcerers are constantly under suspicion of deceit and double-dealing. This must create a great deal of frustration, for those who hire sorcerers cannot denounce them publicly for inaction and deceit, nor can they demand a refund. Thus the ambivalent feelings towards sorcerers are expressed ritually by presenting them with shares from feasts, which is an honour and an acknowledgment of their rank, but sending these shares furtively along tracks used mainly by the socially marginal and by those suspected of criminal

intentions. The ritual act of spitting at sorcerers after hiring them may also be seen as an expression of this ambivalence.

The foregoing discussion reflects the pattern of Mekeo conceptions of the functions of chiefs and sorcerers as dual representatives of civilian authority. I characterise these in the following way.

In talking about chiefs and sorcerers I have been impressed by the consistency with which Mekeo emphasise the point that the chief stands in front and the sorcerer behind him in their joint responsibility of looking after the village. The seating arrangement described above is an expression of this relative positioning of chiefs and sorcerers.

The chief's place is on the open verandah in front of his house. The sorcerer's place is inside at the rear. The chief receives his people and offers them advice and hospitality, therefore his place is in the open verandah. The sorcerer's job is the opposite of this, and he must, therefore, remain inside and out of sight. The chief represents safety and sociability; the sorcerer represents danger. In Mekeo generally when a man sits on his verandah it is a sign that he is prepared to receive visitors. If he is inside his house it could be a sign that he wishes to receive no one. If, however, he is inside for a long period he is either sick, or very angry, or preoccupied, or fasting in his *ngove* for some magical purposes. At worst people will whisper that he is really not inside at all but is out in the bush plotting with sorcerers. I have observed on several occasions that when men get angry in meetings or in other public gatherings they simply go home and close themselves in their houses. If they are so inclined no amount of persuasion will lure them outside. There is, therefore, a general association of being out in the open with hospitality and good humour, and of being inside with unsociability, anger, magic and sorcery. There is a direct analogy here with Mekeo attitudes towards the human body, particularly that of males. The outer part itself is beautifully decorated, giving it a pleasing appearance. Inside the body are dark emotions and hidden thoughts which are often belied by the appearance.

The chief is visible and available, and it is expected of him to be so. A chief who is not seen or is absent from his village for a long time is considered irresponsible and negligent of his duties. The opposite is expected of the sorcerer when he does his work. I have already discussed above the idea of visibility as an aspect of normal human life and of invisibility as that of non-normality associated with supernatural

powers and the forces of darkness. The chief deals with surface harmony, the sorcerer with underlying tensions and conflicts.

The chief's *ufu* wherein he performs his ceremonial duties, conducts formal meetings, and dispenses hospitality, is in the centre of the village. The sorcerer's *fauapi* is at the outskirts hidden away in the bush. This takes us back to the spatial arrangements of Mekeo villages which have been described in detail in Chapter 3. It is in the bush that ghosts, snakes and outside sorcerers lurk, waiting for the opportunity to enter the village. The centre, as we have seen, is associated with normal people and with safety; and the progression from there to the periphery and beyond is along a continuum from safety and normality towards marginality, non-normality, and danger. Consistent with this dichotomy between centre and periphery are the paths that people use. The central ground is the domain of the chief on which he passes when he 'preaches' to his people, and when he walks on the special procession as an *ufuapie* chief, and it is through it that his shares from feasts are conveyed. The circuitous bush tracks, *vaenga*, are tramping grounds of suspect characters, and it is along these that sorcerers' shares from feasts are dispatched.

These juxtapositions of front and behind, open and closed, outside and inside, visible and invisible, and centre and periphery, as applied to chiefs and sorcerers, are indications of the dualism in civilian authority, and of the relative actual powers of chiefs and sorcerers. The chief represents the visible aspects of that authority by working in the open; he stands for safety and hospitality; and is the focus of the ceremonial life of his people. But the very requirement for his visibility and his confinement to the centre also circumscribe the range of his activities and manoeuvreability. He is, as a chief, denied direct access to potent and dangerous powers the locations of which are outside the village. The sorcerer, on the other hand, is the force behind the chief; and the extraordinary and mystical powers needed by the latter to enforce his authority, but which he does not possess, are in the hands of the sorcerer who acts invisibly and, therefore, almost unrestrictedly, whose movements are nowhere as circumscribed as those of the chief. His command of the extraordinary powers, and his ability to transmute himself and to move both ways across the boundary between the village and the external world, between culture and nature, allow the sorcerer to deal with forces of evil and danger which lurk outside in the bush ready for the opportunity to invade the settlement. It is true

that evil in men usually originates inside the village, from the tensions and conflicts within, but always people have to reach outside to bring in the kinds of powers that will attack their enemies within. The sorcerer's place is, therefore, at the periphery—at the boundary between the settlement (us) and the outside world (them)—to protect the village from danger. This places him in the ambiguous position of a partial outsider and, as such, he is often suspected of being in complicity with malevolent external agents, letting them enter the village.

The legitimacy of the sorcerers' position in the authority structure depends on people's belief that sorcerers perform a useful protective function, but more importantly, that they are under the control of chiefs. Without this belief, which sorcerers themselves propagate actively, they would lose their legitimacy and be hounded out of the society. The belief gives the population a measure of the sense of security in the comforting knowledge that sorcery is not a capricious force acting without restraint. Not only do sorcerers underpin the authority of chiefs, but chiefs also protect sorcerers from the the people in their role as peacemakers and troubleshooters. It is plain therefore, that in spite of the contrasts between chiefs and sorcerers, they are not opposed to one another as such but represent rather two interlocking and complementary aspects of a single entity, namely, the civilian authority within the society. Reality in the Mekeo epistemology, as we have seen, is two-sided, and the people's view of the roles of their chiefs and sorcerers is a projection of this mode of thought onto the structure of society, as well as of the people's consciousness of the competing forces of lightness and darkness in the personality and in the cosmos.

I shall close this chapter with a short reference to the first indigenous Roman Catholic Bishop in Papua New Guinea. He is Louis Vangeke, the elder of the two surviving sons of a former head sorcerer of Ongo-fo'ina subclan. Shortly after his consecration, Bishop Vangeke was installed as a chief in an impressive syncretic ceremony which I attended. For the occasion the people of Beipa'a constructed a special temporary *ufu* in the middle of their village, around the tall permanent wooden cross with a snake carved on it, which served as the central post, the *lopia opongo*. The snake is the Mekeo symbol of both death and immortality, the two fundamental irreconcilables, and the ultimate expression of the dualist philosophy of life. The installation ceremony, witnessed by thousands including many missionaries and government



X Bishop Vangeke as Mekeo chief and his sorcerer, Apini Uapaisa, after the Bishop's installation in Beipa'a in 1970. Surrounding the bishop are priests, chiefs and another sorcerer (behind Apini Uapaisa).

officials, was preceded by a Mass. Inside the *ufu*, were dignitaries of the church guarded and protected at the entrance by two sorcerers from Beipa'a and Aipiana. The photograph presented in Plate 10 of Bishop Vangeke, as chief, and Apini Uapaisa, as his *ungaunga*, is a testimony to the resilience and adaptability of traditional institutions.

At Vangeke's investiture in Sydney in December 1970, by Pope Paul, the Australian press reported widely a statement made by him, for its exotic, incongruous, and sensational value though its significance is deeper. He was quoted as saying, 'I am a sorcerer of God.'[26] The Almighty is the great chief, and Vangeke, his vicar and *'ungaunga'*, is the protector and executor of his interests in Mekeo.

26. When I asked the bishop about his statement, he laughed heartily and said that it was just a joke.

9. Mekeo in perspective

In this work I have examined the organisation of Mekeo society and culture. In the course of analysis I made use of some ideas associated with structural anthropology since these insights seemed the most appropriate for the interpretation of the particular phenomena with which I have been concerned. Throughout the work I remained close to the empirical data at my disposal, and used only those ideas which seemed pertinent to their understanding.

The main theme of this study has been traditional inequality and its manifestations in various spheres of social and cultural life. Inequality is a fundamental (if not the central) principle in the ordering of Mekeo relationships. Although there is an element of multitiered hierarchical arrangement as, for example, in the ranking of siblings according to their order of birth or the ranking by seniority of agnatically related lineages, the most socially significant forms of ascribed asymmetrical relationships in Mekeo are dyadic. In a more hierarchical and stratified society as in parts of Polynesia, there are intermediate levels which provide buffers between the top and bottom strata. In the Mekeo dyadic form of inequality there is a virtual absence of such buffers; the system is marked by a series of direct oppositions of asymmetrical relationships or, in Bateson's terms, complementary dualism: elder brother and younger brother; seniors and juniors in wider agnatic groupings; the married and the unmarried; wife-givers and wife-takers; the inequality in *ufuapie* relationships; chiefs and non-chiefs; wielders of dangerous mystical powers and holders of weak powers. I have also described the countervailing symmetrical relationships which check the progression towards extreme complementary schismogenesis (see Bateson 1958: Chapter 13). The study also reveals the means individuals and groups use to circumvent the imposed inequality. In affective terms, the whole system is characterised by a gnawing and pervasive ambivalence which sustains, and in turn receives its sustenance from, the system. The myths of A'aisa and

Isapini, Kaisafa and Ikuafa, and of Rat and Hornbill, express this ambivalence vividly.

The dyadic nature of inequality in the social organisation of Mekeo is also evidenced in the people's marked tendency towards dualist thinking about themselves, their social groupings, and their environment. We have seen expressions of this in their cosmology, for example in the ramifications of the theme of inside and outside; in their epistemology as manifest in the idea of the two-sided nature of reality, the visible and the invisible; and in their moral evaluations of people and events in terms of the good and benign on the one hand, and the bad and dangerous on the other. In these manifestations of dualist thought the opposing elements are fundamentally unequal: the external world is the location of great powers and danger whereas the internal world is weak and vulnerable; the invisible is, in terms of power, stronger than the visible; and so is the evil in relation to the good. This brings into the picture the notion developed by Bateson (1958) regarding symmetrical and complementary dualism, the two manifestations of dualist thought which are fundamentally related to the two types of schismogenesis. Complementary dualism is exemplified in Mekeo culture and society, while symmetrical dualism refers to the opposition of equal elements. Bateson (1958:239) postulated that 'these two patterns of thought are both of them represented in the eidos of all cultures, . . . that there is a great deal of variation between cultures in the degree to which one or the other type of dualism is stressed'. In Iatmul culture both patterns are emphasised although Bateson thought that the symmetrical pattern is stressed more strongly than the other type. Symmetrical relationships in Iatmul prevail between descent groups while complementary relationships prevail between the sexes, which are strongly polarised. This study leaves no doubt as to which pattern of dualism Mekeo stress. If, as Bateson suggested, the patterns exist in all cultures, then a main difference between Mekeo and many other Papua New Guinea cultures (including Iatmul) lies in the greater stress upon complementary dualism by the former, and the tendency of the others to emphasise the symmetrical pattern.[1] The authority structure of the Mekeo, as

1. Bateson's concept of symmetrical and complementary dualism at the level of eidos has sociological implications. Anthony Forge worked out a convincing correspondence between these two types of dualism and what he considered to be the two principles of exchange in Papua New Guinea: 'equal symmetrical exchange' and 'unequal complementary exchange' (1972:539).

seen in the division between the civilian and the military, and between the civilian chief and the sorcerer, is the quintessential expression in this society of the dualist mode of thought. The entire social system in fact, is a striking example of the juxtaposition of opposing and complementary forces.

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This study, in conjunction with my earlier article (1971), has presented an analysis of a Melanesian authority system which differs markedly from those which have informed the prevailing view of Melanesian political organisation. General statements on traditional leadership in Melanesia (see for example Langness 1973; Lawrence 1971; de Lepervanche 1973; and Sahlins 1963) have dismissed with a curt sentence societies which do not fit into the Big-Man paradigm on the ground that they are few and exceptional. And yet they would seem essential for an understanding of traditional Melanesian politics. Although such societies are widely regarded as aberrations from the general Melanesian pattern, along much of seaboard Papua from the Purari Delta in the west to the Trobriand Islands in the east, there are many systems with more or less developed hereditary authority structures: the people of the Purari (Williams 1924; Maher 1961); the Orokolo (Williams 1940); the Elema (Ryan 1974); the Roro (Seligmann 1910); the Kaopo ('Bush Mekeo'); the Nara or Pokao (Seligmann 1910); the Kabadi; the Doura (Wilson 1975); the Koita and Motu (Seligmann 1910; Belshaw 1957; Groves 1963); the Sinaugoro and other coastal groups between the Motu and eastern boundary of the Central District; the Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski 1922); and the Kalauna of Goodenough Island (Young 1971). In the mountains behind the south-eastern coast hereditary leadership is found among the Mafulu (Williamson 1912), the Kuni and the Goilala (van Rijswijck 1967). Even within the heart of the New Guinea Highlands hereditary leadership is found among the Kuma (Reay 1959) and according to Reay, the Chimbu. Michael Somare, the former Prime Minister, says in his recent autobiography that his people, the Murik of Sepik, have chiefs. Somare himself inherited the chiefly title, *Sana*, from his father; his patrilineal great-grandfather was the first Sana chief (1975: 1-2, 16-17). Off the north coast of mainland New Guinea hereditary leadership is found in Wogeo (Hogbin 1940), Manam (Wedgwood 1934), and in the

islands around the Buka Passage (Blackwood 1935). Outside Papua New Guinea are several groups in the Solomons and the New Hebrides which also have chiefs (Codrington 1891; Ivens 1927). It is probable therefore that Melanesian societies with hereditary authority structures are more common than we have realised, and that our unawareness of them stems from the fact that fieldwork in the region has been done haphazardly in geographical terms so that there are large gaps in our ethnographic knowledge, or that we have left them too late in view of post-war changes.[2] Moreover, partly because of the influence of certain key articles such as Sahlins 1963 and Barnes 1962, there has been a willingness to seize too readily upon a dominant descriptive paradigm so that much of the field research and literature on social systems in Papua New Guinea has been biased from the beginning. There has been a conscious effort to delineate a Melanesian social and political structure distinct from Africa and Polynesia, an attempt to produce something uniquely Melanesian. The Big-Man is the key figure in this regional and cultural identity. What some anthropologists have probably done is to understate the hereditary elements they found, or to have been so firm in their belief that such elements were absent that they failed to see them at all. Furthermore, much of the post-war anthropological research has been concentrated in the New Guinea Highlands to the neglect (until recently) of research in coastal areas, especially of Papua. This bias is most evident in the first overall assessment of traditional politics in Papua New Guinea (Berndt and Lawrence 1971); there is not a single Papuan society, and only one coastal group, to be found between its covers. Although some ethnographers (for example, Chowning 1970; Groves 1963; Meggitt 1971; Morauta 1973; Reay 1959; Salisbury 1970; Young 1971) have recognised that there can be a coexistence of hereditary and non-hereditary factors in leadership within a single society, this fact has not been stated forcefully enough. Instead of persisting with the assumption that achievement is the defining characteristic of Melanesian leadership, we could more profitably adopt the view that there is a range of

2. Chieftainships in Melanesia have been found largely along the seaboard and in islands, the areas first invaded by Europeans. There is a reluctance to undertake historical reconstruction of societies in these areas. It seems that anthropologists have been so intimidated by Malinowski and the functionalist school that they have overlooked the fact that Malinowski and others attacked social evolutionism and diffusionism which deal in millennia rather than the historical reconstruction of colonised societies radically changed only within the last one hundred years.

leadership structures in the region manifesting all degrees of relative ascription and relative achievement. On this basis we can hope to attain a greater appreciation of the complexity and variety of Melanesian systems. This study tries to make some contribution to our knowledge and understanding of ascriptive authority in Melanesia.

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The third chapter of this monograph brings out the need for a careful study of the implications of spatial arrangements in Melanesia, a topic which has been largely overlooked. Our knowledge of the structural and symbolic implications of space in Papua New Guinea settlements is very slight. One of the cursory attempts at the analysis of space in the country was Malinowski's description of Omarakana village (1929: 8-17) which Lévi-Strauss used in his examination of dual organisations (1963:132ff.). Nevertheless, Malinowski's account is purely descriptive and all too brief. He fell short of appreciating the significant implications of the layout of the Trobriand village and is rebuked by Lévi-Strauss (1963:136) for his 'indifference to structural problems'. It is possible that Mekeo put far greater emphasis on the careful arrangement of their space than other Papua New Guinea societies, for whom space may have an entirely different significance; but so far we cannot tell because the structural analysis of space has not been given any prominence in Melanesian ethnographies. Work done in South-east Asia (Cunningham 1958), and in Meso-America (Gossens 1974), and the Keesings' interpretation of Malinowski's Trobriand material together with their analysis of Kwaio settlements (1971), suggests that the ordering of space is inextricably connected not only with social organisation but also with cosmological and symbolic systems. Mekeo treatment of space assumes more importance in my analysis than I had anticipated during my fieldwork. As a result, I have not been able to explore these aspects as fully as I would wish. Nevertheless, the data presented touch on the heart of Mary Douglas's notions of boundaries and powers.

Although Douglas's views (1966: chs 6 & 7; 1970: ch. 5) about boundaries and the human body as an image of society are primarily derived from a concern with ritual, much of what she says is directly relevant to my exposition of the spatial arrangements of Mekeo villages. The most relevant of Douglas's ideas in this context are those

pertaining to the types and sources of dangerous powers to a social group: dangers threatening the external boundaries; dangers lying along the margins; and dangers within the system from internal contradictions and from transgressions of internal lines. At a certain level of analysis the description given in Chapter 3 provides empirical evidence which supports Douglas's views very strongly; but a closer examination of the Mekeo material reveals that the distinctions between inside and outside are not so simple. Although the most dangerous powers are located or stored outside, beyond the external boundaries of the villages, such powers are activated mostly at the instigation of people within. Powers become effective only through collusion between a sorcerer operating outside the boundaries, and evil-intentioned people inside them. In fact for Mekeo villagers the ultimate threat is not so much from outside as from within the boundaries. Furthermore, the practising sorcerer is only a temporary outsider who returns to the village at the end of his practice. Unlike shamans and initiates of other societies who go outside and receive powers which they take into their communities, Mekeo sorcerers go outside, receive powers which they use from beyond the external boundaries, and shed them before their re-entry into the village. Again, those who inhabit the margins—bachelors and widowers—are partial outsiders only in a symbolic and moral sense; they remain effectively members of the community although their membership may be temporarily peripheral (cf. Turner 1969 on liminality).

The various boundaries of the village and its surrounding lands from the central ground through house sites, backyards and the bush beyond, can also be seen in Douglas's terms as analogous with the structure of the human body. The centre of the body is the seat of life-forces as well as of the emotions, and it is where the soul substance is located. The relationships between these vital elements of life which inhabit the same locality of the body are 'ambivalent'. When good, the emotions benefit the soul; when dark and evil, the emotions endanger the soul and, therefore, the life of the individual. In this respect these relationships are strikingly similar to those between people within the village. An individual's concern, then, is to protect himself from his own emotions and from dangers external to his body. People see sickness and death as results of dangerous powers penetrating the margins of the body and attacking the life-forces inside, in the same way that dangerous powers penetrate the backyards and

assault those living in the village. Spatial arrangements in Mekeo appear, then, to be projections on to the physical environment of people's anxieties and fears about the vulnerability of their bodies and what these contain. This is one way of viewing man and society; we end with the conclusion that the body symbolises society and that society symbolises the body—exactly where Douglas would leave us. It is unsatisfactory because it is a dead-end approach.

But there is another way of looking at spatial arrangements, a view which takes boundaries in the immediate space not as forming a system of symbolic projections but as actual extensions of the boundaries which start with the human body. These boundaries are protective moats and ditches safe-guarding the life of the individual and the group. This is a Malinowskian functionalist view which sees spatial arrangements as derived from the needs of the human organism, specifically the physical and pyschological needs for security and safety from threat and danger. The analysis in Chapter 4 of the pattern of residence from the domestic group to the lineage, ward and indeed the village grouping, is an extension of the analysis in Chapter 3. The various rules and practices with regard to who should live together in the same house, who should be a member of the domestic group, who should be a next door neighbour and so on, are essentially rules and practices which concern spacing. I have stated in Chapter 4 that from an individual (who should control his emotions in order to avoid open conflict) to the village (including all the area within the outer boundaries of the backyards) is a series of defensive lines for the protection of people against each other and against a threatening world outside. This analytic view seems to reflect reality much more faithfully than the more abstract and symbolic approach of structuralism. Nevertheless, since the two views can be used fruitfully in the analysis of particular ethnographic situations, as demonstrated in this work, they should be considered complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

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The nature of Mekeo sorcery as expounded in this work has certain implications for the general anthropological problem of witchcraft and sorcery beliefs. Marwick (1964: 280-1) contrasts the direction of sorcery attacks in Africa, which is similar to Mekeo, with that in

Oceania where the tendency is for the sorcerer to 'direct his destructive magic outside his own group.[3] Marwick sees the pattern of sorcery beliefs in Oceania as reflecting tensions between communities and thus he distinguishes it from the general pattern in Africa where such beliefs reflect tensions within communities. The situation, however, is not as simple as that. The Abelam (Forge 1970), for example, use outside sorcerers to attack their internal rivals. Forge stated that sorcery attacks occur through collusion between a sorcerer in an enemy village and an evil-minded individual in one's own community. Although in general, there exists the idea that Papua New Guinea sorcerers should attack only outsiders, there is fear that they may—as they occasionally do—turn against their own people. What appears to be a more correct picture than Marwick's is that sorcery attacks in Oceania are not merely expressions of tensions between communities; they also reflect directly or indirectly the tensions within communities. Although sorcery attacks not authorised by chiefs are proscribed, Mekeo secretly hire sorcerers to attack mainly their fellow-villagers. The general direction of attacks and allegations relates fundamentally to the Mekeo patterns of residence, inheritance and marriage among others. We have seen that most agnates live together in the same locality, that the system of inheritance of the most valued property, land, is not clear-cut and is a factor for disharmony among agnates, that marriage with its associated obligations is contracted mostly within the village and its closest neighbouring communities, and that *ufuapie* ties have been for decades confined largely within the same village. All this means that most of the important personal and group relationships are concentrated within the local community. It is inevitable therefore, that loves and enmities are also similarly concentrated. When we consider this together with the tensions and conflicts arising from the overall applications of the principle of inequality in agnatic, affinal, and ceremonial relationships, it is not surprising that the pattern of sorcery beliefs in Mekeo approximates the African rather than the Oceanic model. In this respect the Mekeo pattern resembles those of Dobu (Fortune 1932) and Goodenough Island (Young 1971) despite the great differences in social organisation. Young has demonstrated (in the only discussion of sorcery in Papua New Guinea which

3. See for example, Belshaw 1957: 197; Berndt 1962: 211; Bulmer 1965: 155, 156; Burridge 1965: 231-3; Forge 1970: 258-63; Hogbin 1935: 15, 16; 1951; 142; Oliver 1955: 241; and Reay 1959: 135.

tabulates sorcery accusations constructed along the lines advocated by Marwick) that in Kalauna sorcerers are accused of attacking not only their fellow-villagers but their own agnates with greater frequency than anyone else.

A conspicuous aspect of sorcery in Mekeo is the nominal subordination of sorcerers to chiefs. In some Papua New Guinea societies Big-Men are believed by their people to possess sorcery powers themselves or to be in league with unknown external sorcerers. To my knowledge, the public partnership between chiefs and sorcerers exists in only three societies: Mekeo, Roro and Trobriand. It is no coincidence that these are the three reported Papua New Guinea societies with the most pronounced ascribed authority structures. There is, however, an important difference between Mekeo/Roro and the Trobriands. In the latter, sorcerers are independent power wielders who sell their services to chiefs and to other people as well, and they do not seem to be structurally subordinate to the chiefs. This degree of independence may be associated with the fact that although succession to Trobriand chieftainship is restricted to certain groups it is nevertheless open to competition within them (Powell 1960). In Mekeo, as we have seen, succession is primogenital so that chiefs are the most senior men of their groups. The lower ranking and nominal subordination of sorcerers to chiefs arises from their being the junior agnates of the latter.

The analysis of sorcery in this study has demonstrated that in Mekeo sorcerers are important public figures, men of high status and political ranking second only to chiefs. This is a rare if not unique phenomenon. For most of Papua New Guinea the statements by Forge and Reay cover the general pattern adequately. According to Forge (1970), the Abelam suspect Big-Men of being sorcerers, but always it is the Big-Men of villages other than one's own. As for Kuma the 'sorcerer does not . . . fill an akcnowledged power-role in his group by virtue of being a sorcerer. In spite of this, the practice of sorcery coincides fairly closely with the traditional positions of power' (Reay 1959:150).

The prominence of Mekeo sorcerers as professionals and public figures in their own right introduces a complication into our generalisations about witchcraft and sorcery. Writers, including Douglas and Marwick, base their general statements largely on the idea that witches and sorcerers are deceivers whose identities are often unknown and frequently merely suspected. Discussions have therefore centred on accusations and confessions, on the beliefs about the powers of

sorcery and witchcraft, and on the categories of kinsmen and types of people who would practise them. There is little material on actual sorcerers because ultimately anyone can be accused of being one, or of hiring unknown practitioners beyond the boundaries of the community. In the present analysis, I have dealt with beliefs and allegations and, furthermore, because of the nature of the phenomenon in Mekeo, with the sorcerers themselves. The question arises why have Mekeo sorcerers become such prominent public figures? Although I cannot as yet provide a full and satisfactory answer, I suspect that part of the explanation lies in a combination of the seniority system and the wider dualist nature of Mekeo epistemology and morality. I have suggested that an aspect of the process of segmentation within a subclan was the acquisition of dangerous mystical powers by junior agnates who used them to circumvent the imposed restrictions of the seniority systems. Once juniors achieved their autonomy they held on to the very weapons which won them their success, and eventually forced an official recognition of their sorcery powers. The marked tendency in Mekeo thought towards distinguishing, among other things, the good and benign on the one hand, and the bad and dangerous on the other, provides an ideological explanation for the division of public authority. When we see Mekeo authority in this light we can say that the division, and consequently the public prominence of the sorcerer, is an outcome of the interplay between politics and philosophy.

This leads to the next point I wish to make about the nature of authority in the society. The basis of inequality in Mekeo is ideological and mystical rather than material. This is evident in the relationships of elder brother to younger brother, senior agnate to junior agnate, wife-giver to wife-taker, and chief to commoner. The ultimate force backing and regulating these relationships is sorcery and the fear of sorcery. There are of course sentiments but these are so ambivalent that the use and the threat of the use of some kind of force, in this case sorcery, is required to regulate conduct. The control at the leadership level of the most potent and dangerous powers is the source of other forms of coercive social control. In two ethnographically reported Papua New Guinea societies, the Trobriands and Wogeo, the authority of chiefs depends primarly on their control of the weather, and hence prosperity or famine. With one exception (Hau'ofa 1971), Mekeo chiefs do not control the weather. The difference is that weather control is not as important with them as it is with chiefs in the coral

island of Kiriwina which has no running waters. Mekeo territory, as we have seen, is washed by the Angabunga River and partly by the Inawafunga River. Although there have been some unusually long dry spells, an example of which is given in Chapter 1, the rivers bring regular floods every year. I do not think that the people have ever experienced a real famine. Food supplies may fall, affecting feasts and ceremonies, but not sufficiently low to cause starvation. However, some important powers are held by particular chiefs: in Beipa'a the wild-pig magic and power for making women fertile or barren are each controlled by chiefs of the two largest wards. Wild pigs, as we have seen, often supply more than half the pork meat for feasts, and a woman's ability to bear children affects the numerical strength of any descent group. Nevertheless, the authority of chiefs depends primarily on the control they are believed to have over sorcerers, and hence over life and death. This is a more powerful instrument than the mere control of weather. Finally, neither the Trobrianders nor the Wogeo emphasise seniority of birth, let alone primogeniture, to anything like the same extent as Mekeo do. In addition to their alleged control of sorcerers, Mekeo chiefs base their claim to public authority on the right of the eldest born male.

Unlike those Big-Men who build up and maintain their following largely through economic indebtedness and obligations to them, Mekeo chiefs are not rich men who use their wealth to manipulate political relationships. Their 'funds of power' are not personally created (although they can increase them personally) as are those of Big-Men; these powers have been accumulated over generations and transmitted to the present incumbents. The groups over which chiefs have authority are enduring corporate descent units unlike the ephemeral following of the typical Melanesian Big-Man of the Sahlins stereotype. Outsiders who fall under the chiefs' authority are the inferior *ipangava* who owe them affinal obligations. Chiefs may have influence over their non-agnatic cognates but these latter owe their primary allegiance to their own agnatic groups. The point here is that the authority of Mekeo chiefs over people is so clearly defined and demarcated that they have no need to compete with each other for followers. This tallies with the fact that chiefs are not expected to be rich men; they do not have to be.

In direct contrast to the basic principle of inequality in the spheres of social and political relationships, the organisation of subsistence

and trading activities is essentially egalitarian. The land is very fertile in a single ecological zone within which the resources are fairly equally distributed. Although there are some differences at the edges, that is, towards the swampy Kaopo, the rainy foothills and the drier and salty coast, at least 85 per cent of the population live within the main part of the zone. Inside this there is nothing of value for trade with other groups except agricultural products. There are no shells or valued plumes—the main items of wealth in Papua New Guinea. At the individual domestic group level, every family should be able to produce the same items in roughly the same amounts. Therefore, in terms of bartering banana, taro and betelnut with coastal people for the products of the sea and with the mountain dwellers for plumes (and stone tools in the past), most Mekeo should be on an equal footing.[4]

But people are not equally endowed with ambition, intelligence and ability. Besides, demographic accidents—such as birth of several sisters through whose marriages their brothers recruit affinal labour, and birth order which puts the elder brothers in favourable position *vis-á-vis* their younger siblings—give some men advantages over others. The combinations of these factors can provide an individual with an opportunity to produce more than his fellow-men and to become wealthy and powerful. But here the whole weight of chiefly authority, backed by sorcerers and community sentiments, bears heavily on individual initiatives. Individual ambitions are not encouraged, as in the New Guinea Highlands; they are actively discouraged. This applies equally to ordinary people and to leaders. The ideal seems to be that no one should be too poor and no one should become too rich. And because many if not most of the items of wealth eventually found their way into sorcerers' coffers as payments and bribes, there was little incentive for ostentatious personal accumulation of valuables and pigs. Thus within the localised agnatic group overt competition is minimised in the sphere of accumulation of wealth as well as in that of succession to positions of leadership. Just as fear of sorcery inhibits competition in the economic sphere, so the same fear sustains the authority of chiefs.

But behind this non-competitive facade there is, as if in compensation, intense competition in the field of invisible mystical powers,

4. Nowadays, mountain dwellers come down to Mekeo villages hawking their plumes for cash.

which is largely a metaphor for psychological dominance contests. Putting it in other words, beneath the surface order of well-regulated human relationships there exists a realm of non-order wherein men vie with each other through the deployment of mystical powers. It is consonant with the dualist mode of thought that what is absent is also present albeit in a different form. In these psychological dominance contests Mekeo are superbly skilful proponents. When occasion arises, the ways in which men decorate their bodies, control their facial and verbal expressions, and comport themselves are calculated to exude power and to impress others with their appearance. In traditional contexts the men decorate their bodies with great care and attention; they place every flower, leaf or feather at a precise angle in the hair or on the most appropriate part of the body so that it conveys the strongest impression; the same holds true of the paints and scents they use. All this is accompanied by the recitation of proper spells so that in the end the total appearance exudes power.[5] This flamboyant body decoration is associated with rigid control of body movement, impressive in its restraint and dignity; the facial expression betrays little, appearing to outsiders aloof and arrogant. Exuberance in body decoration is countered by restraint in body movement. For a young man the aim may be to impress women and win their affection against his rivals; for an adult man going to a meeting it is to mystify and baffle his counterparts; for a sorcerer going to a ceremony it is to put the fear of the devil into the hearts of mere mortals. The powers emanating from the body are also a protection against other powers penetrating the body to weaken resolve or to harm what is inside.

As stated elsewhere a major aim of facial painting and decoration of the head and body for dances is to conceal the identity of the person. What remains visible is a display of sheer power. It is ultimately a symbolic attempt to make visible what is really invisible. (This is yet another expression of the people's tendency to push to the limits: in extracting subordination from their inferior affines, in humiliating widowers, in shaming the *ufuapie* partners, and in sorcerers' self-inflicted deprivations.) It may be argued that the Mekeo culture is obsessed with the problem of resolving ambivalence and reconciling

5. Mekeo men say that when they decorate themselves for a dance their bodies are so charged with power that any physical contact with a woman (for example the brush of a male elbow on a female arm) means the penetration into the woman's body of the man's power, making her fall hopelessly in love with him.

irreconcilables, and that part of this obsession is to reach for the limits in order to bring them under control. Mekeo preoccupation with the body as an expression of invisible powers finds its ultimate realisation in the body of the sorcerer, the possessor of the most potent and dangerous powers in the society.

In the appearance of the sorcerer we see one dimension of Mekeo personality: he is a man of chosen words who exerts a strong control over his body; who expresses his dominance through his quiet, confident and awe-inspiring demeanour. He is not a man to meddle with for he is dangerous and known as such along much of the southern coast of Papua. He is a man of invisible powers. This dimension of personality is projected onto the character of the external boundaries of the large villages: a powerful and awesome front presented at the main entrances as a warning to visitors from other places to beware. The chief represents another side of personality: he is rather formal but generous, kindly, hospitable to outsiders, and concerned with amity among his people. He is a man of peace, harmony, and visible authority, the opposite of the sorcerer. There is yet a third dimension of personality represented by the common man. He does not have much power but sometimes he is confident and sometimes uncertain and vulnerable. He is loving and hating of his brothers, trusting and suspicious, prone to misunderstanding and to being misunderstood, and adept at hurling the epithets *pikupa* and *pifonge* (jealous, envious, lying) against his fellow men.

All these contradictory and complementary traits of character are embodied in the mythical A'aisa, the archetype Mekeo who is at the same time a chief, a sorcerer, and a little boy with weak powers. His younger brother, the love and bane of his life, sees behind the façade his weaknesses and vulnerability and calls him a child. Therein lies the fundamental ambivalence in human existence.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 Numbers of Mekeo not resident in Mekeo villages

Village	1955	1958	1961	1968	1971
Beipa'a	78	137	185	291	272
Aipiana	60	87	89	218	187
Amoamo	9	19	15	73	33
Oriropetana	11	38	31	84	77
Inawi	41	88	111	206	193
Inawae	4	11	6	25	31
Rarai	28	42	30	53	108
Bebeo	10	23	7	27	36
Inawauni	15	19	33	41	66
Imounga	1	7	10	23	41
Jesubaibua	21	20	41	110	105
Inawaia	20	32	57	148	154
Eboa	30	29	41	220	157
Inawabui	19	43	42	145	123
Total	347	595	698	1164	1583
Total population	4296	4714	5087	5948	6411

Source: Official Censuses, Bereina.

Appendix 2 Percentages of resident (R) and non-resident (NR) Beipa'a males and females by age and marital status, 1971

		Single			Married			Widowed		
	Age Group	R	NR	Total	R	NR	To-tal	R	NR	To-tal
Males	16-20	10	35	45	0	0	0	0	0	0
	21-30	8	29	37	6	7	13	0	0	0
	31-40	2	6	8	15	14	29	20	0	20
	41-50	2	5	7	20	9	29	7	0	7
	51-60	0	0	0	18	5	23	13	7	20
	61-70	3	0	3	3	1	4	40	7	47
	71 +	0	0	0	0	1	1	7	0	7
	Total	25	75	100	62	37	99	87	14	101
	N	32	101	133	109	65	174	13	2	15
Females	16-20	35	18	53	0	1	1	0	0	0
	21-30	30	4	34	6	18	24	0	0	0
	31-40	8	1	9	13	20	33	0	7	7
	41-50	3	0	3	18	8	26	14	0	14
	51-60	1	0	1	11	3	14	29	0	29
	61-70	0	0	0	1	2	3	21	7	28
	71 +	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	21
	Total	77	23	100	49	52	101	85	14	99
	N	86	26	112	74	77	151	12	2	14

This table includes only those for whom Beipa'a is the patri-village. Eighty Beipa'a men have wives from other villages and regions, thirty-five of whom live with their husbands in the village. There are also four widows from outside villages who are living with their children in Beipa'a.

Source: My own census collection.

Appendix 3 Resident and non-resident bachelors and single females of Beipa'a, 1971

	Age group	Resident in the village	Resident elsewhere	Total
Bachelors	16-20	13	47	60
	21-30	11	38	49
	31-40	2	10	12
	41-50	3	6	9
	51-60	0	0	0
	61-70	3	0	3
	Total	32	101	133
	Percentage	25	75	100
Single females	16-20	39	20	59
	21-30	34	5	39
	31-40	9	1	10
	41-50	3	0	3
	51-60	1	0	1
	61-70	0	0	0
	Total	86	26	112
	Percentage	77	23	100

Appendix 4 Age and marital status of Beipa'a males and females sixteen years of age and above

	Age Group	Single		Married		Widowed	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males	16-20	60	45	0	0	0	0
	21-30	49	37	23	13	0	0
	31-40	12	9	51	29	3	18
	41-50	9	7	50	29	1	5
	51-60	0	0	40	23	3	18
	61-70	3	2	8	5	7	41
	71 +	0	0	2	0	3	18
	Total	133	100	174	99	17	100
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Females	16-20	59	53	1	1	0	0
	21-30	39	35	37	24	0	0
	31-40	10	9	49	32	1	7
	41-50	3	2	39	26	2	14
	51-60	1	1	21	14	4	29
	61-70	0	0	4	3	4	29
	71 +	0	0	0	0	3	21
	Total	112	100	151	100	14	100

This table includes only those for whom Beipa'a is the patri-village.

Appendix 5 Extant marriages of Beipa'a people, 1971.

1. Marriages where both parties are from Beipa'a

		Ward of origin of husband					
Ward of origin of wife	Ongofo'ina	4	6	5	11	5	31
	Fopafo'ina	11	0	5	6	3	25
	Aloaivea	4	5	0	0	0	9
	Inaufokoa	7	9	2	0	1	19
	Inau'i	3	4	2	1	0	10
	Total	29	24	14	18	9	94

2. Marriages between Beipa'a people and others

		Ward of origin of Beipa'a people married to people from elsewhere					
		Ongo.	Fopa.	Aloa.	Inauf.	Inau.	Total
Origins of wives of Beipa'a men	Amoamo and Aipiana	10	9	9	2	1	31
	Other Pioufa villages	5	0	3	0	1	9
	Ve'e villages	2	1	0	0	0	3
	Adjacent language groups	5	4	1	2	0	12
	Others	14	4	3	2	2	25
	Total	36	18	16	6	4	80
Origins of husbands of Beipa'a women	Amoamo and Aipiana	13	5	2	4	1	25
	Other Pioufa villages	4	2	3	1	0	10
	Ve'e villages	6	3	1	0	1	11
	Adjacent language groups	4	1	2	0	0	7
	Others	1	2	1	0	0	4
	Total	28	13	9	5	2	57

Appendix 6 Some descriptive details of Beipa'a village

This Appendix supplements Chapter 3. Map 2 shows the exact size and location of almost every building in Beipa'a in 1971. One of the things I did during my familiarisation period was to map the entire village using the compass-and-chain method. At the time of the survey there were five Ongofo'ina houses and three *ngove* located along the main road to Bereina which begins about one hundred metres from the Ongofo'ina end of the main settlement; and one Fopafo'ina house was sited about half a kilometre along the main road from the Fopafo'ina end of the village. These buildings are not shown on the chart because I was unable to map them accurately. For the same reason I have not included the buildings in the old and the new Mission stations. The sizes and locations of buildings 8, 35, 41 and 96 are approximations since they were constructed after I had mapped the village. The size and location of building 89A is also an approximation since I overlooked it during my survey. The vacant house sites on one side of the central ground facing houses 110, 112 and 114 belonged to a lineage which fled the village in the early 1960s after one of its members killed the owner of house 106 (see Chapter 7).

As mentioned in the text, the houses of married brothers are positioned from front (the central ground) to back, or from right to left (facing the houses from the central ground) according to the order of birth. I shall show the front to back arrangement first. These are houses 3* and 4; 21*, 22 and 23; 25, 26 and 27; 31 and 33; 37*, 38 and 39; 41* and 42; 51 and 52; 99 and 100; and 140 and 139. Houses 3 and 4 were owned by a man who moved to the newer and rear-located house 4 when his deceased elder brother's son returned from Port Moresby in late 1971 after a long absence from the village. In 1972 the younger brother of the owner of house 50 built his European-style house just behind his elder brother's.

The right to left arrangements are houses 7 and 9;† 31 and 36 (with 33 being the house of the youngest brother); 46, 48* and 49; 71 and 72; 91, 92* and 93; 103 and 104; 106, 108 and 109; 117 and 118; and 150* and 151. Map 2 also shows that with the exception of two sets of fraternal houses (46, 48 and 49; and 150 and 151) in the right to left

* Indicates that the owner is the son of a deceased brother. The seniority of the dead brother is indicated by the position of his son's house.

† The owner of this house is the father's younger brother's son of the owner of house 7.

arrangement, all the others are so positioned that the eldest brothers' houses are not only on the right but also in front of their younger brothers' houses. Moreover, the youngest brothers' houses are the furthest back. The owner of house 46, an elder brother, told me that his real house site is just behind the *ufu* 44. In view of this fact, it can be seen that one of the two exceptions is temporary.

Although the vast majority of the houses of married brothers living in the village conform with the patterns described above, there are a few exceptions. The exceptions to the front to back pattern are houses 145 and 147; and 123 and 124. The exceptions to the right to left pattern are houses 134 and 136; and 129 and 127. In these few deviations the elder brothers are either behind or to the left of the younger brothers. I did not obtain any information on the reasons for the exceptions. The rest of the houses in Beipa'a are either those of men without brothers, or of men whose brothers are living elsewhere in the country.

Houses 8 and 27 are in the backyard position. The former belongs to an ex-chief who had an incurable disease. His son constructed him a new house removing him from the centre of the village. He died in 1973. House 27 belongs to the local court magistrate of the Kairuku Subdistrict. He wanted to build a big European-type house but since there was not sufficient land for it in his family's residential strip he constructed it at the back.

Hereditary leaders, particularly civilian chiefs, have the privilege of building their houses facing the central ground. These are seen in houses 46, 99, 116, 140 and 129, all of which are houses of civilian chiefs. Three of these belong to ward chiefs. Although the houses of the other two ward chiefs (of Fopafo'ina and Inau'i) do not conform with the pattern they are nevertheless distinctive. House 7 (which collapsed in 1972) had a distinctive roof design which only chiefs can use. House 103 is the largest (native material) house in Mekeo. It belongs to Faupungu Oaeke, an ex-chief of a client subclan of Inau'i ward, who had for a long time been the effective ward chief of Inau'i because the real one had emigrated to Port Moresby and had no intention of returning to the village. There are other buildings in the village which face the central ground but which do not belong to civilian chiefs. Six of these (48, 100, 104, 127, 139 and 142) belong to younger brothers of chiefs. House 26 belongs to the war chief of Inaufokoa. Although he is a younger brother (of the owner of house 25) he was adopted by

the former childless war chief as his heir. House 27 which belongs to a youngest brother (again of the owner of house 25) is so positioned probably because the owner, as we have seen, is the local court magistrate who is normally treated with great respect. The unnumbered building next to house 153 is not a house but a kitchen-storehouse. Buildings 78 and 89 are not houses but trade-stores. House 22, which also faces the central ground, belongs to an ordinary man who is not even an eldest brother. His house was so close to my dwelling (the rear part of the *ufu* in front of it) that it completely escaped my attention.

House 3, 4, 123 and 124 belong to the most senior war magicians in the village. House 63 belongs to the son of a former powerful sorcerer; and house 143 belongs to the most senior man of the former sorcery family of Aloaivea. The significance of the locations of warrior and sorcery groups at the village ends is discussed in Chapter 3.

The traditional position of the Fopafo'ina *ufu* is where the platform 121 is located. The present *ufu* is a temporary substitute until the proper one is constructed on its traditional site. Note also that three of the four *ufu* in the main settlement are located partly on the central ground.

The front fence of the Catholic Mission Station extends from the end of Ongofo'ina to the platform 28, depriving about a quarter of the village of its traditional backyard area. This explains why the *ngove* on that side of the village are sited inside. Nevertheless these *ngove* are at the back of the residential section of the owners. *Ngove* 35 was constructed in 1973 inside a small pigsty just in front of the mission station fence, for a new widower. *Ngove* 89A was formerly a small barn inside a pigsty. It was converted into a *ngove* in 1973 for another new widower. The reason for the location of other *ngove* inside the village is given in Chapter 3.

Map 2 also shows that the backstreets do not necessarily follow the edges of the village. One reason for this is that people have started to fence large areas behind their houses. The owner of house 83 constructed a fence from a few yards in front of his house right into the backyard, cutting off the traditional backstreet. Similarly, the owner of trade-store 78 fenced his property from the front of his shop right into the backyard. This has forced people to walk along the central ground when they pass along that side of Ongofo'ina. Starting from Fopafo'ina on the northwestern side of the village the backstreet

moves in from the edge near the boundary with Inau'i. The reason for this is that because of the depletion of the population of Inau'i the spaces between and behind houses 14, 16 and 18, which are vacant house sites, are so bushy that people prefer to walk in front of these houses. At Inaufokoa, houses 26 and 27 are also fenced so that people cannot walk behind them. One side of Aloaivea has no backstreet because of fences and bushes between houses 148 and 150.

Concerning clan roads, Inau'i and Inaufokoa share the same roads because of the small size of Inau'i and because the two wards (the smallest in the village) have had a long tradition of co-operation. The Fopafo'ina clan road branches off from the main road about half a kilometre away from the village. There are two main entrances at the Ongofo'ina end of the main settlement. The traditional one is at the end of the central ground. The other one was created by the missionaries because it was convenient for them to move in and out of their station. It is by this second entrance that trucks and other vehicles enter and leave the village. Since the introduction of motor vehicles into the area, and especially from 1972 when Mekeo bought many trucks in anticipation of the opening of the road to Port Moresby, the central grounds of the villages have become thoroughfares for motor vehicles. These vehicles have spoiled the appearance of the villages, especially during the wet season, and have defiled the sanctity of the central ground. Nevertheless, although people pass along the central ground on trucks, they still follow the backstreets when they walk.

Appendix 7 Residence and domestic groupings in Beipa'a, 1971

The following descriptive account supplements that in Chapter 4.

It is shown in Table 5 that only 5 out of 154 males aged sixteen years and more did not adhere to the norm of patrilocal residence. One of the two men who took up avunculocal residence was a man from Aloaivea who shifted residence to Fopafo'ina after he killed a man of his own ward. Though he was living in his mother's ward he was regarded as an Aloaivea man. He worked on his land on Aloaivea territory and often visited his ward for relaxation, meetings and feasts. The other individual was an Amoamo man who lived in Inaufokoa, whose case I describe in Chapter 4.

Of the two men who assumed uxorilocal residence, one was a widower who had been living for about seven years with his wife's agnates since soon after her death (see Chapter 8 for the conditions

of widowerhood). He returned to his patri-ward late in 1972 after he began constructing his own *ngove*. The other was a Fopafo'ina man who lived in the neighbouring ward of Inau'i in the house of his wife's brother because his agnates did not approve of his choice of his second (and present) wife. He lived in Inau'i for twelve years until early in 1973 when he returned to his own ward. Through these years of residential exile he worked on his own land, kept assiduously his obligations to his ward and subclan, and spent his leisure time mainly in the *ufu* of his patri-ward. There was no question as to where he placed his primary allegiance. In 1973 there were two more men with their nuclear families, from Inau'i and Fopafo'ina, who shifted residence from their own wards to that of their wives, Inaufokoa. One of them left home because of fights with his elder brother, and the other because of quarrels with his father. Neither was considered a permanent resident of Inaufokoa. Both maintained their agnatic ties and their claims to their agnatic lands.

There were three men who took up neolocal residence. One, a bachelor, lived with his widowed mother's stepson, a widower, in a *ngove* in Ongofo'ina. Of the two married men involved in neolocal residence, one was an Ongofo'ina person living with his widowed sister at her home in Fopafo'ina. He left his patri-ward because of alleged sorcery attempts on his life by his own people. The other man was a Fopafo'ina who lived in Aloaivea with his mother and her second husband. He moved to Aloaivea as a refugee because a man of his subclan killed another Fopafo'ina man. The rest of the subclan, with the exception of one family, fled to other villages. Though both neolocal residents were 'refugees' they nevertheless maintained their ties with their wards and subclans and their claims to their land.

Domestic groups consisting of nuclear families

Table 6, Category A, shows that 56 per cent of all domestic groups in the village consisted of single nuclear families. With six exceptions, these groups were complete nuclear family units headed by men whose parents were dead, or by younger sons whose parents (either one or both) were alive and were living with eldest sons. Four of the six exceptions were domestic groups consisting of incomplete nuclear families: two were headed by widows, one by a divorced woman, and the fourth by a widower. The widows were living in their dead husbands' wards. One lived alone with her nineteen-year-old step-

daughter, and the other had her two unmarried daughters with her. The divorcee had been living for a number of years with her dependent children in her own patri-ward in a house next to those of her brothers. Her eldest brother's wife was antagonistic towards her, largely because of the additional demands she and her children made on the limited family resources. The brother's wife felt strongly that her sister-in-law's place was in her former husband's ward (in another village) because her children belonged by birth to their father's subclan and and should draw upon its resources. The hostility between the two women was resolved late in 1971 when the divorcee married another man and moved out of the village with him. The fourth of these incomplete nuclear family units consisted of a widower and his two dependent children. This case was remarkable because customarily when a woman dies her widower leaves their house for a long period of mourning elsewhere. The widower and his children are the only case of its kind I have seen or heard of in Mekeo. His wife died in March 1971, upon which occasion he was immediately brought to the ward of his wife's brothers to begin his mourning seclusion. But since he was completely helpless through total blindness and ill health his affines felt pity for him, and sent him back home. It was so arranged that he continued living in his house where he would be cared for by his spinster daughter who was twenty-nine years old. This domestic group existed only because the daughter was neither a little girl nor a married woman.

The fifth exception (A in Table 6) was a married man and his wife who lived alone because their only son, a young bachelor, worked and lived in Lae.

The sixth was a young ward chief in his early thirties who preferred to live separately from, although next-door to, his parents.

The foregoing account reveals certain important facts about Mekeo domestic groupings. With the exception of the ailing widower who, it can be argued, was really a dependent of his daughter, the single parent in domestic units composed of incomplete nuclear families was invariably a woman. There were three other domestic groups headed by women without adult males, which have not been dealt with because they belong to other categories to be dealt with later. In all these groups of female-headed domestic units the mothers were assisted by daughters who were over twelve years of age, and in one instance by a middle-aged spinster sister of the widow's dead husband. (See Chapter

4 for a discussion of the reason why single-parent domestic groups are almost all headed by women.)

The isolated instances of a man and his wife living alone, and of an eldest son establishing his own domestic group separate from that of his parents, are indicative of changes that Mekeo society is undergoing. The first was a result of post-war developments in Papua New Guinea which have drawn young men away from the village into the growing urban centres. There were, however, several men who, being eldest sons, either had refrained from going away or had deliberately returned from outside to look after their aging parents. The young chief who was living separately from his parents returned from Port Moresby in the 1960s in order to fulfil his traditional obligations to his parents as the eldest son. He had two younger brothers who were away from home. But it appears that partly because of his experiences in the domestic service of Europeans living in exclusive nuclear family household units, and partly because his father had been seriously ill for a number of years, he declined to live in his parents' domestic unit and thereby contravened the ideals of his community.

Three-generation domestic groups

The Mekeo ideal of the married eldest son being part of his parents' domestic group is borne out in practice: in six of the seven Beipa'a domestic units which included a pair of parents and their son's nuclear family, the son in question was the eldest (Table 7). Of the six sons, four were men in their twenties whose younger brothers were still bachelors, one had a married younger brother who lived next door to him, and the sixth was an only son.

The single exception was a youngest son who lived with his parents. He belonged to a set of six sons, but since one of them was adopted by the father's elder brother (who sired only one son), the youngest was strictly from a set of five sons. The four elder brothers, whose ages ranged from thirty-four to forty-four, were confirmed bachelors one of whom was an ordained priest. The youngest son married in 1964 at the age of twenty in order to look after the aging parents and to provide generational continuity to the group. This family was the most exceptional in the village because of the reluctance of the children to get married. In addition to the bachelor sons the two daughters in the family, aged forty-one and forty-six, were spinsters too old to marry.

Widowers continued to live with their eldest sons (Table 7). The two widowers who lived on their own (G in Table 6) would have been part of three-generation domestic groups had it not been for their sons' absence from the village. One of the two widowers (both aged sixty-four) had a married daughter living in the village but he would not live with her for Mekeo men do not normally live with their daughters' husbands.

With regard to widowed mothers, there were exceptions to the ideal concerning eldest sons and parents. Younger and more recently widowed mothers lived with their eldest sons (Table 7), but old widows were passed on to the care of their youngest sons. An examination of the circumstances involved in widows' living with their youngest sons instead of with their eldest reveals some important facts about the developmental cycle of domestic groups in the village.

One widow, aged seventy-five, was with the youngest of her four sons all of whom were living. The eldest son was a blind man whose wife, a long-term invalid, died in 1971. The second had a large family of nine surviving children. The third son was living in Port Moresby. The youngest, who had only three children, was the one best placed to look after the mother. Another widow, aged seventy-four, was with the youngest of her three sons living in the village. She had initially lived with her eldest son but she left for the domestic group of her youngest son because, with only four children, it was the smallest. Her eldest son had a three-generation domestic group and her second son had a family of thirteen children. The third widow had left the growing domestic group of her elder son to join that of her younger son. This group was smaller, including only four other people besides herself, whereas her elder son's three-generation group had a membership of nine and was due to increase because of the marriage of her younger grandson.

The pattern that emerges from the description of three-generation domestic groups in Beipa'a is that the eldest sons live with their parents after marriage. When a mother dies the father continues to live with his eldest son. The same is true of widows for some years after the death of their husbands. Should widows live long, however, they move to the youngest sons, who normally marry many years after their elder brothers and have smaller groups to look after. By the time the widows are in their late sixties and seventies, their elder sons have had large families, even three-generation groups, while their youngest sons are

still building their nuclear families. The result is that there is no domestic group which consists of four generations. The two widows who have lived to see their great-grandchildren, who are the grandchildren of their eldest sons, have left to join their younger sons and maintain thereby the three-generation domestic groups as the genealogically largest units.

Domestic groups of nuclear family with agnatic accretions

Although most nuclear family domestic groups in Beipa'a were without accretions, some had additional members who were very close agnatic relatives. The composition of these groups was determined by three factors: siblings who remained bachelors and spinsters; brothers whose wives died while their children were small; and orphans of dead brothers.

Of the nine groups shown in Category C in Table 6, six included the husband's unmarried brothers and sisters. The first of these had two old bachelors, aged sixty-two and sixty-four, living with their youngest brother and his nuclear family. They belonged to an original set of five brothers, the two eldest of whom died in the early 1940s. Both dead brothers were married men but the only son produced between them was nine years old when his father, the eldest brother, died. Since the third and fourth brothers were bachelors, the then recently married youngest brother became responsible for them.

The second involved an unmarried polio victim, aged thirty-eight, living with his younger brother and his nuclear family. They were from a set of three brothers the eldest of whom remained a bachelor until very late 1971, living in Port Moresby.

In the third instance, a sixty-three-year-old bachelor was living with his younger brother. The bachelor initially lived with his elder brother's nuclear family but, for reasons similar to those in which old widows are passed on to the youngest sons, the old bachelor eventually became the charge of his younger brother.

In the fourth instance, a bachelor aged forty-six was living with an elder brother's family. They were from an original set of four brothers. The bachelor was the youngest and lived with the eldest brother until the latter died in 1960. The second eldest took up residence in another part of the village because of disputes within the subclan. The third brother, who was living on the family residential strip, assumed the responsibility of looking after the bachelor.

The fifth case was that of a fifty-year-old spinster living with her

only brother's nuclear family. Her brother died in 1969 but she continued to live with her brother's widow and children.

Finally, there was a ten-year-old girl who lived with her brother, aged thirty-four. The brother was an eldest son whose parents were still alive. He lived apart from them because he was an employee of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries, which accommodated him in a European-type house on its station just outside the village. This man took his sister, the youngest of his siblings, because it helped his aging parents by relieving them of part of their burden.

Four of the confirmed bachelors whose circumstances I have described above lived in their *ngove* apart from their brothers' nuclear family households, as is customary. The fifth lived in his brother's family house because he was an invalid. In Mekeo the system of primogeniture in succession and inheritance requires that the most senior men of families must marry. Hence it is not surprising that none of these bachelors was an eldest son. With a single exception, all adult eldest sons living in the village were married men.

Three domestic groups consist of in each case a nuclear family together with the man's siblings and the dependent children of his brother (C in Table 6). The first of these involved a fifty-eight-year-old widower and his spinster daughter living with the nuclear family of the younger of his two younger brothers. The middle brother had a three-generation domestic group the membership of which was growing; it had eleven people in 1971. The youngest brother had six children none of whom was married. The widower and his daughter were not a burden on the youngest brother because the daughter was a valuable economic asset who helped the youngest brother's wife in the production of food and in other domestic chores.

The second instance was the domestic group of a fifty-year-old man, his nuclear family, his spinster sister aged forty-eight, and a twenty-eight-year-old daughter of one of his elder brothers. He was the youngest of three brothers. The eldest died in 1948. In the same year the middle brother's wife died after which the widower led twelve years of roaming life. His children, whose ages ranged from one to twelve years, went to live with the youngest brother who was then a married man of eight years standing though he had no children of his own. He raised his brother's children and also took care of his unmarried sister. His nephews have since grown up and migrated to Port Moresby, one niece has married, and the other niece together

with his unmarried sister continue to live with him. He has two small sons but no daughters.

The final instance was that of a younger brother's nuclear family together with his two unmarried sisters and his dead elder brother's daughter. These women were in their twenties.

With the additional adult women in their domestic groups, the last two of the above instances were among the most productive food-growers in the village. This has helped one of the heads of the groups to maintain his position as the most prominent man in his ward.

Domestic groups of nuclear family with non-agnatic accretions

Only three domestic groups consisted of single nuclear families with non-agnatic accretions (D in Table 6). Non-agnatic cognates visit each other and often stay at each other's places; but they rarely stay long and they return eventually to their own homes. Each of the three exceptions to the Mekeo preference for the clustering of agnates had only a single dependent non-agnate. One was the man's sister's daughter who was seventeen years old. Her mother was dead and she would have joined her father's brother's domestic group if it had not been so large, consisting of fifteen people. The dependent non-agnate in the second domestic group was the fifty-eight-year-old widow of a distant agnate. Her husband had no real brothers, and her sons were bachelors who were working outside the village. Nevertheless, it was an agnate of her husband who took responsibility for her. The dependent non-agnate in the third domestic group was the man's wife's sister. Her reasons for not being with her parents are not known to me, though it is probable that her divorce disrupted her relations with them.

Domestic groups comprising multi-nuclear families of agnates

In accordance with the Mekeo ideal of the clustering of agnates, two-thirds (ten out of fourteen) of the multi-nuclear family domestic groups consisted of agnatically related families, and only one-third of them were nuclear families related affinally through their heads.

Of the ten domestic groups of agnatically related families (E in Table 6), one included the nuclear family of a man, together with his brother's widow, her daughter and her younger son's nuclear family. Originally the group consisted of the complete nuclear families of two brothers. The elder brother died but the rest of his family remained in the group. The widow's elder son married and left the village for Lae;

her two elder daughters were married and living elsewhere virilocally. The widow's younger son married and continued to live in the group, as did her unmarried daughter. The younger brother, who was the effective head of the domestic group, had his own wife and a grown-up daughter, his brother's widow, his brother's daughter, and his brother's son's wife to work for the sustenance of this large group with a membership of fourteen. The large gardens made by these women constituted the economic basis for the surviving brother's influence in the village.

Another instance was that of the nuclear family of a man together with that of his brother's son. The latter had lived for a long time in Port Moresby and elsewhere, and on his return to the village he moved into his father's brother's house because he had no house of his own and his father was dead.

A further group consisted of the nuclear family of a sixty-year-old man and that of his FBSS* who was forty-two. The younger man was raised in the ward of his mother's second husband. On marriage he returned to his own ward and joined the domestic group of his FFBS who was his closest adult male agnate in the village.

The complete nuclear family of a man together with the incomplete one of his FFBSS, who was a widower living in a *ngove*, constituted the fourth domestic group. The two men were not only 'brothers' but they were also each other's closest adult male agnate. Moreover, the widower's mother was the other man's second wife whom he had inherited as was customary.

Another domestic group was composed of a father, the nuclear family of his son, and the nuclear family of a distant agnate who was the father's classificatory son. The exact relationship of the distant agnate to the father was FFFFFBSSSSSS. The agnate had lived with his MBSs until he was accused of involvement in a fatal accident. He fled to another village for a short while and then returned with his nuclear family to his own ward. But since his relationships with his closest agnates were not amicable, and since he had no house of his own (for he had spent many years as a policeman elsewhere), he was admitted to his present place of residence. His wife died late in 1971 after which he moved into a *ngove* following a period of mourning in his wife's village.

The sixth domestic group was composed of the incomplete nuclear family of a widow and the complete one of her HFBSS. The HFBSS

brought his family to live in the widow's house partly because he had none of his own and partly because the relationship between him and his married elder brother was not harmonious. The widow's dead husband was his second closest adult male agnate in the village. In 1972 the HFBSS constructed a new house of his own behind that of his elder brother and has since moved out of the widow's house to start a new domestic group of his own. He was twenty-nine years old and had two sons aged four and two. The break up of this domestic group has created two nuclear family domestic groups.

Another case was that of a widow and her adopted daughter together wth the nuclear family of her brother.

Finally, three domestic units each consisted of the families of two real brothers, their dependent siblings, or their parents. I describe these in of Chapter 4.

Domestic groups comprising multi-nuclear families of agnates and affines

There were four such domestic units in Beipa'a (F in Table 6). One was centred on the nuclear family of a younger brother who was thirty-three years old. Living with him were his forty-year old widower elder brother and the latter's nineteen-year-old dependent son. In addition to these were a thirty-five-year-old widower and his son who was eleven. The widower was the brothers' FFFBSSS. The widower brought into the domestic group his dead father's second wife, aged seventy-four, her mentally handicapped bachelor son of fifty, and her forty-year-old spinster daughter, both of whom were children from a previous marriage. The incorporation of the two widowers and their dependants into the younger brother's domestic group was brought about by the deaths of the widowers' wives. The incorporation of the second widower (the FFFBSSS) and his dependants occurred because the younger brother was the widower's closest adult male agnate with a viable domestic group. This group had, with one exception, all the surviving males of a once large lineage. Early in 1973 the younger brother, who was a school teacher, was offered a post in a village far away. He accepted the offer but before he left he successfully pressured his elder brother, who had been leading an irresponsible widower's life for thirteen years, to marry in order to look after the remainder of the group.

A second group comprised the nuclear family of a man together

with that of his wife's son from a previous marriage.

The third group consisted of the nuclear families of a man and that of his sister's husband. This domestic group disintegrated early in 1973 after a series of quarrels between the man and his sister. It was said that the man was indirectly getting at his brother-in-law through abusing his sister. The brother-in-law was not in the position to say anything because he was resident in someone else's house, and because he had not paid his bride-wealth dues after twelve years of marriage. The fourth group contained the incomplete nuclear family of a sixty-three-year-old widow, her two spinster daughters (thirty-nine and thirty-four), and the complete nuclear family of her adopted daughter. Her son-in-law (forty-one) was the only remaining representative of his subclan in the village. His in-laws, then, were his closest relatives in Beipa'a.

'Other' domestic groups

The only other domestic unit is composed of a fifty-five-year-old spinster and her brother's son's daughter. Originally the woman lived with the nuclear family of her brother. Both the brother and his wife died and the sister raised the orphaned children, two boys and a girl. The children have since married and left the village but the house was still occupied by their father's sister. Later one of her nephews sent her his daughter to live with her as she was getting old and lonely.

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*F	— father
M	— mother
D	— daughter
S	— son
Z	— sister
B	— brother
W	— wife
H	— husband
FMBD	— father's mother's brother's daughter
FBSS	— father's brother's son's son
MZH	— mother's sister's husband
	etc.

A glossary of Mekeo terms

Auafa'a	ancestral spirits incorporated in magical spells
Ava	strong timber from a palm tree used as floor boards
Eke	junior
Ekefa'a	friend; non-agnatic cognate; a special dyadic partnership between distantly related agnates
Fa'aniau	senior
Fai'a	war magic; war magician
Fauapi	sorcerers' retreat-cum-workshop
Ikupu	clan; subclan; closed; taboo; protective magic
Ipangava	affine
Iso lopia	war chief
Lopia	chief
Lopia eke	junior chief
Lopia fa'a	senior chief
Maka	backyard
Ngope	'set apart'; 'sacred'; fast
Ngopu	a grouping of agnatically related clans
Ngove	bachelors' and widowers' quarters
Ofuenge	deep anger; humiliation; disgrace
Pangua	village; settlement; ward
Pifonge	lie; to tell lies
Pikupa	envy; jealousy
Ungaunga	sorcery; sorcerer
Ufu	ceremonial house; 'clubhouse'
Ufuapie	dyadic ceremonial partnership between subclans
Vaenga	bush tracks around villages

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Epeli Hau'ofa has studied at the University of New England and at McGill University, Montreal, as well as at the Australian National University, where he was awarded his PhD. He now lives and works in Tonga.



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Mekeo is a study of the organisation of a Melanesian village society. Dr Hau'ofa lived for some time among the Mekeo, a people from the Port Moresby area, studying their society and learning their language, and this book reports the results of his work. It contains valuable insights on their attitudes to such matters as sorcery, marriage and notions of good and evil.

The book's central theme, however, is the ascribed inequality in Mekeo society. Although Melanesian societies are often thought of as egalitarian Dr Hau'ofa shows that the Mekeo place great emphasis on the principle of inequality in their most important political and social relationships. His case is illustrated by fascinatingly detailed examples of dealings between groups such as elder and younger brothers, junior and senior chiefs and the givers and takers of wives.

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