STEALING PEOPLE'S NAMES: SOCIAL STRUCTURE, COSMOLOGY AND POLITICS IN A SEPIK RIVER VILLAGE

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Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis describes my own research and analysis.

Simon J. Harrison.
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Nyanya nggurak wukem roksanandowon; wunak wukemartoksa.
ABSTRACT

The political life of Avatip, a community on the Sepik River in northwestern Papua New Guinea, revolves almost exclusively around disputes between descent groups over the ownership of personal names. The purpose of this thesis is to explain the value which personal names have in this society, and which makes them a focus of competition; to describe the manner in which these conflicts are conducted and resolved; and to examine their consequences for the political system of the community.

Avatip is a large, but uncentralised and fractious community, and the most important mechanism which socially integrates it is that of exchange. The focus of the identity and unity of each social segment is its apical ancestor and a type of spirit-being called a ndja'am. The ndja'am of a group symbolises its status as a unit in a system of 'total' reciprocities, involving women, wealth, magical and ritual services, and esoteric knowledge.

Of the group's exchange capacities, the most important from the villagers' point of view are its hereditary cosmological powers. The possession of these is a source of continual dispute between groups. These conflicts are both motivated by the idea of cosmological reciprocity and serve to reaffirm this idea. In these disputes, in short, groups contend for prestige and status within a consensus as to the ultimate basis of their solidarity.

Each group possesses a distinctive corpus of personal names. These names, which derive from mythology, are held to be magically efficacious and are the basis of the group's magical and ritual prerogatives. It is these prerogatives which are at stake in disputes over personal names. A dispute of this kind is settled in a ceremonial debate, in which the two sides hold a formal context in knowledge of esoteric names and myths. These debates are the central political arena of the society; almost all competition between groups for status is waged in debating the ownership of names, and it is here too that ambitious men rise to prominence.

To an outsider, the most important prerogatives held by Avatip groups are almost entirely immaterial. Much of this thesis is
concerned with providing the background of social values and cosmological ideas from which these intangible entitlements derive their value. The general theoretical concern of the thesis is a problem which some authors have argued is central to social anthropology: the relation between the symbolic order and the order of political action and power. The particular ethnographic form in which I examine this problem is as follows: Avatip possesses an elaborate totemic cosmology ideally suited to the types of analysis characteristic of structuralism while, on the other hand, this scheme is continually manipulated as groups manoeuvre for status and political advantage within its framework.
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mutato nomine de te

fabula narratur

Horace *Satires* 1 i 69-70
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on fieldwork carried out among the Manambu, a Sepik River people of northwest Papua New Guinea. At the time of planning my research there was little material available on the Manambu apart from an outline of their language by Laycock (1965) and a brief but fascinating ethnographic sketch by Newton (1971). These pointed to close cultural and linguistic links between the Manambu and their downriver neighbours, the Iatmul, whose culture had been the subject of one of the most original and outstanding monographs in the anthropological literature (Bateson 1958).

I had been intrigued by Bateson's references to Iatmul debates, in which groups contested the ownership of personal names, and by his characterisation of the Iatmul as a society in which personal names form "a theoretical image of the whole culture" (Bateson 1958: 228). But I did not intend to make these matters in any way a focus of my research, nor of course could I have been certain that they formed part of the culture of the Manambu. Instead, my plans were for a study of a much more familiar theme of the New Guinea ethnography: ceremonial exchange and 'bigmanship' - that distinctively Melanesian style of leadership in which status is achieved through the production and manipulation of wealth. I was particularly interested in the relation between ceremonial exchange and ritual, which Bateson's material indicated was a very close one among the Iatmul; and I hoped to investigate the symbolic statements about social values, kinship and so forth being made in these prestations.

But names and debating were issues which forced themselves upon me almost from the moment of my arrival among the Manambu. I arrived at the settlement of Avatip, where I later established my home, to find that a dispute was in progress between two of the largest subclans in the community. A child had been born to each of these groups a year or so earlier and, through some anomaly, both infants had apparently been given the same name, Manggalaman. Since then, the two subclans had quarrelled continually over which of them 'owned' this name, each accusing the other of trying to 'steal' it. Preparations were underway for what my younger English-speaking informants described as a debate, in which the two groups would
contend for the name and one of them (by some unspecified means) would force the other to relinquish it. The atmosphere in the village was tense; for - as I only learned much later - each side was apprehensive that certain esoteric lore belonging to it might fall into the hands of its opponents and enable them to win this debate.

The debate took place and, before many more months had passed, a number of other quarrels over names had broken out and debates been staged in an attempt to resolve them. It became increasingly clear that much time and energy was devoted to these affairs, and that they were somehow the key political institution of the society. Wealth seemed to have little political importance; and leadership appeared to rest instead on knowledge of myth and skill in debating. I felt that to focus my research on the somewhat matter-of-fact bridewealth and mortuary payments which I also witnessed in the meantime would be to accord them an entirely artificial importance. Moreover, I was frustrated, even disoriented, by what seemed the complete meaninglessness of an institution which obviously played so large a part in the lives of my friends and informants; until I learned why groups continually disputed the ownership of personal names, I felt, I could have little claim to a comprehension of Manambu culture. Although Bateson's Iatmul material provided a few clues, I was still far from understanding the real issues involved in name-disputes. I knew that they were disputes about mythology; but only after many months had passed did I begin to learn that in these affairs groups were in effect contending for the prerogative of performing certain ritual and magical functions. Gradually, I discovered that the society was conceived as being based upon a complex exchange of 'cosmological' services between groups; and that this was only part, if the most important part, of a 'total' system of reciprocities between them, involving also the movement of women, wealth and esoteric knowledge. Lastly, I came to understand that this whole system was inscribed in an elaborate corpus of 'totemic' classifications, in which personal names, social groups, ritual sacra, land, spirit-beings, natural species and in fact almost all the elements of the villagers' universe were linked together in a single conceptual scheme.

Altogether I spent twenty-one months among the Manambu, between July 1977 and December 1978, and between July and December 1979. I made my home at Avatip, primarily because it was by far the largest
of the three Manambu communities. The questions in which I became interested seemed to call for as intensive a familiarity as possible with a single community, and I carried out almost all my research at Avatip except for short visits made to the two other Manambu settlements for purposes of comparison. I was very quickly incorporated into the clan system and allotted a Manambu name, though I feel this was done in a Lévi-Straussian spirit, that is, for conceptual rather than sentimental reasons. For the Manambu are relentless classifiers and insist upon everything, even stray Englishmen, being fitted into their scheme of totemic categories. The Manambu language is not a particularly difficult one and in time I was able to understand it reasonably well; but until the end of my fieldwork I remained a rather mediocre speaker of it and often had to resort to the lingua franca of Melanesian pidgin, in which almost all the villagers were fluent.

The immediate ethnographic aims of this thesis are to explain why descent groups at Avatip quarrel continually over the use of personal names, to describe the way in which these conflicts are conducted and resolved, and to examine their consequences for the political system of the community. More broadly, my theme is the relation between power and meaning. Power in Avatip society consists simply and wholly in knowledge; it rests, in other words, on the most insubstantial and yet refractory of bases - the common universe of meaning to which the members of the society subscribe. For this reason much of this thesis is concerned with the framework of Avatip social values and ideas about society and the cosmos; this is dealt with primarily in the first half of the thesis, which lays the groundwork for an account of the politics of name-disputes and debating in the second half.

The Manambu conceive of the world as divided into a fixed number of 'totemic' categories, each of which encompasses one or more human social segments and a large number of natural species and other elements of the non-human world. The latter figure in myth as totemic ancestors, and under this aspect they all bear specific personal names. In this way each category is distinguished by an exclusive corpus of names vested in it. Its human and non-human members are in many ways identified with each other, and this is expressed by their carrying the same names.
From the point of view of the social segments occupying them, these classes function as 'alliance' categories in a perpetual state of reciprocity, which operates on three levels. Firstly, they are exogamous and linked together through the exchange of women and of bridewealth and other payments connected with marriage. Secondly, groups are considered to hold magical power over their totemic ancestors by means of their possession of the latters' names; each category is associated with a set of specialised magical and ritual functions, and society and nature are thought of as dependent for their functioning on this interlinking exchange of cosmological services. Finally, the secret spells and mythology connected with these powers are transmitted not only within each category but also between them along ties of marital alliance; in this way social segments are linked together in an exchange of esoteric knowledge.

I describe this scheme of reciprocities in the first half of the thesis, drawing on the Maussian concept of the 'total' nature of exchange, on the works of 'social exchange' theorists, such as Homans (1961) and Blau (1964), and on Lévi-Strauss' concept of communication structures (Lévi-Strauss 1963:296-309). After an introductory chapter dealing with the physical adaptation of the Manambu, their history and patterns of settlement and residence, Chapter 2 discusses marriage and the system of bridewealth and mortuary payments. Chapter 3 concerns the cosmological powers held by groups and the exchange of magical and ritual services between them. The fourth chapter deals with the politics of the transmission of esoteric knowledge within and between groups, and the connection between this and leadership. At one level these chapters form an extended exegesis of a single Manambu concept, ndja'am, which refers to the exchange capacities held by the totemic categories in relation to women, cosmological powers and secret knowledge. A number of writers have called for, or employed, models of New Guinea social structures using the notion of exchange as a structural principle (e.g. Forge 1972a; McDowell 1975; Schwimmer 1973; Wagner 1967). I hope to show in this part of the thesis that exchange, as expressed in the concept of ndja'am, is fundamental to both Avatip social structure and world-view.

The second half of the thesis deals with competition between groups for status within the totemic system. Avatip society is
divided into a series of patrilineal descent groups, which are conceptually entirely distinct from the totemic 'alliance' categories; for the latter are thought of as timeless, necessary, embedded in the structure of the world itself, while descent groups are regarded as simply sets of persons sharing the same agnatic pedigree and subject to demographic and other contingencies. Manambu politics consists essentially in struggles between these groups for the cosmological powers inscribed in the totemic system. These conflicts take the form of disputes over the control of personal names; they are settled in ceremonial debates between the antagonists by means of a formal contest in knowledge of the esoteric details of myth. In Avatip society there are two distinct levels or orders of political power: one relates to the manner in which the totemic categories are ranked and ordered according to the importance of the cosmological powers vested in them, and the other relates to the differential capacity of descent groups to conduct name-disputes against each other.

Chapter 5 deals with the relation between descent group organisation and the totemic system. Collateral descent groups hold reversionary rights in each others' totemic patrimonies, these rights being designed to protect the totemic system against the effects of demographic change. But they create conflict between groups, and this in turn results in manipulation of the totemic system; and I try to show that much of the organisation of this system can be explained in terms of long-term historical patterns of competition between groups. In Chapter 6 I discuss the place of personal names in Avatip totemism, taking my cue from Lévi-Strauss' work on classifications (Lévi-Strauss 1966); in the same chapter, I show that fission and other changes in descent group structure take the form of essentially demographic conflicts over the splitting or fusing of corpuses of personal names. Chapter 7 deals with the ethnography of debating; and Chapter 8 with the strategies which groups use in these disputes to mythologically vindicate their claims. In the Conclusion, I close with an analysis of the relation between power and meaning in Avatip society, relate this to the wider context of Melanesian ethnography, and discuss its implications for the ideas of Lévi-Strauss and others concerning totemic classifications.

In short, the leitmotif of this thesis is the relation between
what Cohen (1974) has called the 'two dimensions' of social existence: the world of political action, in which individuals and groups struggle for status and influence, and the collective symbolic order within which this takes place (see also Cohen 1969).

A dichotomy closely related to this is that between what Lévi-Strauss terms structure and history: the first having to do with the logical or meaningful schemes which the mind imposes on the world, and the second with the essentially contingent and 'statistical' succession of actions and events. In his writings, Lévi-Strauss has tended to assume an irremediable antipathy between them, but I hope to explain in this thesis the manner in which, in one specific society, they are in large part reconciled and operate as each other's complements.

At Avatip the relation between the symbolic order and the order of history and political action corresponds broadly to the relation between the principles of exchange and descent. The first is embodied in the totemic system, in which the ultimate moral unity of society is conceived as lying; this system, as I show, is ideally suited to the kinds of structural and ahistorical analyses used by Lévi-Strauss. The principle of descent, on the other hand, is manifested in the form of the agnatic segments which actually carry this system through time; these groups continually reorganise themselves in relation to the 'eternal' categories of the totemic system as, struggling for prestigious positions within it, they grow, decline, fission, amalgamate and so forth. These processes can be analysed only as forms of political action. Totemism is the universe of 'structure' and the timeless solidarities which unify society; descent is the universe of 'history' and conflict. My aim in this thesis is to explain the manner in which the two form the indivisible weft and warp of Avatip society.
i. Geography and climate

The Sepik River basin is a broad corridor of swamps, lakes and seasonally flooded plains. It crosses northern Papua New Guinea in an east-west direction, separating the interior cordillera from the smaller northern ranges toward the coast. The Hunstein Range, an arm of the central cordillera, projects into the basin roughly midway along it; the river cuts through the tip of this to leave an isolated group of hills standing in the swamplands to its north - the Washkuk Hills. The Manambu live along the forty-or-so kilometre section of the river that passes through this valley.

Apart from the proximity of these mountains, the Manambu environment is much the same as that along most of the Middle and Lower Sepik. Here and there, the hill-slopes abut directly onto the river; but elsewhere they recede and the Sepik flows in a broad meander bed and is subject to frequent changes in course. The river varies in width from 300-700 metres, and the water is milky brown with suspended sediment. During the dry season the river flows at an estimated rate of three knots (Haantjens et al. 1972:187). Mudbanks typically form the inner banks of curves, while outer banks rise vertically to some 5 metres above low water level; both are lined with tall dense stands of wild sugarcane (Saccharum robustum) and Phragmites reed. During the wet season, the river rises on average five or six metres, flooding large areas of the plain.

Off the river, pandanus and swamp-grasses are the predominant types of vegetation. The immediate meander plain of the river is made up of complexes of parallel and intersecting natural levees, the highest of which may be lightly forested. Here there are also ox-bow lagoons - detached meander loops of the river - covered with floating grasses, water-lillies and other aquatic vegetation. Behind the levees lie large areas of level back-swamp, much of which is permanently inundated to form shallow all-season lakes. Further
inland again, the terrain tends to change to swampy forest with sago-palm in the understory; parts of this may be lightly flooded for a short period each year.

Average monthly rainfall in the Manambu area ranges from 1265 mm in June to 3201 mm in March, with an annual mean of 25522 mm. The temperature is fairly constant throughout the year, with a mean maximum during the day of 31.8 degrees Celsius, and a mean nightly minimum of 22.6 degrees Celsius. Mean monthly relative humidity at 9.00 a.m. ranges between 87-93%, and at 3.00 p.m. between 75-79% (McAlpine 1972:61,66,68 [Imperial units converted to metric]).

Many of the economic and other activities of the Manambu are closely geared to the rhythm of wet and dry seasons, and to the corresponding annual rise and fall of the water-level. The two seasons are roughly equal in length and, although the timing may vary considerably from one year to another, the dry season (nyakamali) runs from about May until September and the wet (kwaiyungkwa) from October to April.

During the early part of the dry season the river falls and, at the village of Yentshanggai where most of my fieldwork was done, it exposes a broad foreshore in front of the settlement. Consisting of fine silt (kareki) nearest the village, and turning to sand (yawl) further out, this may measure a hundred metres or more across at the height of the season, and is gradually baked hard and white by the sun. The river contracts to about two-thirds of its wet season width; draining off seepage from the stagnant back-swamps and lagoons, the current is slow and the water turbid and warm. Heat-haze (mali or mba'aw) appears each morning, growing thicker and increasingly reducing visibility until later afternoon. The prevailing winds are the south-east trades (walimangk).

Once the wet season begins, the river rises and in most years comes to within a few centimetres of the level of the village site, perhaps making incursions into one or two of the village's low-lying parts. It is mainly as a precaution against floods that domestic houses are built on stilts with the floor some two metres above the ground. Occasionally, the village is completely flooded; the last time this occurred was in 1972, and the water-stains still remaining
Map 1.

The Manambu area
on trees and house-posts indicate a flood some 1.7 m deep. There are traditions of a major flood having occurred some generations ago in which the village was inundated to a depth of some 4-5 m, and the villagers were forced to build false floors inside their houses to escape it. The river is wide, fast-flowing and swollen in the wet, and can get choppy in windy weather; the water is cold and relatively clear. The direction of flow in the smaller tributaries of the river is reversed as the river feeds water back into the swamps. The Sepik brings down large numbers of tree-trunks, the better specimens of which the villagers take for house-posts and dug-out canoes. Mosquitoes swarm continually, but are at their worst at dusk - the time of day known as *kupw ukepi*, "the falling-groundwards of the mosquitoes" (the insects are said to remain in the upper air during the day, descending to the ground for feeding at twilight). The north-west monsoon (*yarribunmanwei*) prevails, and thunderstorms break out frequently over the river; the rains fall mostly at night.

ii. Subsistence

The Manambu support themselves primarily by fishing and sago-palm exploitation, with hunting and horticulture having secondary places in their economy. Nowadays they also market produce - principally coffee and crocodile skins - for cash; while a small number of individuals earn salaries or wages in towns.

The environment is a naturally rich one, particularly in fish, and allows the Manambu to meet their subsistence needs quite easily by means of what is technically a largely hunting-gathering economy. The villagers - men more so than women - have a good deal of leisure time, but the environment and their manner of exploiting it do not permit much *over*-production. The only foodstuff regularly produced beyond immediate subsistence requirements is fish, the surplus of which is traded with the bush-villages in exchange for sago-starch. Yams are a prestige food and are important ritually; in the past, they were also an important stop-gap when hostilities prevented access to sago-grounds. But because of the high and unpredictable water-table, yam cultivation is somewhat hazardous and each household produces little more than enough for its own consumption. Very few domestic pigs are kept; firstly, there is probably not the excess food production to support them, and secondly
wild pigs - as well as other game such as cassowary - are plentiful and easily hunted or trapped.

Often in Melanesia, traditional leadership and politics revolve at least in part around the competitive production and ceremonial exchange of food (see for example Oliver 1955; Sahlins 1963; Serpenti 1965; Young 1971). Among the Manambu there are no institutions of this kind, and the status and power of individuals and groups is based not on the control of wealth but, above all, of various forms of esoteric knowledge. The factors I have outlined suggest, I think, one reason why Manambu politics does not have material wealth as its focus. Their economy is not one which enables the villagers to regularly build up large surpluses of high-prestige foodstuffs, such as yams or pigs, suitable for ceremonial exchange; and it would probably be impossible for them to do so unless very special adaptive measures were taken, such as the construction of artificial garden-islands which Serpenti (1965) describes for the similarly swamp-dwelling Frederik-Henrik Islanders.

In their exploitation of the environment, the Manambu are, above all, conservationists. To waste food is considered an offence against the totemic ancestral spirits of food-species, and would invite various forms of supernatural punishment (see Chapter 3). The rotting yams of the Goodenough Islanders (Young 1971:162-4) for example, kept as symbols of their owners' prosperity, would appal the Manambu; the yam spirits, they say, would kill anyone who squandered his tubers in this way. A hard-working man is respected, and it is important for a man to be productive if he is to properly fulfill his kinship obligations, particularly to his affines and uterine kin (see Chapter 2). But there is no positive value placed on competitive production, on production to excess, and no institutional framework for using food and wealth as resources in contests for status.

Each of the Manambu villages is situated within easy reach of one or more large lagoons, on which it depends for most of its supply of fish. Fishing is women's work; a woman fishes daily and it is her principal economic task. The traditional equipment is a circular dip-net (nangger), a mesh stretched across a hoop of cane some three metres in diameter; it is held by hand between two canoes and plunged
into the water with a scooping motion. The nanggar is now gradually being replaced by the European gill-net; this is left tied to bamboo poles set in the river- or lagoon-bed, and the catch collected once or twice a day. While it saves labour, the gill-net is often criticized as wasteful; it traps large numbers of fish quickly, and if it is left unattended for long many of the fish die and must be discarded.

A few times a year large shoals of fish may appear in one of the lagoons for a day or two, and the fish are speared from canoes. Men, women and children - almost all the able-bodied individuals available in the village - take part, and great quantities of fish can be taken in a short space of time.

Fish are available all year round, though fishing may be less productive in the wet season - particularly if there is a substantial flood - because the fish are distributed over a large area of water. It is most productive at the height of the dry season, when the size of all bodies of water is greatly reduced. Large concentrations of fish often become trapped in small ponds, and in the tiny ox-bow lagoons along the Amoku River (see Map 2) and other tributaries of the Sepik, and the women and children collect them simply by hand. All fish not for immediate consumption are smoked by the women, and in this form they are the main item of trade with the bush villages.

The Manambu communities - particularly Avatip, the largest (see below) - are probably potentially self-sufficient in sago (na'anggw). But their large surpluses of fish make it easier for them to acquire part of their sago supply through trade with the bush villages than to produce all their own sago themselves. Most of the sago lands are some distance off the river, and for this reason families may camp overnight while processing the palms. In the past, however, sago-making expeditions were undertaken only by large armed parties, because of the danger of ambush by the bush peoples. An average household (five adults over eighteen years, and five children) processes a palm about once a month.

Felling the palm, breaking open the hard cortex and pounding the exposed pith are men's tasks; women leach the pounded pith to remove the starch. The leaching apparatus is a trough, consisting of a sago leaf-base set up on a trestle of sticks, in which the pith
is kneaded with water. The water carries the starch in suspension through a filter made of the fibrous sheath of a coconut-palm leaf, and flows into a second container - a palm-spathe folded into a box - in which the heavy starch sediments out. Few sago-areas are near a natural source of water, and most have a large well (mdkwu) nearby from which water is ladled into the leaching-trough with a half-coconut shell attached to a bamboo pole.

Sago production is an all-year-round activity and is only affected by great extremes of wet and dry. An extended period of dry weather which causes the wells to dry up, or a flood inundating the sago-stands, may make it difficult or impossible to process the palms, at least in situ.

Hunting is an important male occupation, and pigs, cassowaries and wallabies, in that order, are the main types of game taken. Wild pigs are the principal form of offering made to ghosts and spirits, and since almost all sickness and misfortune is ascribed to supernatural causes the demand for them is continual. Game is hunted with dogs and spears, while pigs are also sometimes trapped; nowadays, a small number of men use shotguns.

If the water-level rises very high during the wet season, game is forced to retreat to higher ground and may become trapped there in large numbers by the water. When this happens the men organise communal game-drives, in which the animals are driven by beaters toward a line of men armed with spears. The meat from the hunt is distributed from one of the ceremonial houses to each household in the village according to its size.

As the swamps dry out during the dry season, large concentrations of crocodiles and turtles may appear in the remaining water-logged areas. In a good year, almost all the able-bodied men in the village may camp out for a week or so to hunt the animals. The hunting method involves first flattening down the dense grass and cane which covers the swamp; this is done by the men crossing the area in a line, with poles held horizontally in front of them. Once the grass is pushed down, the men then re-cross the area, again in a line, prodding the mud at the bottom with spikes hafted to bamboo poles. Any turtles found are simply pulled out and passed ashore. When a crocodile is
encountered, the snout is first raised out of the water with the jaws held shut, and the jaws are bound with cane; the creature is then pulled further out of the water so that its forelegs rest on the flattened grass, and then these are bound together. Finally, the rest of the animal is dragged up onto the grass, its rear legs tied, and it is taken ashore to be killed and butchered. The meat from the hunt is distributed in the same way as with the wet season game drives. Nowadays crocodile skins - at least those that do not exceed the size limit imposed by the government to protect the breeding stock - are sold at Ambunti; in the past, all skins were discarded.

All the Manambu villages make yam gardens on the natural levees along the Sepik; these are planted around May, early in the dry season, and harvested in December at the beginning of the wet. In this way the yams, which require a well-drained environment, mature over the driest part of the year. Yams have great ritual importance, and the harvest is celebrated in each village with a first-fruits ceremony. Every four or five years, an especially elaborate version of this is performed, which inducts novices into the second of three male initiatory grades (see Chapter 3). In each community the cultivation schedule is under the ceremonial direction of a number of hereditary ritual specialists; from the moment the gardens are planted until these specialists inaugurate the harvest ritual, the gardens are under an interdiction and cannot be harvested.

Two species of yam are grown by the Manambu: *Dioscorea alata* (*nyan*) and *D. esculenta* (*kemnga'au*). At Avatip a second type of yam garden is made, in addition to the river gardens; in these, which are cultivated in secondary forest on the Amoku River (see Map 2), it is mainly *esculenta* that is grown, while the river gardens are devoted primarily to *alata*. The practice of cultivating the two species separately is, so far as I can tell, of entirely ritual significance and has nothing to do with their physical properties. There are strict taboos against allowing river-garden and bush-garden tubers to come in contact with each other (see Harrison, in press, for a discussion of the symbolic significance of these taboos).

The Avatip bush gardens are planted around July and harvested usually in February, so that they mature over the wettest part of the year; this is made possible by the relatively high lie of the land on
the Amoku. The other two Manambu villages do not make bush gardens, because they do not have access to land of this kind. Avatip, as I shall describe later, is in a somewhat favoured ecological position, and it is this that enables it to produce two yam crops a year on a staggered schedule of cultivation. The Avatip bush gardens have a rather secondary ritual importance; they are not, for example, laid under an interdiction while they mature, and their harvest is celebrated only in a simple private ceremony performed individually by each household.

There is no very rigid sexual division of labour in yam cultivation. Clearing the garden sites and fencing them are generally done by men; planting is a co-operative task involving both sexes and also children, while it is usually women who weed and maintain the gardens while they mature. This is in contrast to a number of other Sepik societies in which the growing of yams, at least of the so-called 'long yams' used in ceremonial exchange and ritual (alata cultivated under special conditions so as to produce very large tubers) is an exclusively male occupation surrounded by many sexual taboos (see for example Forge 1966; Lea 1964; Tuzin 1972). The Manambu do not grow long yams, because the seasonal rise of the water permits only a short growing season, and they do not use yams in ceremonial exchange. There is only one part of the process of yam cultivation from which women are ritually excluded: the harvest of the first-fruits of the river gardens, which can be performed only by initiated males. It is probably because yam production is not an arena for competition for prestige between men that it is not a focus of elaborate female pollution beliefs.

In all yam gardens, sugarcane, banana and various leafy greens are also cultivated. Gardens last for two years at most and are then left for a long period of bush fallow. Although horticulture ranks behind fishing and sago-production in economic importance, my impression is that it contributes more - certainly at Avatip - to subsistence than it does among the Iatmul, the downriver neighbours of the Manambu. This seems to be due to the Manambu terrain being on the whole higher and less frequently inundated. The relative importance of yam-growing, and the male cult ritual connected with it, together form the single most conspicuous feature distinguishing the Manambu from the Iatmul, to whom they are otherwise culturally very closely related (see below).
iii. The Manambu and their neighbours

The Manambu language belongs to the Ndu linguistic family (see Laycock 1965), a family which dominates the Middle Sepik region and the most widely spoken members of which are Abelam (see Forge 1966, 1970, 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c; Kaberry 1941, 1942, 1971) and Iatmul (see Bateson 1932, 1958). As Newton (1971:64) notes, the Manambu traditionally had no collective name for themselves, and referred to themselves simply by the names of their three major villages. They are called Manambu by their Western Iatmul neighbours; this term is being adopted by many younger Manambu speakers, and has been given to their language by Laycock (ibid.). Of the other Ndu-speaking societies, the Manambu appear to be linguistically and culturally most closely related to the Western Iatmul (see Laycock 1965:185-7). The greater importance of horticulture in the Manambu economy and the yam-cult associated with this, which distinguish the Manambu from the Iatmul, ally them to the land-based Ndu-speakers to their north, such as the Abelam and Kwoma (see Bowden 1977; Whiting 1941, 1944; Whiting and Reed 1938-9).

The first recorded contact of the Manambu with Europeans was with the members of the German Sepik River Expedition of 1912-13, who made their main camp near the Manambu village of Malu (see Behrman 1922). Regular administration of the area did not however begin until the establishment of Ambunti Patrol Post by the Australian authorities in 1924, near the geographical center of Manambu territory (see Townsend 1968:Ch.9). Toward the end of the Second World War, the area was under Japanese occupation, and it was during this period that the Manambu conducted their last raids and ambushes in a brief resurgence of traditional warfare. It was only after the war that major changes to the traditional situation began, the 1950's being the period of most rapid transition.

Before European contact there were three Manambu villages, each of which was politically autonomous: Yuanamb, Malu and Avatip. In recent times Avatip has split into the villages of Yentshanggai and Yawmbak and the hamlet of Lapanggai; and both Yuanamb and Malu have

1 Yuanamb is known by the administration, incorrectly, as Yambon; this is an abbreviation of Yambwundjendu, the name not of the village itself but of its site at the time of European contact.
relocated to the northern bank of the river, the latter producing a new offshoot, Apan, a few kilometres upriver and a small hamlet called Kamandjaw a little further upstream again (see Map 1). Each of the three communities nevertheless still retains its original name and a strong sense of identity; each continues to be largely endogamous and an independent unit in ceremonial affairs. The populations of the three communities in 1978 are given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avatip</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yentshanggai</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yawmbak</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapanggai</td>
<td>59 (excluding W. Iatmul immigrants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malu (includes Apan and Kamandjaw)</td>
<td>561 (source: Official Census Nov. 1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuanamb</td>
<td>362 (source: Official Census Nov. 1978)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Manambu population:** 1282

Table 1: Populations of Manambu villages in 1978 (including absentees)

The Manambu state that they originated at a village called Asiti, the site of which is a few kilometres downriver from Avatip and was long ago land-locked by a change in course of the river. According to genealogical tradition their ancestors lived together at Asiti until some seven generations ago. Croton plants can reportedly still be found there, once grown on the ceremonial mounds (tupwi) in front of the men's cult-houses, as well as the occasional potsherd; the site is however avoided as unlucky. Legend states that Asiti and most of its inhabitants were destroyed by thunderbolts, called down by sorcery during an internecine feud (see Chapter 3). The survivors moved upriver and founded Avatip; in the following generation colonists from Avatip established the village of Malu some 15 km upriver, and in the next generation again colonists from
Malu combined with an autochthonous population to form the village of Yuanamb a further 20 km upstream. Granting historical validity at least in outline to these migration traditions, the direction of Manambu expansion has thus been exclusively upriver. This accords with the general distribution of population along the river in the area; upstream from the Manambu the river is relatively sparsely peopled, while downstream it is densely settled by Iatmul villages.

Asiti and the legends surrounding it have always been important to the Manambu as a symbol of their cultural and linguistic identity. For example, most Manambu lineages trace their descent from a survivor of the destruction of Asiti (see Chapter 2). Many of these lineages, moreover, are represented in more than one of the three communities, so that it is not uncommon for Manambu from different villages to be able to trace precise genealogical ties with each other stemming from their original home.

The clan system, which is connected with a complex and extensive totemism, is believed to be identical throughout the Manambu villages, and is in fact very nearly so; each community is what Hogbin and Wedgwood (1953:257-59) would presumably call an osculant multicarpellary parish. When exact genealogical connection cannot be traced, clanship provides the basis for trading, visiting and so forth. In addition, the Iatmul, Kwoma and other groups with whom the Manambu are in contact are thought to share the same system. These groups appear to believe the same themselves (see for example Bowden 1977:48, 50), and totemic clanship provides the entrée for trading expeditions and other forms of communication between the different language areas. In fact, the Iatmul, Kwoma, Manambu and others each seem to have a quite different totemic organisation (Bowden pers. comm.; Forge pers. comm.); but since these schemes share at least some totemic species in common, the groups concerned have clearly been able to accommodate them to each other to their own satisfaction.

The Manambu have always had at least a partial sense of 'tribal' unity, a state of affairs rare in the Melanesian context and one which their small numbers have perhaps facilitated. Avatip never fought lethally with either Malu or Yuanamb, on the grounds of their common language and traditions. Brawls and sorcery feuds on
the other hand - stemming usually from disputes over their common territorial boundary - did break out from time to time between Avatip and Malu, and have continued well into the post-contact era. Intermittent killings did occur between Yuanamb and Malu; the two youngest of the Manambu villages, they seem to have had stronger political ties with Avatip than they had with each other.

Avatip, then, occupied something of a key position in the political relations between the three villages. Although each was an independent unit in warfare, and still remains formally self-governing in its ritual affairs, Avatip has always claimed - and been granted - a certain pre-eminence, a kind of 'metropolitan' status. Ecologically, Avatip is the most advantageously situated of the three communities (see below), and as can be seen from Table 1 it is by far the largest, accounting for more than half of the total Manambu population. Before European contact Avatip was militarily the most powerful river village known to the Manambu. Presumably it would not have been in the interest of Malu and Yuanamb to be at war with such a sizeable neighbour; while from the point of view of Avatip, peaceful relations with its two colonies would have kept it secure to the west and enabled it to focus its warmaking - as it in fact did - eastwards against the Western Iatmul and northwards into the Amoku River.

Within their overall common culture, there are differences between Avatip on the one hand and Malu and Yuanamb on the other in language, economy, social structure and ritual organisation. Avatip claims, on the grounds of its antiquity and its position as the historical centre from which Manambu expansion occurred, to preserve Manambu traditions in their definitive form; and Malu and Yuanamb tend, if only out of diplomacy, to defer to this. Malu and Yuanamb, for instance, speak a different dialect from that at Avatip, and Avatip holds that its own is the older and more pure (in fact, linguistic evidence suggests that the Malu-Yuanamb dialect is if anything the more archaic). Avatip cultivates yams more intensively than the other two communities (see above) and, connected with this, has a rather more elaborate yam-cult; again, while these are thought by the Manambu to be ancestral traditions that Avatip alone has preserved, the available evidence similarly indicates that they are relatively recent developments (see Harrison, in press). At any rate,
Avatip ritual leaders have on the whole a greater prestige than their Malu and Yuanamb counterparts, and are now and then invited by the latter to help preside over performances of ritual. But the sphere in which Avatip is regarded as having the greatest authority is totemism, and the whole complex of mythology, personal names and debating connected with this. The other two Manambu villages regard Avatip as a community almost obsessed with disputes over the ownership of personal names. This reputation for fractiousness is quite justified; name-disputes are far more frequent at Avatip than at Malu and Yuanamb, a reflection no doubt of its larger size and correspondingly higher incidence of personal and inter-group rivalries. Avatip is the traditional source of the most authoritative experts in debating and totemic mythology, and they are regularly sought after by Malu and Yuanamb men as teachers of mythology and supporters in their own debates.

Avatip, in short, enjoys a degree of hegemony over the other two Manambu villages, at least in ceremonial matters. To the Manambu this is due to its antiquity and its possession of the canonical traditions; but so far as I can see it is in one way or another connected simply with its large size.

Like the Iatmul the Manambu were head-hunters, though trophy-heads seem to have been ritually rather less important than they were among the Iatmul, and the emphasis was laid primarily on the achievement of homicide rather than on the capture of heads as such. Bravery and skill in fighting were, and continue to be, very highly admired in men, and in the past homicides were entitled to wear special insignia - black face-paint (nggel), tassels (ea'amb) attached to their lime-sticks as a tally of their kills, and a pubic apron (kumbvisambol) of flying-fox skin (males who had not achieved a homicide wore no genital covering). Unlike the Iatmul the Manambu did not require a man to achieve a kill before he could marry.

The Western Iatmul, who are as it were adapted to the same ecological niche as the Manambu, seem on the whole to have been attempting for a number of generations to expand upriver as a result of population pressure on land. The Manambu villages - particularly Avatip, the furthest downriver - were chronically at war with those of the Western Iatmul nearest to them. Fighting occurred mainly on
the river rather than on land, and took the form of skirmishes between canoes, and sometimes full-scale battles between fleets, using spear-throwers, bows and hand-spears.

At some point during the pre-contact period a faction within the Western Iatmul village of Japandai - at the time the furthest upriver of the Iatmul villages - were allowed by the people of Yuanamb to settle with them, in this way leap-frogging Avatip and Malu (see Staalsen 1965). At first co-existing peaceably, the two groups eventually quarrelled and around 1920 Yuanamb together with its Malu and Avatip allies massacred many of these guests. The survivors established the village of Brugnawi, upriver from Yuanamb, and this is thus now the most westerly of the Iatmul villages and separated from the rest of the Iatmul by the whole of Manambu territory.

It appears then that both the Manambu and the Western Iatmul have for many generations been expanding, or attempting to expand, upriver - but at different rates, the Iatmul in effect moving faster and beginning around the time of European contact to overtake the Manambu. It is possible that had European contact never occurred the Manambu would in time have become completely enclaved within the Iatmul and even eventually been absorbed by them.

The attitude of the Manambu toward the Western Iatmul, or Nyaula\(^2\) as they are called at Avatip, has always been a highly ambivalent one. The Manambu continue to regard them as their enemies, and are suspicious of their territorial intentions and fearful of their sorcery. On the other hand the Manambu traded extensively with the Iatmul in traditional times, exchanging *Campnosperm* oil (used in body decoration), coconuts, and logs for dug-out canoes primarily for shell valuables, which were traded up the river from its mouth. In addition most mature men, at least at Avatip, have always been competent if not fluent speakers of Western Iatmul, and there is considerable evidence that the Manambu have throughout their history imported many details of Iatmul culture, particularly of magic, totemism and mythology: their attraction being precisely that they

\(^2\) Nyaura in the Malu-Yuanamb dialect.
are foreign and surrounded by an aura of dangerous power.

Off the river to the north, the neighbours of the Manambu are the Kwoma and some other smaller land-based Ndu-speaking groups. The dichotomy in the Sepik River basin between river-people and bush-people is a fundamental one, involving two entirely distinct adaptations and modes of life. According to the Manambu stereotype the river-dwellers such as themselves are primarily fishermen, with the lakes and waterways as their habitat, while the bush-dwellers are horticulturalists and sago-palm exploiters inhabiting the forest. To the Manambu the bush is a dangerous and inhospitable environment, and they avoid travel on land. They are poor woodsmen and in the bush were easy targets for ambushes by the Numbundu, or 'dry land men', as they call the bush peoples. The Numbundu are said to avidly practice exuvial sorcery (wa'ai) (a form of sorcery reportedly foreign to the river-peoples and greatly feared by them) against each other and anyone who ventures into the bush, and in the bush Manambu always dispose very carefully of their personal leavings. The Manambu regard everything to do with the bush and its inhabitants as crude, dirty and inferior, an attitude apparently common among the river-folk (see Gewertz 1978:38).

Although the Manambu villages fought with those of the Numbundu, in the intervals of peace they held markets (takw) for the exchange of fish for sago. It was because of the danger of attack from these populations to the north that all the Manambu villages were in traditional times situated on the southern bank of the river. Inland to the south are a number of small communities speaking languages unrelated to Manambu, but they were on the whole too small to pose a major threat.

iv. Avatip: pre-contact and post-contact history

Up until the early 1920's Avatip was a single village; its site, which is now abandoned, lies midway between its three daughter settlements, Yentshanggai, Lapanggai and Yawmbak, landlocked within the bush by a shift northwards of the river. I will refer to it as Old Avatip. Yentshanggai, located on the Sepik opposite the mouth of the Amoku River, Lapanggai a short distance downriver from it, and Yawmbak, situated on the eastern shore of the Walemaw lagoon, still form a strongly unified intermarrying and ceremonial community. They
continue to be referred to collectively as Avatip, and I will follow this usage here. Their populations in 1978 are given in Table 1.

In pre-contact times, Old Avatip occupied the same relative position as Yentshanggai does now: it was directly opposite the confluence of the Amoku River with the Sepik, on the Sepik's southern bank. This geographical situation was a particularly favoured one, as is nowadays that of Yentshanggai and Lapanggai and to some extent also that of Yawmbak. The land along the Amoku is an area unique in Manambu territory, a relatively high, well-drained alluvial plain suited to cultivation. Its overall agricultural land use capacity has been estimated as high, in contrast to a rating of nil given to almost all the rest of the Manambu area (Haantjens et al. 1971: agricultural land use capability map). It enables Avatip to produce as I mentioned earlier two garden crops each year, while both Malu and Yuanamb produce only one. It has a vital place in Avatip subsistence: besides gardening land, it provides hunting-grounds, extensive areas of sago palm, and forest for building materials. In comparison with many other river villages, the Avatip economy is as a consequence relatively diversified; besides its more intensive cultivation of yams, the community is self-sufficient in building materials and largely so in sago. Many of the other river people, in contrast, are fairly specialised fishermen who must trade with their inland neighbours for these resources. During the 1960's the villagers began to make coffee gardens along the Amoku, and nowadays the sale of this cash-crop provides almost every household with a regular if modest income; largely for this reason Avatip is in modern terms the wealthiest of the Manambu communities. Avatip is unusual for a river village in having access to terrain of this kind; and its large population is in great part due to its location.

Old Avatip acquired this territory by warfare during the nineteenth century; up until then it had been occupied by an apparently quite sizeable population, speakers of a Ndu-family language called by Laycock Buiamanambu (Laycock 1965:18). They were Numbundu, yam cultivators dwelling in small palisaded hamlets; the principal military tactic which Avatip employed against them was to surround a hamlet at night with a large raiding-party and overrun it at dawn. The names of some thirty settlements destroyed in this way are remembered by informants. All that remains now of this population are two hamlets far up the Amoku, at its confluence with
Map 2. Avatip and its vicinity
the Yimi, and a small settlement called Kaiyukw near the mouth of the Amoku. The Kaiyukw people have for as long as can be remembered been on amicable terms with Avatip; they intermarry regularly with Avatip, are bilingual, and participate in ritual and other Avatip affairs.

Up until probably the second half of the last century, there was also a reportedly quite large village east of the lower Amoku on the Pakwusuwi lagoon (see Map 2) inhabited by a people whom Avatip called Ngginyap. They appear to have been a Sawos-speaking group who had moved down from the plains to the northeast, and they had partially adapted themselves to a lacustrine life, fishing on Pakwusuwi from rafts and crude canoes. They controlled the large sago-areas lying behind Pakwusuwi, and Avatip alternately fought and traded fish for sago with them. Avatip eventually destroyed their village in two major engagements, the last with the assistance of a large contingent of Kwoma allies; this is said explicitly to have been done so as to take possession of Pakwusuwi and its adjacent sago-lands.

It was only then toward the end of the nineteenth century, with the displacement of the Ngginyap and the Amoku River people, that Avatip gained complete possession of the Amoku River lands and assumed its present economic near-self-sufficiency. Prior to that time, it is likely that Avatip was dependent on the occupants of the Amoku bush for much of its sago, trading fish with them as the river villages typically do with their bush-dwelling neighbours. The military expansion of Old Avatip northwards had, as the villagers themselves explicitly state, economic motives; and it is easy to envisage a kind of snowballing process, in which as Old Avatip acquired more land, so its population grew, and as it grew so the village was able to make war the more effectively.

By 1920, just prior to the imposition of European rule, Avatip had a population of about 800; this, given the highly segmentary political organisation of the village, was probably near the maximum the community could maintain without undergoing fission. Moreover the river had begun shifting its course northwards, peeling away from the village at its western end to leave it landlocked - a process which in Manambu eyes would eventually make the site uninhabitable. It is likely then that the village was approaching the point of
splitting up into settlements better located and of more manageable size. But this was abruptly brought about, if a little earlier than it probably would otherwise have occurred, as a result of the imposition of European rule. This was a highly traumatic event for Avatip. Between 1918 and 1920, at least two punitive expeditions were made against the village by the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, which was then administering New Guinea. The largest of these was in reprisal for an attack on a German labour recruiter attempting to land at Old Avatip (see Rowley 1958:202-3; Townsend 1968:100). Informants say that the village was shelled from the river and burned on each of these raids, and that during the largest of them the villagers were pursued by armed police through the swamps behind the village where a small number of them were shot and killed. Shortly after the raids, the first group of Avatip men were taken to the coast as indentured labourers, to return two years later with a knowledge of Pidgin and some acquaintance with the new colonial order. One was made luluai, the Government official for the village, and two his assistants, or tultul.

The punitive expeditions almost completely disorganised the community; the village was abandoned, with people living in isolated groups in small bush-camps for fear of further attack, and it was not for some time that they began to return to the village and rebuild it. However, not all of them did so; the residents of the western section of Old Avatip - from which the river had shifted the furthest - relocated to the eastern shore of the Walomaw lagoon, where they felt secure from future raids, and established the village of Yawmbak.

The river continued its movement northwards over the following years, and in the mid-1930's the residents of Old Avatip began to abandon the site, some moving north to the new bank of the Sepik, where the village of Yentshanggai began to grow, and others east to establish the hamlet of Lapanggai. The last people to leave Old Avatip did so in the early 1960's, the village being by then completely landlocked. It is now quite overgrown, except for its main path which now forms a section of the bush-track connecting Lapanggai with Yentshanggai and Yawmbak. For a while Lapanggai was quite a large settlement, competing in size with Yentshanggai; but its site is less suitable than the latter, being mosquito-infested, and over the years it has dwindled in size as its inhabitants have
moved gradually to Yentshanggai. During my period of fieldwork the Sepik broke through the narrow neck of land in the loop on which Lapanggai is situated (see Map 2), and this loop is in the process of becoming a detached ox-bow lagoon, leaving Lapanggai cut off from the main river - in these days of motorised river-transport a situation unattractive to its remaining residents, all of whom are planning to resettle at Yentshanggai. After a period then of some sixty years, during which Old Avatip split successively into two and then four separate settlements, the community appears finally on the point of stabilising residentially; within a few years it will consist solely of two villages, Yentshanggai and Yawmbak, both of which seem to have long-term viability.

During the later part of the Second World War, Yentshanggai was occupied by a small force of Japanese, and the village was a few times bombed and strafed by Allied aircraft, though without loss of life. The soldiers were an economic burden on the community, but the villagers appear to have reached a modus vivendi with them and relations between the two groups seem on the whole to have been surprisingly amicable and relaxed. But very shortly before the Japanese surrender, at the instigation of an Allied guerilla unit operating in the plains to the north, the villagers caught the Japanese off their guard and killed them, except for their officer who was handed over as a prisoner of war. This massacre had the full magical and ritual preparations which traditionally preceded a raid, and was the last time these procedures were used. Many of the older men claim homicidal regalia for their part in it, and they look back upon it as their final act of traditional warfare.

The 1950's were a period of rapid change. Avatip underwent intensive Christian evangelisation, primarily from the Catholic Mission; a village church, or haus lotu in Melanesian Pidgin, was built at Yentshanggai and catechists visited regularly to give bible-lessons. Yielding to Mission pressure the men abandoned much of their ritual for a period of years. In time, however, there was growing disillusionment with the missions; older men now speak bitterly of the period, claiming that the mission workers deliberately withheld from them the skills - now highly valued - of literacy and numeracy which they could otherwise have acquired and chose instead to teach them, as they now put it, mere bible-stories. This
disaffection resulted in one of the villagers physically attacking a European Catholic missionary; abandoned rituals were reinstated and the *haus lotu* pulled down. Nowadays there is no more than a handful of adults at Yentshanggai who profess Christian belief, and fewer still who attend services with any regularity; the mission personnel at Ambunti regard the Yentshanggai people as intractable, and find it more profitable to focus their evangelical activities elsewhere. Yawmbak, rather differently, has had for a number of years a resident native evangelist of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission. His services are popular among the younger Yawmbak people, but his presence is otherwise having little effect on the village's affairs.

The response of Avatip to cargo-cult ideology has been much the same as its response to Christianity; to the villagers the two systems of belief are not in fact entirely distinct from each other. The people are quite well acquainted with cargo-cult beliefs but, publicly at least, they reject them and there has never been an organised cult at Avatip. In these respects Avatip differs markedly from Malu and Yuanamb. There was a short-lived cargo-cult at these two villages in the 1950's, quickly suppressed by the authorities, and both have shown themselves more amenable to mission influence than Avatip. I will suggest below some reasons for these different responses.

Because of the unusually large population of Avatip, a Government primary school was established in 1961 at Yentshanggai, and the educational standard among young Avatip people is now generally high. Up until the 1960's, young men who left the village did so typically as wage-labourers on contracts of a few years; nowadays they are more likely to be taking up permanent and highly-paid careers in the Public Service as teachers, policemen, clerks and so forth. In general these young salary-earning absentees maintain close ties with their kin and are an important source of money and goods.

Shortly after the establishment of the school, the community allowed a small number of families from the neighbouring Western Iatmul village of Japandai to settle at Lapangganai so as to be able to send their children to the school. Relations between these Nyaula and their hosts, however, soured over the years. Japandai is thought
to be land-hungry, as are the Nyaula villages generally, and it was increasingly felt that the presence of the Western Iatmul at Lapanggai was allowing the Nyaula a foothold in Avatip territory. The Nyaula settlement was growing unnecessarily large, it was said, they were planting coconut-palms - a sign that they intended to stay for good - and they were encouraging the other Japandai villagers to use Avatip lagoons. These long-rankling grievances came to a head during my period of fieldwork with a series of sorcery accusations and near-brawls between the men of Avatip and Japandai; and following these the Nyaula at Lapanggai, except for one die-hard and his family, returned to their own village.

The first coffee gardens began to appear on the Amoku River in the 1960's, and nowadays almost every household has at least one coffee garden in production and a regular income from the sale of the beans. Largely for this reason, and because of the high proportion of salary-earners, Avatip is a relatively wealthy and economically progressive community. There are five trade-stores at Yentshanggai, two or three of which seem likely to remain viable, and one at Yawmbak. The number of canoes equipped with outboard motors - the largest capital investment at present made by the villagers - grew steadily during my fieldwork period; and just before I left the first haus kapa, or European-materials house, was being built by the school Headmaster, an Avatip man, for his retirement.

Although Avatip was subject to heavy labour recruitment until the end of the 1950's, it seems not to have experienced the permanent outmigration and consequent depopulation that some of the river villages have suffered from (see Curtain 1978; 1980:324, 332). Firstly, the villagers very strongly disapprove of anyone migrating to towns without a definite prospect of employment. Secondly, the pattern up till now has been for outmigrants to return to the village on retirement or after a few years of contract labour; and this seems likely to continue so long as the village still offers economic opportunities - as it very probably will, primarily because of its Amoku River territory. Just before I left Avatip the villagers had begun planting a new cash-crop - chili - on the Amoku, and one individual had established there a small cattle-project. A number of the Iatmul villages seem in contrast to have few internal means of earning cash apart from the sale of artefacts; their people have little choice except either to migrate permanently or periodically to
towns, or to remain in their villages and rely upon the vagaries of the tourist trade along the Sepik. The Manambu on the other hand are a little higher up than the main tourist route along the river; Manambu art is cruder than that of the Iatmul, very little is produced for commercial purposes and the demand for it is even smaller.

The geographical position of Avatip, which made it one of the largest settlements on the Sepik before European contact, has also contributed to its viability in the post-contact era. With a large and relatively well-off resident population, it seemed to me paradoxically both the most aggressively pagan and 'traditional' in outlook of the three Manambu communities, and at the same time economically the most progressive. Largely self-supporting in pre-contact times, and now able to earn cash and acquire European goods from its own resources, the community has retained a strong sense of independence and an attitude of hostility toward attempts by outsiders to interfere in its affairs. Among Government and Mission personnel its people have a reputation for refractoriness and have apparently done so since the earliest days of European administration on the Sepik (see Townsend 1968:100, 136).

v. Settlement and residence

This section deals specifically with the pattern of settlement and residence at Yentshanggai; at present the largest of all the Manambu villages, it is the one at which I was based during my fieldwork and with which I am most familiar. My description is however in its essentials representative of Manambu settlements in general.

As Old Avatip was before it, Yentshanggai is built on a natural levee of the Sepik River, and its physical form owes much to this location. The village is a long, narrow ribbon of settlement running for some two and a half kilometres along the riverbank; immediately behind it the land drops away into uninhabitable swamp.

The domestic houses (wá) stand at the rear of the village, nearest the swamp, and form a continuous row - and in places a double row - along the whole length of the village. Here and there in front of them stand junior ceremonial houses (ea'at) and, in front of these, the major ceremonial houses (kara’amb) stand along the riverbank.
Sa'ai are club-houses for the general use of men, though they are primarily intended for uninitiated men; kara'amb are the preserve of initiated men and are the centres for male ritual activity.

Between the domestic houses and the sa'ai runs a path for general use; parallel to this, but between the sa'ai and the kara'amb, runs a second path, and this is formally for the exclusive use of initiated men. Women and the uninitiated cross this path regularly on their way to the river, but they must avoid the ceremonial houses in doing so and are forbidden to walk along it. In recent times these rules have been relaxed and, except during performances of ritual, uninitiated males are usually allowed to enter the major ceremonial houses and to use the initiated men's path; women are still prohibited from doing either.

Old Avatip stood on a broader levee than does Yentshanggai, permitting a double line of domestic houses for the whole of its length; these houses were also larger and their total number fewer (see below). Although Yentshanggai has about the same size of population as Old Avatip had at the time of European contact, it is as a consequence far longer and less compact than the latter. The major ceremonial houses are relatively distantly spaced, and as a result the paths for the initiated and uninitiated run as a single track through most of the village, separating in the vicinity of major ceremonial houses (see Map 3).

The domestic houses, and the rear of the village in general, are regarded as the preserve of women and children; men spend comparatively little time in their own houses, except for sleeping there, fearing what are thought of as the enervating effects of too much contact with women and domesticity. They prefer to spend their leisure time in the ceremonial houses in each other's company, and often do their own cooking there. Removed from the rear of the village, with its traffic of women and children along the main path, and from what they describe as the insalubrious odour of menstrual discharges which accompanies them, men can relax safely in their club-houses in an all-male atmosphere. To sit in a junior ceremonial house simply reduces the risk of contact with this effluvium; in the case of the major ceremonial houses, on the other hand, it is women who are potentially at risk from contact with the men. These buildings, or rather the cult-spirits inhabiting them, are said to be
inimical to women and would cause any who approached too closely to sicken and die.

The notion of ritual hierarchy, and of an antithesis of the sexes, is in other words codified in the physical plan of the village - the rear of the settlement being associated with women and children, the middle section with males prior to initiation, and the riverfront with initiated men. Males begin life among the domestic houses, graduate to the *sa'ai*, and reach ritual maturity with their admission to the major ceremonial houses - so that a man's ritual career involves as it were a gradual progression from the rear of the village to the front.

The village is divided into a series of wards (*yerengk*), the boundaries between these being marked by rows of coconut palms. Ideally, each ward is associated with a patrilineal subclan - the most important social unit within the village as I shall explain below. The wards are formally identical in plan. Each includes a number of domestic houses, between one and four *sa'ai*, and one *kara'amb*; in a few cases two subclans share ownership of a *kara'amb*. The ward, the junior ceremonial houses and the major ceremonial house are regarded as the physical embodiment of totemic ancestors of the subclan, and each is known by a totemic personal name belonging to the subclan (see Chapter 6). The ward extends across the whole width of the village, so that each includes a section of riverfront; here, its constituent households have individual log-jetties, or *yimbun*, for mooring their canoes (see Plate 4).

The village has in other words no central plaza or other common focal area, and consists simply of a series of homologous segments; a fact reflecting the highly uncentralised and segmentary nature of Avatip society. Viewed across its width, on the other hand, the settlement can be seen as consisting of three sets of functionally specialised buildings associated with differential degrees of ritual status. Taken as a whole, the ground-plan of the village expresses two of the most basic - and similarly cross-cutting - principles of Avatip social structure: the division of the society into a series of politically equal segmentary groups, and a generalised ritual hierarchy giving authority to men over women and to the old over the young.
Fig. 1. Schematic plan of settlement organisation
The subclans are nowadays residually somewhat less unified than they were in the past. The period of thirty years or so of relocation from Old Avatip to Yentshanggai resulted in a degree of disorganisation of the original ward divisions, for reasons to do largely with the nature of the site of the new village. Instead of unitary wards, a number of subclans now have two or three residential sections at Yentshanggai, each identified with one of their internal segments. But this does not seem to have significantly affected the solidarity of these groups in debating, affinal exchange and the other forms of action to be described in later chapters.

Residence after marriage is normatively patrivirilocal, and also very largely so in actuality, and people tend in general to speak of marriage as a physical movement of women between wards. If a man's life-cycle involves a progression within his own ward from the domestic area toward the riverfront, a woman's involves a complementary lateral movement: from a domestic house in her natal ward to another in her husband's ward. It is men who give the subclan its residential identity and continuity, simply assuming an increasingly senior ritual status as they mature. Women, on the other hand, are dispersed at marriage; permanently the ritual inferiors of men, they represent the transverse ties which link the wards together.

A man may live temporarily with his affines if for instance he quarrels with his agnates or his household ghosts are thought to be afflicting him. But long-term uxorilocal residence would be regarded as an extreme anomaly; people would say of such a marriage: "The woman is the husband; she took (a man) as her wife and fetched him away (to her ward)" (a ta'akwa lanand; kəran kəraynda).

Patrivirilocal residence is so fundamental that it is assumed to extend into the afterlife. Formerly, the dead were buried under their houses, a man under his own house and a married woman under that of her husband - their ghosts remaining in these houses as domestic tutelaries. Nowadays the dead are buried in a common cemetery at the southwestern end of the village, but the beliefs concerning household ghosts still continue. Although a married woman retains, as I shall explain later, strong ties with her consanguines, at death her ghost (and formerly also her reliquiae) are lost permanently to her affines. Only the males of the subclan remain a united collectivity as ghosts, as they do in life; it is they who
after death watch over their agnatic descendants, receive offerings from them and symbolise the subclan's perpetuity. The ghosts of unmarried women, I might note, having no corporate identity as a group, play a very minor role in the religious affairs of the household.

Male ghosts (nggwa'al-as'a'ai wundemb: 'the ghosts of the fathers' fathers and of the fathers') are believed to have strong attachments to their wards; and their powers - at least their beneficent powers - are thought not to extend into other wards. When a man moves temporarily to another ward he deprives himself of their protection. And if he was to remain there permanently - and particularly if he was to build a house there - his ghosts would be expected to resent being uprooted and visit harm on him or his dependants.

Men are thought to have far closer ties with their agnatic nggwa'al-as'a'ai wundemb than are women. For men alone are expected to spend their whole lives under their guardianship, and are destined to join them after death. Offerings to ghosts must be presided over by their adult male descendants if they are to be effective, so that the household is dependent on its mature men for maintaining a proper relationship with these spirits. Men also have as a major sanction of their domestic authority the capacity to make powerful curses invoking their wundemb. This authority has in short a largely supernatural basis: the privileged relationship with household ghosts which patrivirilocal residence gives to adult men. This is a strong disincentive against changes of residence by men; within each subclan the authority of its adult males depends upon them remaining united residentially. Its basis is similar to that of their authority in the public sphere, which stems in an analogous way largely from their exclusive access to the cult-spirits of the major ceremonial houses.

A household consists typically of a set of real or classificatory brothers and their wives, children and other dependants. As I shall explain in the next chapter, a subclan ideally comprises two named segments called tonemb; in the past houses were very large and it was common for all the males of a tonemb to live under the same roof, the residents of an entire ward in this way being domiciled in only two
domestic houses. When European administration was first imposed in the mid-1920's some thirty houses accommodated the entire population of Old Avatip - about 800 people. However, the administration disapproved of these large households, apparently on the grounds of hygiene, and the villagers were required to make them smaller; nowadays a household rarely comprises more than two or three adult males and their dependants. In 1977 there were 74 households at Yentshanggai, accommodating roughly the same population as Old Avatip.

Houses face the river, their doors overlooking the women's and children's path. The genealogically senior men of the household, and their wives and children, are domiciled toward the front of the house (tanggawi), while their younger brothers and their dependants have their living-area toward the rear (mbanggawi); each family is in this way quartered along the main axis of the house according to the genealogical position of its head.

The central floor-space along the length of the house is the preserve of adult men; here, the family heads have individual seating-places, arranged in their order of seniority. The two sides of the house (malawit) are the women's and children's area; each wife has a domestic hearth against one of the side-walls of the house, opposite the place of her husband, and it is around her hearth that she and her children congregate. This central/peripheral division within the house is especially heightened when a woman menstruates: she must completely avoid the central 'male' floor-space, and for this reason must not use the front door of the house but enter and leave through a small side-door - little more than a hatch - located in the wall near her hearth for this purpose (the most commonly used euphemism describing a woman during her monthly period is malawiam rena: 'she sits at the side of the house').

The household's ghosts are quartered in the same manner as its living occupants. Male ghosts are said to reside in the two or three massive central houseposts supporting the ridge of the roof, once again in their order of seniority from the front to the rear of the house. The ghosts of their wives inhabit the shorter side-posts which support the eaves, each in the post nearest her own hearth.
Plate 1. The ward of the subclan Maliyaw at Yentshanggai.

Plate 2. The ward of the subclan Valik at Yentshanggai. The general path is on the left and the initiated men's path on the right.
Plate 3. Yentshanggai in the flood season.

Plate 4. The foreshore at Yentshanggai early in the dry season.
Plate 5. Raising the ridgepole of a domestic house.

Plate 6. Thatching a junior ceremonial house.
Plate 7. The ceremonial house Nyanggleaning at Yawmbak.
Plate 8. A yam house.
Plate 9. Cutting a canoe in the Amoku River bush.

Plate 10. Canoeing on the Amoku River.
As one can see, the spacial organisation of the household recapitulates much of that of the ward and of the village as a whole. Men, for example, form the central axis of the household just as they form the residential core of the ward, while their wives - as outsiders - occupy a correspondingly distal place within the house. And both in the case of the household and the village as a whole the direction of the riverfront is associated with increasing seniority, genealogical in the first case and ritual in the other. As I shall describe in a later chapter, male ritual status is governed by genealogical position so that the two are very closely linked.

Subclans possess a high degree of political autonomy, and relations between them are often intensely rivalrous. Each has a strongly proprietorial attitude to its ward, as it does to all of its corporate accoutrements - personal names, myths, ritual prerogatives and the rest. When visiting other wards people feel themselves as if they were in the public eye, and tend to behave circumspectly; it takes a number of years even for a married woman to be entirely on home ground in her husband's ward. Children are warned not to play outside their wards; and even the dogs seem to know the boundaries and guard them against each other. It is rather as if the village were conceived not as an organic whole so much as a series of contiguous little republics - and this is in fact the view of the society expressed in cosmogonic myth and in Avatip cosmology generally, as I will show in a later chapter. The atmosphere of the ward is domestic, secure and a little dull; it is in relations with other subclans that people see the real rewards - and hazards - of sociality.

vi. Conclusion: the problem of village integration

Old Avatip was as I have said a very sizeable village even by Sepik River standards, and an important question concerns the manner in which such a large settlement remained integrated in the absence of any centralised authority. I suggested earlier that at the time

3 In at least one other Sepik society, Umeda, the masculine/feminine dichotomy, is symbolically equated with the opposition central/lateral (Gell 1975:135).

4 See Harrison (1981) for a discussion of this in relation to child socialisation.
of European contact its population was beginning to approach the maximum it could sustain as a single polity; the evidence for this being the rapid and permanent break-up of the village into smaller settlements following the punitive raids. The original community was not however dismantled completely; for its daughter settlements, as I have explained, are in close proximity to each other and still form a single connubium and ceremonial community. The problems of social cohesion which Old Avatip had been about to face, while they may have been partly forestalled by its splitting apart, were therefore not eliminated; and the question remains concerning the mechanisms which continue to integrate the present-day community.

As in any uncentralised social system, there are chronic tendencies toward fission in a Manambu village; and of these the following is probably the most basic. All Manambu villages are divided conceptually into a named upriver and downriver half, although the names of these sections vary from one village to another. At Old Avatip they were called respectively Yambund and Kapak, and at Yentshanggai are known as Kamban and Mba'andjandja'anggw. There are no boundary-markers or other physical indications of this division, except at Yentshanggai where the two Government patrol huts stand at the border between them; but the boundary is precise, falling between two wards, and everyone knows where it lies.

Ideally, the two divisions should be approximately equal in length and number of residents. They are entirely independent of the clan system, since the distribution of wards along the village bears no relation to formal descent group structure. Nor do they regulate marriage in any way or have ceremonial or - in normal circumstances - political functions. The main significance of this residential bipartition is economic: the regulation of the villagers' exploitation of their environment. The residents of the downriver section generally exploit the village's downriver territory, and the upriver section its territory upstream; as people say: "We go to work in the direction which our chests face." At Yentshanggai, for example, Mba'andjandja'anggw (downstream) usually fish in the two lagoons nearest them, Pakwusuwi and Aranya'amb (see Map 2), while Kamban (upriver) residents tend to do their fishing on Walomaw, the closest lagoon to their residential section. The same
principal governs hunting, sago exploitation and other subsistence activities. No strict rule demands that these activities be carried out in this way; it is simply a matter of convenience, of saving time and energy.

The residential moieties have an important place in the subculture of children, and here they have a rather different significance. There is institutionalised rivalry between children and adolescents of the two sections, which is treated with indulgence by adults so long as it does not lead to serious trouble. The children organise mock attacks against each other in the swamps behind the village, or on the long foreshore exposed in the dry season, or simply shout insulting songs across the boundary between them. Nowadays the residential moieties also provide the teams in intra- and inter-village sports contests.

When Old Avatip broke apart after the punitive raids, it did so along the line of the residential dual division. It was its western section, Yambund, that moved to the Walamaw lagoon and established the village of Yawmbak; while the descent groups that remained based at Old Avatip, and later established themselves at Yentshanggai and Lapanggai, formed the eastern residential moiety of the village, Kapak. I suggested earlier that when the punitive expeditions took place, Old Avatip was nearing the point of fission anyway; and it is reasonable to suppose that even had these raids never occurred the fission would in time have taken place in essentially the same manner.

As a village grows in size its inhabitants are forced to travel increasingly far afield for their subsistence; and as this process continues one division may choose to hive off from the village and Resettle in the direction in which it gains its livelihood. An objection, however, to this hypothesis is that it would leave an incomplete complement of subclans in each of the two new villages. But if men were to migrate from one to the other to establish the 'missing' wards - perhaps at the invitation of affines or non-agnatic kin - their clan systems would in time become homologous.

The residential moiety division, I suggest, is a major 'fault-line' within a Manambu village; and perhaps the institutionalised aggression between the children of the two sections is in
some way a covert reflection of this. Adults sometimes become slightly embarrassed when the existence of the division is too strongly adverted to, and dismiss it as "just something concerning the children" (nyamongku ndeia ndja'ava). But I have occasionally noticed a kind of stiffness between adults of the two moieties, an attitude deriving no doubt from their own childhoods.

It is possible to suggest a number of factors responsible for having prevented the fission of Old Avatip in pre-contact times: its advantageous location, for example, which would have discouraged either of the residential divisions from moving elsewhere, and the need to maintain military strength particularly in the face of Western Iatmul expansion (on the latter point, see Tuzin 1976 for a similar argument). But I shall try to show in the following chapters that the most basic mechanism of social integration - both formerly at Old Avatip and nowadays in the community which succeeded it - is a system of 'total' prestations between social segments. This involves the exchange of women, of wealth and of many kinds of goods and services; but the most important of these forms of reciprocity is based upon a division of ritual and magical responsibilities between descent groups. These units are invested with distinctive functions in male initiatory ritual, and specialised forms of magic and sorcery for the control of the fertility of edible species and areas of land, and for manipulating weather and other phenomena. It is this exchange of 'cosmological' services, above all, which as it were binds the community into an organic whole, making its segments interdependent for maintaining the ritual system and the natural order.

But this solidarity is nevertheless an uneasy one; groups are often jealous of each other's ritual and magical prerogatives, and attempt to appropriate them from each other in order to increase their own status and prestige. These disputes revolve around the contested ownership of personal names and myths, in which the titles to these prerogatives are vested. They are resolved in highly formalised public debates, called saki, which are the central political forum of the society. Almost all competition for status between groups is waged in these debates, and it is here too that ambitious men achieve recognition as leaders.

Conflict, as Simmel (1955) showed, can in itself be a powerful
cohesive force; and I will try to show that this is very much so in the case of Avatip. Debates are fought for essentially 'symbolic' rewards, and they are highly ceremonialized and governed by etiquette, and in this way they provide an institutional framework within which status-contests between groups can be played out in a minimally disruptive manner. But more fundamentally, these disputes themselves arise out of the axiom of a reciprocity of ritual and magical services on which the unity of the society is conceived to depend. They could not occur apart from it and, however intense they may be, their effect ultimately is to reaffirm this axiom and perpetuate the values associated with it.
Chapter Two

MARRIAGE AND AFFINAL EXCHANGE

i. Descent and exchange: the vei and the ndja'am

In his analysis of descent group structure among the Melpa, Strathern (1972) stresses the importance of identifying the models and idioms in terms of which the members of a society themselves describe and conceptualise their social groups. In giving an exposition of these indigenous idioms, the anthropologist must find an adequate means of translating terms in the language he is studying into the language in which he himself is writing (Strathern 1972:6).

This, Strathern writes, is a task which carries many semantic difficulties.

At Avatip, the corporate unity of a social segment is conceived to consist in its possession of "one vei and one ndja'am" (vei nak, ndja'am nak). These terms refer to two complementary principles of Avatip social structure and facets of a group's corporate identity. The vei of a group is its presumptive apical ancestor, and the term relates to the idea of agnatic descent. Ndja'am is a rather more difficult term to translate. It is one of the most complex of Avatip concepts, and is crucial to an understanding of Avatip social structure. In this chapter and the three that follow I will try to show that it refers to the rights which a group holds in certain kinds of exchange capacities. Because it is useful to have an English equivalent for the term, I will refer to the ndja'am of a group as its estate; however, a large part of this thesis will be concerned with unravelling the meaning of the term, and I hope that the reader will for the time being simply accept this as an adequate translation.

The first type of rights which comprise an estate are rights in women; the possession of a common ndja'am denotes, as I shall show in the present chapter, that the group operates as a unit in the exchange of women and in the exchanges of goods and services that are inaugurated by marriage. A ndja'am is, secondly, a set of specialised ritual and magico-economic functions vested in a group. Social segments, as Chapter 3 will describe, are conceived of as linked together through a division of cosmological responsibilities between them. Finally, a group's ndja'am includes an hereditary
body of esoteric lore, principally secret spells and myths. These esoterica are highly valuable, and they are communicated between groups along ties of marriage; this will be described in Chapter 4.

The underlying theme which unifies these three categories of rights, and which is the key to the significance of the concept of ndja'am, is that of reciprocity. An estate is a body of capacities oriented outwards, towards other groups - in what Lévi-Strauss (1966:118, 122) terms exo-praxis. Lévi-Strauss has proposed that

(i)n any society, communication operates on three different levels: communication of women, communication of goods and services, communication of messages (Lévi-Strauss 1963:296).

Something very similar is implied in the concept of ndja'am; estate-holding groups are viewed as being interlinked in a perpetual exchange of women, of totemic and ritual services, and of esoteric knowledge. These three forms of communication are symbolically closely identified with each other, and operate according to homologous principles; they are treated ultimately as facets of a single system of exchange, and it is this which is implied by their all being subsumed under the one idiom of ndja'am. This concept refers, in other words, to a system of 'total' prestations, in which reciprocity between groups is conducted simultaneously on economic, kinship, political and cosmological planes.

This reciprocity is altogether as important and permanent a dimension of Avatip social structure as the principle of agnostic descent; a fact given explicit recognition in the notion of vei and ndja'am as the two complementary foci of the unity and solidarity of a group. A group's ndja'am expresses its status as a unit in a system of 'total' reciprocity. Its vei refers to the principle of patrilineal descent by which these capacities are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Veí literally means 'spear', and the connotations of the term are masculine, phallic and agnostic. A ndja'am, on the other hand, is symbolically feminine; as I shall explain below, it is usually represented as a female spirit personifying a vulva and womb. It is connected closely with the principle of uterine kinship, and
particularly with the relationship between a group and its collective sisters' children. The vei and ndja'am symbolise what one might term masculine and feminine aspects of the identity of a social unit: the vei an axial, 'male' principal - the patrilineal continuity of a group and the residential solidarity of its male members; and the ndja'am a distal, 'female' principal - the lateral ties of reciprocity which link a group with others, and which have as their paradigm the affinal and uterine relationships created by the marriages of its female members.

These conceptualisations are also connected with Avatip notions of physiological kinship. Bone (ap) is said to be transmitted by agnation, being formed in the womb from the father's semen. The morpheme ap is in fact highly polysemous and signifies, alone or as a prefix, a complex of ideas having to do with patriliny, centrality, strength, age or size. Blood and flesh, on the other hand, are said to be inherited by matrifiliation, originating from the mother's menstrual blood. A person is said to share blood in some loosely defined way with all the members of his or her maternal subclan; while bone is transmitted exclusively within these groups, blood is thought of as being transmitted between them through marriage. The constitution of the body in a sense reflects the constitution of society, in that it reiterates the same opposition of a 'central', patrilineal aspect, and a 'distal', uterine one. At the risk of carrying this imagery further than the villagers themselves would, one could indeed view agnation as the 'skeleton' of Avatip society, and exchange - of which marriage alliance is one facet - as its flesh and blood.

ii. Avatip descent groups

In the Manambu language a subclan is known as a nggwa'alungku. This is the plural form of the term for any agnate of the second ascending or descending generation (nggwa'al: FF, FFZ, SS, SD). In this context, however, the term is said to refer to the collective totemic ancestors of the subclan, who are similarly known as its nggwa'al or, more commonly, nggwa'al-asa'ai ('fathers' fathers and fathers'); it relates to the fact that the subclan is an important totemic group. There are no specific terms for a clan or clan-pair in Manambu; occasionally these are described as nggwa'alungku, but the primary referent of this term is the subclan.
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Table 2: Avatip descent groups, their sizes (including absentees) and ward locations in 1978.

Note: within the clan-pair/clan all segments are given in descending order of genealogical seniority.
Ideally, a subclan comprises two named segments. These units are called *tonemb*, the term for a domestic hearth (see Plate 11). They are said to have been founded by the sons of the apical ancestor of the subclan by different mothers; the term *tonemb* refers to the fact that, as described in the previous chapter, in a polygynous household each wife and her offspring have a separate cooking hearth.

The founding ancestors of all descent groups are known as I have said as *vei*, or 'spears'; those of subclans (and usually also those of clans and clan-pairs) being describes specifically as *apavei* (strong/principal spears; from *ap* (bone) - see above), and those of tanombs as *tonembavei* ('tanemb spears'). The members of these groups claim agnatic descent from their *vei*, but in no cases can precise genealogical links with them be specified.

Unlike a subclan or other higher-order group, a *tonemb* has no permanent name. Instead, it is known by the personal name of the genealogically most senior sister's child, preferably sister's son, of its senior extant generation. Once the members of this generation have all died, the name of the *tonemb* is altered to that of the senior sister's child of the next generation. A *tonemb*'s name in other words perishes every thirty years or so and is replaced with a new one. The name-change in effect announces the rise to political maturity of each generation and their taking control of the group's affairs.

Another oddity of the *tonemb* is that while its members claim descent from their *tonembavei*, they also trace more immediate common descent from an ancestor placed some six or seven generations in the past; and their links with this figure can be precisely specified. It is said that when Asiti was destroyed (see preceding chapter), one man from every *tonemb* survived; these are the figures which the tanombs posit as their immediate apical ancestors, and which represent the upper limits of unbroken genealogical knowledge. They are known as *warangk* (or *waranggandu* [warangk men]), the term for all agnates of the third ascending and all previous generations (and also of the third descending and all successive generations).

Morphologically then, a *tonemb* could be regarded as a sub-sub-clan consisting of a single lineage; in this thesis I will refer to these
groups simply by the indigenous term for them. The significance of this form of pedigree will become clear later, when I describe the genealogical position of totemic ancestors, a category of forebears entirely distinct from both vei and warungk.

All segments sharing common descent stand in an order of genealogical seniority as 'elder siblings' (ma'amungkw) and 'younger siblings' (nyamusungkw). Within the clan-pair, one clan stands as senior to the other, as do subclans within the clan, tonombs within the subclan, patrilines within the tonomb and, finally, siblings within the same sibling set.

In theory, a man has authority over his younger brothers and can expect deference and respect from them. A man may not marry, enter any initiatory grade, or acquire expertise in magic, sorcery, esoteric myth or debating - the basis, as I shall show in a later chapter, of leadership at Avatip - before his elder brother does so. At the level of relations between groups as well, as I shall explain in a later chapter, genealogical seniority confers certain privileges. Two very important kinds of corporate rights are determined by seniority: firstly, ritual, magical and totemic prerogatives, the most prestigious of which are in principal held by senior segments; and secondly the manner in which such entitlements escheat when groups become extinct. The ratification of these rights is one of the most important functions of a group's agnatic pedigree.

In contrast to some Melanesian societies, and in particular those of the Highlands, the recruitment of descent groups at Avatip follows patrilineal descent very strictly. One does not find individuals altering their group affiliations, or segments incorporating affines, sisters' children or other non-agnates. But

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1 In this thesis the names of tonombs are given in italics, so as to enable the reader to distinguish them from the names of subclans. I have also adopted the procedure of prefixing to the names of tonombs the names of the subclan to which they belong; thus, Maliyaw Wapikas = the tonomb Wapikas of the subclan Maliyaw. This is done so as to specify the subclan of which each tonomb is a segment; it is not, I should note, a practice followed by the Manambu themselves.

2 To be precise, ma'am and nyamus (pl. ma'amungkw, nyamusungkw) mean respectively elder and younger sibling of the same sex.
rather paradoxically, this absence of 'flexibility' does not result from an emphasis on agnation as such, but more directly from the principles of the affinal exchange system. Before this can be explained, however, it is first necessary to examine the concept of ndja'am and its relationship to Avatip social structure.

iii. Ndja'am and the prescription of exogamy

To start with the primary and probably simplest referent of this polysemous term: a ndja'am is a type of spirit-being whose distinctive function is to punish incest and breaches of rules of exogamy. As I mentioned above, it is regarded as female and is often spoken of as a personified vulva and womb.

Like vei, ndja'am-spirits are individually named and each is associated with a specific descent group. While named segments of every order possess a vei, only those which are significant for the regulation of marriage possess ndja'am. These are, firstly, the three primary exogamous groups Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggela'angkw clan-pairs and Nambul-Sambelap clan, and secondly each subclan within them.

Incest and breaches of exogamy are known as kwaiyakes ('staying the vulva': i.e. keeping the vulva from those, as it were, with legitimate access to it). A ndja'am-spirit is believed to punish acts of kwaiyakes between the members of the group with which it is identified and, in the case of a subclan ndja'am-spirit, with or between their sisters' children. The spirit is expected to visit sickness and eventual death on the offenders and, if offspring results from the union, to cause a stillbirth or death in infancy. In both cases extended sacrifices of pigs are necessary to appease the spirit.

To the members of a descent group, their ndja'am-spirit is as important a symbol of their collective identity as is their vei. They view themselves as united not only by descent, but just as significantly by the fact that as a corollary they share a single source of retribution for acts of kwaiyakes.

The concept of ndja'am does not however simply relate to a negative proscription of marriage and sexual relations within prohibited categories; the emphasis is rather on the positive
injunction on men to bestow upon others the women forbidden to themselves as sexual partners. There is a rather curious practice which illustrates this well. Distantly related kin may quite safely have incestuous sexual relations if a man standing as a legitimate potential spouse of the woman copulates with her immediately after the act. For this reason, a man intending an illicit rendezvous with, let us say, a distant clan 'sister', will usually arrange to have an appropriate accomplice come with him to perform this service. The 'bestowal' of the woman on this legitimate mate completely neutralises the incest and forestalls any punishment by the ndja'am-spirit. It is not so much the act of incest itself which the ndja'am-spirits sanction, so much as the refusal - which incest implies but does not necessitate - to yield up a female consanguine to other men. What a group's ndja'am-spirit symbolises then, is not simply that its members are forbidden to each other as mates but, more positively, that they are an active source of marriage partners for outsiders.

iv. Clan-pair ndja'am and the question of Avatip dualism

The three maximal descent groups at Avatip - the clan-pairs Nggola'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi, and the clan Nambul-Sambolap - are, as I have said, each exogamous. Each has its own ndja'am-spirit, and these are named respectively Ndjamawanwai, Meipørwaralimungk and Watukwulmangk.

As one can see from Table 2, Nggola'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi account for approximately 44% and 49% of the population respectively, and Nambul-Sambolap for some 7%. Demographically speaking then, there is very nearly a moiety system at Avatip. In fact, the villagers habitually speak of their marriage system very much as if they had a moiety-like model in mind and were attempting to fit their triadic system into a dualistic mould. It is often said of Nambul-Sambolap that it "stands in the middle" (nyendom tenand) - between the other two groups; sometimes, this clan is referred to by the epithet, "the hole, or gap, in the middle" (nyendom tap). Asked to elucidate this somewhat puzzling expression, one informant explained it as follows:

It is just like your house here at Avatip. There are two rooms, one at the front and one at the back. Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw are like those two rooms. Nambul-Sambolap is like the doorway between them; it can be entered from both sides.
The term 'entered' was meant to convey, as it does in English, a double *entendre*; Nambul-Sambolap is 'entered from both sides' in the sense that its women are the potential spouses of men of both Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw. Now of course exactly the same is true of these two clan-pairs as well; their women are married by men of two other groups. But Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw - and this is no doubt facilitated by the fact that they include most of the village population and are nearly equal in size - are conceptualised as halves of an exogamous dual division, as though exchange of women took place between them alone. In order to fit Nambul-Sambolap into this scheme, this clan is spoken of simply as a kind of floating pool of women standing 'between' the other two groups. Clearly, the attempt is being made to convert a set of three terms into a dualism by identifying one of them with the relation - the 'gap' - between the other two. It is women who, through their marriages, are viewed as forming the link between Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw; hence Nambul-Sambolap is a conceptually 'feminised' group, a segment represented simply as a stock of women to be "entered from both sides."

Lévi-Strauss (1963) has argued, in a paper concerning the relation of dual to ternary forms of social structure, that the former are simply a special case of the latter; dual organisations are only superficially dual, and a more fundamental triadic scheme underlies them. In the case of Avatip social structure, however, the relation of binarism to triadism is arguably the reverse of this. In actuality - as the villagers are of course perfectly aware - their marriage system involves three groups; this number is itself presumably contingent, a result of demographic and other processes. But to the villagers - although they would not express it in this way, it is implicit in their statements - this ternary system is the 'imperfect' empirical realisation of an underlying and more basic dualism.

The villagers speak of Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw as standing corporately in a permanent uterine relationship with each other; each is referred to as the collective 'mothers' (*ameimber*), or 'mothers' brothers' (*awainber*) of the other. Their respective *ndja'om*-spirits, which ensure their exogamy, symbolise this immemorial 'matrifilial' tie between them. This usage is, however,
a largely rhetorical one; in actual practice the effective units for reckoning uterine kinship are not these groups but subclans, as I shall describe below.

In many other ways as well, the relationship between Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw resembles one of a 'classical' moiety type. As I will show in Chapter 3, they possess complementary ceremonial and magico-economic functions; and Nambul-Sambolap fits into this dualistic scheme in a - from a formal point of view - rather untidy way. Like that of the Iatmul depicted so perceptively by Bateson (1958:123-141), Avatip eidos is pervaded by dualisms. Binarism repeatedly manifests itself not only in social organisation, but also in such diverse fields as flute music (cf. Bateson 1958:246; Tuzin 1976:350-54), song and lyric, and the symbolic organisation of time (Harrison, in press) to mention only a few examples. Whatever the reasons for the villagers' propensity to visualise their social structure in dualistic terms, one factor which I think should not be ignored is the intellectual and aesthetic attraction which such a paradigm has in this culture.

In a recent monograph dealing with another Sepik society, the Ilahita Arapesh, Tuzin (1976) has attempted an alternative to what he describes as idealist approaches to the study of dual organisation exemplified by Lévi-Strauss' early writings on the subject (Lévi-Strauss 1949). Tuzin found among the Ilahita a complex system of cross-cutting dual divisions, the 'total' systematic properties of which his informants only partially comprehended. Tuzin argues that these structures are an emergent - and hence largely unintended and unperceived - product of individual goal-oriented behaviour directed toward other ends. This actor-focussed approach, he proposes, makes it unnecessary to assume dual organisation to be a reflection of an innate mental disposition toward binarism. My intention here is not to criticize Tuzin's analysis so much as simply to point out that the problem which Tuzin encountered in his work is in a sense the reverse

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3 One possibility is that Nambul-Sambolap is a recent immigrant group incorporated into a pre-existing moiety system. However, all indications are to the contrary. The triadic pattern seems to be of long standing and is reproduced in all the Manambu villages. And mythology suggests that if any of the three groups is a more recent arrival than the other two, it is Wuluwi-Nyawi (see Chapter 8).
of one which I faced in my own. The Ilahitans possess a complex dual organisation the complete mechanics of which they themselves only partially grasp; at Avatip the idea exists of a system of exogamous moieties which the society is in fact without. It would clearly be impossible to apply to Avatip the kind of analysis which Tuzin proposes, for Avatip dualism cannot in any way be said to 'emerge' from behaviour in the manner which Tuzin suggests for the Ilahita. It is rather an idealisation, an artificial construction put upon behaviour; and one to which - as the people themselves would be the first to admit - their actual social arrangements only approximate. And this construction, I would argue, derives at least partly from the fact that the relationship between the three primary groups at Avatip is conceived to be fundamentally one of reciprocity, as symbolised by their respective ndja'am; and that, as Lévi-Strauss has shown (1949), one of the logically most elementary ways of institutionalising reciprocity within a society (or, in the case of Avatip, of representing the idea of such reciprocity) is in the form of dual organisation.

v. Subclan ndja'am and the marriage system

Terminologically, a person stands as sister's child (nggambero, m.s.), or as child (nyan, w.s.), to all his or her mother's subclan-agnates of the mother's generation and of all succeeding generations. The members of their maternal subclan refer collectively to these individuals as nggambero-yanungkis (sisters' children and children). Reciprocally, a man stands as mother's brother (awai), and a woman - in address - as mother (ameit), to the children of all the females of their subclan of their own generation and of all preceding generations. In referential usage the term ameit is usually applied only to one's own mother; her real and classificatory elder sisters within her subclan are referred to as nyan, and all her female subclan-agnates genealogically junior to herself irrespective of generation as mamai. A person refers to the members of his or her maternal subclan collectively as awai-mamai (see Figure 2).

As these terminological usages suggest, a person stands in an important sense in a uterine relationship with the maternal subclan as a whole. On the other hand a person is considered to have no
Fig. 2. Basic uterine kin terms
matrifilial ties with other subclans of the same clan or clan-pair as that of his or her mother; and conversely a subclan has no uterine ties with the nggambero-nyanungkw of subclans collateral with itself. If no closer kinship ties intervene, these individuals stand to each other simply in the residual category of mamandu/mamata'akw ('enemy men/women') - potential marriageables, with whom no significant relationships are traced. It is the uterine ties which flow from them which distinguish subclans of the same clan or clan-pair from one another; each is a quite separate entity for reckoning matrifiliation.

The most basic way in which this is expressed is that marriage and sexual relations between nggambero-nyanungkw and cawai-mamai - between a person and a member of his or her maternal subclan - are forbidden. Each subclan possesses a ndja'am-spirit of its own, separate from and subsidiary to the spirit of the exogamous group as a whole, and any breach of this prohibition would be punished by this spirit. Like the three principal ndja'am-spirits, the subclan spirit also punishes incest and breaches of exogamy between agnates; but a function specific to this spirit, and which distinguishes it from the higher-order spirits, is the punishment of such infractions between uterine kin.

A person may legitimately marry into a subclan collateral with that of his or her mother; and, conversely, marry a sister's child of a subclan collateral with his or her own. Because there is demographically almost a moiety system at Avatip, such marriages are in fact the statistical norm. This is explicitly recognised by the villagers themselves, who view subclans of the same exogamous group as involved in exchanging sisters' daughters with each other.

People speak of their marriage system as based upon a movement of women in two dimensions simultaneously: an exchange of female agnates between exogamous groups, and an exchange of sisters' daughters within these groups. The first is seen as being guaranteed by the three principal ndja'am-spirits, which punish marriage between agnates; and the second by the subclan spirits, which specifically punish marriage between the members of each subclan and their own nggambero-nyanungkw.
Bridewealth and mortuary payments are the two most important types of affinal prestation made at Avatip, and the unit in these transactions is the subclan (see below). The subclan pays bridewealth as a group on the first marriages of its male members, and receives bridewealth as a group on the marriages of its female members. Similarly, it receives mortuary payments on the deaths of its nggambero-nyanungka, and makes mortuary payments to the maternal subclans of its members upon their deaths. Minimally, it is the tonømb which performs these functions; some tonømbs do act independently in these affairs, but this is usually a sign of an incipient subclan fission.

The marriage of any member of the tonømb, while most immediately the concern of the tonømb itself, is ultimately the corporate affair of the subclan as a whole; subclans are in the final analysis the units which arrange marriage and between which debts and credits in women are reckoned. The adult males of the subclan not only collectively hold rights of disposal over the females of the subclan but also have a considerable say in the marriages of their sisters' daughters. There is a quite explicit policy which these groups follow in contracting marriages. Firstly, they attempt to spread their alliances as widely as possible. A subclan preferably has at any one time at least one of its female members married into every subclan with which it stands in a marriageable relationship; and at least one sister's daughter married into every subclan collateral with itself. Secondly, a balanced flow of women should in the long term be maintained between groups. For every female agnate or sister's daughter bestowed, another should eventually be given in return. If a major disequilibrium between two groups was to develop, the senior men of the aggrieved group would be likely to make a formal curse (wambawi ma'andf) forbidding the women of their subclan, or their sisters' daughters as the case may be, from marrying into the offending subclan until it makes good its debts.

Despite this emphasis on balanced reciprocity, true sister-exchange marriage is strongly disapproved of, because it would destroy what is thought of as the necessary asymmetry inherent in the affinal relationship. The essence of mutually satisfactory ties of marriage between any two subclans is for these inequalities to be allowed full play between individual patrilines, but within an overall balance in the movement of women between the two groups as wholes.
A subclan stands as a unit in a very important relationship with the husbands of its female members, with the children these women bear, and with the husbands of its sisters' daughters. I will refer to these individuals collectively as the subclan's allies. They are indebted to the subclan as the source of their wives, mothers and wives' mothers respectively, and are expected to support it in all collective enterprises it undertakes. They give their assistance, for example, in building or repairing the subclan's ceremonial house; they contribute to the bridewealth and mortuary payments it makes; and they support it in brawls and debates. In no circumstances whatever does a subclan corporately act alone, but always in concert with these allies.

Of the three categories of ally, it is the subclan's sisters' sons who have the strongest allegiances to it. The blood a person shares with his matrikin not only renders the sister's child unmarriageable, but is also viewed as a debt of bodily substance creating binding obligations to the maternal subclan. When men rally to the support of their maternal subclans in some context or other, they often justify their action with the cliche: "my mother's blood pulls me to it" (amei nyiki langwundandwun). A man's ties with his mother's subclan are regarded as stronger than those with the subclan of his wife, because the latter are not based on consanguinity, and these in turn are stronger than those with the subclan of his wife's mother.

A subclan has a number of reciprocal obligations towards its allies. As I will describe in later chapters, they hold usufructory rights in the subclan's land; the right to learn the subclan's secret mythology and to learn and practice the techniques of magic vested in it; and, in default of the subclan's own members, to assume their hereditary responsibilities in male ritual. None of the subclan's allies, except for sisters' husbands, may pass these entitlements on to their own children. An alliance is established by the marriage of a female member of the subclan, and comes to an end on the deaths of her offspring; at this point the rights I have just described automatically expire and revert to the subclan.

The most important of a subclan's obligations to its allies are towards its nggambëro-nyanung'ës. A man is expected to refuse his true
sister's children nothing, and allow them to help themselves to his possessions without asking. As an expression of the closeness of this relationship, the true mother's brother is referred to as ma'arnā'isu ('elder brother man'), and a mother's brother and sister's son will often address each other as elder and younger brother.

A man has a nurturant, supportive, quasi-maternal relationship with his sister's children. He should send them food gifts throughout his life - beginning while they are children with food gifts to their father, his sister's husband. He should help provide pigs and domestic fowl as sacrificial offerings when his sister's children fall ill, and assist them with tasks such as housebuilding, gardening and making canoes, and he has a number of special responsibilities toward them during rites de passage. A woman too has much the same kinds of duties towards her sister's children, the physically more arduous of which are usually performed on her behalf by her husband. As I mentioned earlier, all of a man's agnatic descendants stand terminologically to his sister's children as 'mothers' and 'mothers' brothers' themselves; and after his death they are expected to maintain the same kind of relationship with them. The rendering of goods and services to sisters' children is referred to as 'giving mother's milk' (amei mān kwina) an idiom which will be encountered frequently in later chapters.

As I have explained, each subclan ideally has at all times alliance ties with individuals in every other subclan in the community: with sisters' husbands and sisters' children in all directly marriageable subclans, and with sisters' daughters' husbands in all subclans of the same exogamous group as itself.

An alliance is inaugurated by a marriage and comes to an end with the deaths of the children of the marriage. It then becomes necessary for a further marriage between the two groups to be contracted so that a continuous alliance is maintained. While each generation within the subclan inherits the alliance relationships of preceding generations, these relations are themselves continually decaying and must be regularly re-created. One of the responsibilities

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4 Alternatively, 'giving the mother's breast'; mān means both breast and breast-milk.
of a sister's son toward his maternal subclan is to ensure that this takes place - to arrange a marriage between his own subclan and that of his mother, so that the alliance between them is renewed and continues after his death. One of the simplest ways he can effect this is to arrange such a marriage for one or more of his own children. The latter refer to all the members of their father's mother's subclan by the single term *ya'ai*, and stand to them in turn as *yanan*. People clearly envisage the way in which, if followed, *ya'ai-yanan* marriage leads to a regular repetition of marriages in alternate generations. Often, the partners stand to each other as true or classificatory FMWSC and FFZSC; but a union with any member of the *ya'ai* subclan of a suitable age, regardless of generation, satisfies the requirements of this form of marriage.

Given the disapproval of sister exchange, a marriage between *ya'ai* and *yanan* may take one of two forms: between female *ya'ai* and male *yanan*, or between male *ya'ai* and female *yanan*. In the first case, the sister's son is viewed as calling for a woman of his maternal subclan to marry his son, so that she may bear sister's children for her subclan to take his own place when he dies. In the second case he is regarded as returning his daughter in marriage to his maternal subclan in repayment for his own mother. Structurally, the two types of marriage are of course quite different: in the first, the direction of movement of women remains constant, while with the second the positions of wife-givers and wife-takers are reversed. But these differences are less important to the villagers than the fact that both are equally effective means of recreating an alliance which would otherwise lapse. Regularly repeated, one form would lead to long-term and the other to short-term asymmetries in the movement of women between patrilines. But so long as an overall equilibrium is maintained between the two subclans as wholes, these are in the end immaterial; for it is not between patrilines but between subclans that transfers of women are ultimately reckoned to take place. And both forms of marriage, or any combination of them, are quite compatible with such an equilibrium, as Figure 3 shows.

Furthermore, it is rare for *ya'ai-yanan* marriage to be consistently followed, in either of its forms. Usually, two affinally-linked patrilines in time decide to discontinue their alliance and contract marriages elsewhere. There is no prescription of *ya'ai-yanan*
Fig. 3. Balanced *ya'ai–yanan* marriages between two subclans
marriage; and all that is important, as I have said, is that while observing the prohibition of marriage with sisters' children, alliances between any two marriageable subclans should be continually renewed as they expire, and that an overall parity be preserved in their exchanges of women.

vi. Classificatory matrilateral siblingship

All persons sharing the same maternal subclan stand to one another terminologically as siblings, and there are very close ties between them. Matrilateral siblings, as I shall call them, borrowing Kelly's (1977) term, are said to "come from one womb" (ya'al nak rendi: they lay in a single womb). They might say of themselves, for example, Valika ya'al rendiyan: "We lay in the womb of the subclan Valik." Marriage and sexual relations between matrilateral siblings are forbidden, and if they occurred they would be punished by the ndja'am-spirit of their maternal subclan.

Matrilateral siblings perform a number of functions performed by a subclan. For instance, they assist each other with the payment of brideprice; and they have the right, conversely, to receive a share of the bridewealth for each other's sisters. They contribute to each other's mortuary payments; and, reciprocally, they are entitled to a share of the mortuary payments for each other's sisters' children. They share a common relationship with each other's sisters' husbands, sisters' children and sisters' daughters' husbands, and have essentially the same alliance ties with them as they have with the allies of their own subclans. For example, matrilateral siblings stand terminologically as awai-mamai of each other's sisters' children, and have much the same rights and responsibilities in relation to them as to nggambbero-nyanungkw of their own subclans; they should send them food gifts regularly, assist them in major economic tasks, and so forth. When it is necessary to distinguish them, the mother's subclan-agnates are known as wundi-awaimamai, or 'umbilicus awaimamai' (reciprocal: wundi-nggambbero-nyanungkw), and the mother's matrilateral siblings as rekesa-awaimamai, or 'vulva awaimamai' (reciprocal: rekesa-nggambbero-nyanungkw). A set of matrilateral siblings can be thought of as so to speak the uterine 'shadow' cast by their maternal subclan on the groups it intermarries with - in that it has a structure similar to that of a subclan but based on uterine ties rather than on agnation.
Because there is, demographically, a near-moiety division, most of a person's matrilateral siblings are likely to belong to the same exogamous groups as himself; and because of the policy of spreading marriages, they are likely to include members of all the subclans collateral with his own. This has important consequences for political relations between segments of the same clan or clan-pair, for matrilateral siblings support each other in brawls and disputes. The principle of segmentary escalation, familiar from African segmentary descent systems, tends not to operate; for the clan or clan-pair is internally cross-cut by ties of matrilateral siblingship creating solidarities as powerful as those which unite the subclan. In a dispute, for example, between two men of two collateral subclans, the protagonists will be supported by (among others) their respective matrilateral siblings; and these are likely to include members of all the subclans of the same exogamous unit, including members of each other's subclans. The only type of dispute between agnates which do escalate along segmentary lines to some extent are debates; for here there are no individual protagonists since the conflict is between two groups purely as corporate entities, so that matrilateral siblingship cannot operate.

In principle, matrilateral siblingship may be transmitted indefinitely through parallel-sex links in each generation, so that for example two individuals related as FMZSC may if they wish treat each other as matrilateral siblings and continue the relationship which obtained between their fathers. In actuality, matrilateral siblingship tends to be extinguished after a couple of generations. For if these ties were allowed to accumulate indefinitely, they would eventually saturate the society and make all marriage impossible; everyone would stand to everyone else either as siblings or as awaimamai and nggambero-nyangungka.

vii. The system of bridewealth and mortuary payments

A marriage involves the two subclans concerned in two major affinal prestations: bridewealth (ta'akwayu) and mortuary payments (kəketep). A subclan receives bridewealth on the marriages of its female members, and a kəketep payment on the death of each of its sisters' children. Marriage and the transfer of bridewealth inaugurate an alliance; the deaths of the children of the marriage, and the mortuary payments made for them, mark its end. Thus both
the beginning and the expiry of an alliance are marked by large transfers of wealth to the wife-giving subclan.

A woman's bridewealth is shared between her subclan-agnates and her matrilateral siblings; a person's kekete'p is shared between his or her mother's subclan-agnates and the mother's matrilateral siblings. A bridewealth payment is made jointly by the husband's subclan and that of his mother, together with the respective sisters' husbands, sisters' sons and sisters' daughters' husbands of these groups. A kekete'p payment is made jointly by the subclan of the deceased and - if the latter was married - by the subclan of his or her spouse, again together with their respective sisters' husbands, sisters' sons and sisters' daughters' husbands. (An unmarried child's kekete'p is made by its subclan and allies alone; while that of a polygynous male is contributed to by all his wives' subclans and their allies, so that it tends to be large). (See Figures 4 and 5).

Both bridewealth and mortuary payments consist of shell valuables of various kinds (ndja'ap), nowadays with the addition of cash. They have inflated since pre-contact times, in the case of mortuary payments considerably; this has resulted from an increased availability of shell valuables, particularly since the end of the Second World War.

Kekete'p is and always has been economically and sociologically a more important transaction than bridewealth. Firstly, it is more substantial; bridewealth payments are deliberately kept relatively small, so as not to weaken the obligations of wife-takers to their wife-givers. Secondly, a woman's brideprice - at least for an eldest daughter - should exactly equal that paid for her mother, and it is distributed among the children of the donors to the mother's brideprice in exact repayment for their original contributions. In effect, one brideprice simply goes in return for another; the two payments must match each other exactly, and it is said that any deficit or excess would cause the bride to be barren.

Kekete'p, on the other hand, involves an element of 'profit' and a degree of flexibility which enables enterprising individuals to manipulate this system of payments to their own advantage. The goods and services which individuals render their sisters' children
Fig. 4. Categories of donors and recipients of bridewealth
Fig. 5. Categories of donors and recipients of kākatap
validate their rights to receive $kekatep$ on the latters' deaths. A person's share of a mortuary payment is normally far greater than the total outlay expended on the sister's child concerned; English-speaking Manambu describe the economic responsibilities towards sisters' children as a form of 'investment', in that they eventually bring large returns. There is no theoretical limit on the size of a $kekatep$ payment, and it depends simply on the number of donors and the size of their individual contributions. The largest payment I recorded during fieldwork was about 400 valuables plus K1600; an average $kekatep$ for a married woman or monogamous male, however, is usually of the order of 200 valuables plus K500 (an average bride-price, in contrast, is in the region of 80 valuables plus K45$^5$).

Normally, the recipients of a person's mortuary payment are the mother's closest surviving agnates and matrilateral siblings. However, it is usual for a large number of individuals to stand terminologically to a person as 'mother's brothers' and 'mothers'; and all of these are potentially entitled to establish the necessary relationship with him or her through provision of goods and services, and so qualify themselves to receive a share of the mortuary payment. Energetic individuals - both men and women - can maintain a large number of such relationships, and receive $kekatep$ frequently; on the other hand those who are undutiful to their sisters' children risk having the latter formally sever their ties with them and being debarred from their $kekatep$. The status of 'mother's brother' or 'mother' is in effect partly an achieved one, since it must be continually validated by gifts and services.

Some time before his death, a person informs his close kin of those $awaimanai$ he wishes to receive his mortuary payment and the relative proportions of it to go to each. Ideally, the $kekatep$ should be divided equally between his $wandi-awaimanai$ and $rekoe-awaimanai$. However, if one of the two sets of $awaimanai$ neglect him, he may arrange for a larger share - or even the whole payment - to go to the other. During his life there is a certain degree of competition between the two sets for his allegiance, which tends to ensure that both observe their duties to him scrupulously.

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$^5$ During the period of my fieldwork, the Papua New Guinea Kina was equivalent to about A$1.25.$
It is expected of some individuals, while still alive, that their *kekətep* payments will be particularly large: polygynists, for example, as I mentioned earlier; members of large subclans, or persons with large numbers of matrilateral siblings; persons who are consistently major contributors to *kekətep* payments, and who are therefore expected to have correspondingly substantial contributions made to their own *kekətep* in return; and finally *simbuka*, men prominent in the principal sphere of Avatip politics - esoteric mythology and debating (see Chapter 4). Such an individual may have large numbers of *awaimanai* wishing to establish ties with him, and competing for his attention with goods and services.

When people receive *kekətep* for the child of a female subclan-agnate, they distribute part of it in repayment to those of their subclan-mates who have previously given such shares to them; similarly, they distribute part of the *kekətep* for the children of their matrilateral sisters to those of their matrilateral siblings who have shared with them a part of such receipts themselves. If a person neglects his sisters' children and receives little or no *kekətep* for them, he may be unable to discharge these debts properly. He is likely in future to be left out by his agnates or matrilateral siblings in distributions of *kekətep* receipts. A person must be dutiful to his sisters' children if he is to maintain his economic position within his own subclan, and among his matrilateral siblings. The mortuary payments they are jointly entitled to receive are of paramount economic importance to the members of a subclan, or a set of matrilateral siblings; and disputes are likely to occur within them if one of their number does not 'pull his weight' *vis-à-vis* his duties to his sisters' children.

An alliance between two subclans involves them in the course of time in several bridewealth and *kekətep* transactions. These are listed below, in their normal chronological order. Although not shown, it should be remembered, firstly, that in making any payment a subclan is assisted by its allies; and secondly, that the recipients of a woman's brideprice, and of the mortuary payments for her children, include her matrilateral siblings as well as her subclan agnates (see Figure 6).
Fig. 6. The cycle of bridewealth and kakatap payments
1. The marriage of x. The transfer of bridewealth from subclan B to D, to which x's maternal subclan C contributes.

2. The marriage of x's son. The transfer of bridewealth from subclan B to E, to which x's wife's subclan D contributes.

3. The deaths of x and his wife. Subclans B and D jointly make a mortuary payment to x's maternal subclan C on his death, and to his wife's maternal subclan A on her death.

4. The deaths of x's children (x's son only shown). Subclans B and E jointly make a mortuary payment to x's son's maternal subclan D.

It can be seen that a bridewealth payment, or a mortuary payment for a married person, is always made jointly by two affinally-linked subclans (or, in the case of a polygynous male's mortuary payment, by more than two) to another. Because there is very nearly an exogamous dual division, the recipient subclan is in most cases of the same exogamous group as one of the two donor subclans. This is the situation I have represented in Figure 6, subclans A and B being of one clan or clan-pair, and C, D and E of another. The system of affinal and matrilateral payments involves the movement of wealth not only between exogamous groups but also within them; collateral subclans are engaged in an indirect exchange of bridewealth and kókótep payments with each other. This is a consequence of the fact that, firstly, these groups, forbidden marriage with their own nggambéro-nyänungkw, intermarry with each other's; and, secondly, that each contributes to the bridewealth payments of its sisters' sons and to the mortuary payments for its members' spouses.

viii. Conclusion

Clearly, a subclan can operate as a unit in bridewealth and mortuary transactions only on condition that it prohibits marriage with its nggambéro-nyänungkw. If such marriage was to take place the subclan would bring the rules of the system into conflict with each other and find itself in the position of both donor and recipient in the same payment. Given the rules of matrilateral and affinal exchange, the units in this system are necessarily the units for reckoning matrilateral kinship; i.e. the groups whose members hold their nggambéro-nyänungkw in common.

It sometimes happens, as I shall describe in a later chapter, that the two tänambês which normally comprise a subclan begin to marry
Plate 11. A domestic hearth.

Plate 12. A mortuary payment displayed on an effigy of the dead person.
each other's sisters' children - to treat them, in other words, not as sisters' children but as unrelated marriageables (manandu/-ta'ako).
When this happens, it is usually an indication that the subclan is undergoing fission. Once a sister's son of one tonomb marries a woman of the other, his maternal tonomb is obliged to contribute to his bridewealth payment, which the other tonomb receives; and when he dies, his maternal tonomb receives a mortuary payment to which his wife's tonomb contributes. In this way the two tonombs become independent units in the exchange of bridewealth and mortuary payments. One of the most important ways in which this is signalled is the acquisition of separate ndja'am-spirits by the two tonombs, which signifies the permissibility of marriage with each other's sisters' children.

The keystone of the unity of the subclan in marriage alliance and in economic exchange is the prohibition of marriage with its nngambevo-nyanungk. A subclan remains united in this way so long as its members remain united in an unmarrigeable relationship with their collective sisters' children. As I have described it is the subclan's ndja'am-spirit which symbolises this relationship. When the members of a subclan invoke their shared ndga'can as a focus of their solidarity, they are in effect stating that they are an autonomous alliance-making group and a co-operative unit in the exchange of wealth. They view themselves as united, in other words, not only by descent - their possession of a single vei - but also through a common relationship to a single set of allies; and it is this latter aspect of the collective identity of the subclan that its ndja'am-spirit signifies.

As I mentioned earlier, recruitment to descent groups at Avatip is strictly agnatic. It often happens that, for instance, a person is fostered as a child by his maternal subclan, usually following the death of his father; it is in fact an important responsibility of a subclan to foster sisters' children in this situation, and it is an additional validation of its right to receive kakatap on their deaths. But once the sister's child is mature and marries, he or she is expected to leave the maternal ward and take up residence, in the case of a man, in his agnatic ward and, in the case of a woman, in that of her husband. A subclan in fact takes care to ensure that these sisters' children never become too closely identified with itself but always retain their membership in their own agnatic groups. The main reason for this is that if it was to permanently incorporate a sister's
child, it would automatically deprive itself of the *mekep* payment for the latter. A sister's child has many of the same rights and responsibilities as an agnate anyway (see above). Sisters' children, for example, contribute to the bridewealth and mortuary payments a subclan makes in the same way that its own members do; and a subclan contributes to the bridewealth payments of its sisters' sons just as it does to those of its agnatic members. To recruit sisters' children would not in fact radically alter their status or be of any particular advantage to the subclan, but would simply prevent the subclan from receiving mortuary payments for them. The economic aspects of marriage alliance are such that a subclan must ensure that its wife-takers' patrilines always remain distinct from itself, and that within these patrilines a regular progression be maintained - from affines in one generation, sisters' children in the next, and potential spouses in the third.

Secondly, it is possible for even a very small subclan to remain economically viable. This is so firstly because a subclan is assisted by its allies in making all affinal payments and, rather more importantly, because matrilateral siblings co-operate in these transactions in quite the same way that subclan-agnates do. The members of a subclan each collaborate with their respective matrilateral siblings in paying and receiving bridewealth and mortuary prestations; no matter how small a subclan is, it can in principle remain viable in these exchanges as long as its members have sufficient numbers of matrilateral siblings. For this reason, small subclans tend to intermarry with very large ones, as this generally provides their members with large sets of matrilateral siblings. In this way a declining subclan can continue to successfully discharge its exchange functions almost up to the point it becomes extinct. There is then no necessity for a small subclan to incorporate non-agnates so as to bolster its numerical strength in affinal exchange; for matrilateral siblingship as well as agnation enjoins collaboration in these prestations.

For these reasons, bridewealth and mortuary payments are not particularly important for political relations between groups. Since a subclan can in principle discharge its economic obligations adequately irrespective of its size, these exchanges provide little scope for corporate competition for power and status - as they do in many other Melanesian societies. One does not find for example, as
one does among the neighbouring Chambri (Gewertz 1977a), patron-client relations between descent groups in which large groups assist small ones in meeting their affinal exchange obligations in return for their political allegiance. An Avatip subclan can always preserve its autonomy in these affairs; for exchange functions are not only discharged by subclans but also by sets of matrilateral siblings, and these sets entirely cross-cut descent group structure.

It is nevertheless correct to speak of subclans as the basic units in these exchanges; for a set of matrilateral siblings, although of course not a subclan itself, is defined in reference to a subclan - its members' common maternal subclan. While exchange functions are performed by two distinct and cross-cutting types of social unit, the important point is that both have as the focus and symbol of their solidarity in affinal exchange a specific ndja'am-spirit: the spirit of their common maternal subclan in the case of a set of matrilateral siblings and, in the case of a subclan, its own agnatic ndja'am-spirit.

While the system of bridewealth and mortuary payments is central to Avatip social structure, it is almost entirely without a political dimension, at least so far as relations between corporate groups are concerned. And this I think helps to explain, if negatively, the focus which Avatip polities does have - the competition for personal names and the ceremonial and other prerogatives vested in them. Here, group size is a critical factor; small groups are vulnerable to the loss of their personal names, secret lore and hereditary privileges to larger and more successful ones. For these hereditaments are the exclusive corporate property of descent groups, so that the matrilateral siblings of the subclan's members have no rights to them and the capacity of the subclan to maintain control of them depends heavily on its own numerical strength. Part of the reason, then, why Avatip politics revolves around the possession of 'immaterial' prerogatives, rather than around the control of wealth, is that it is only in the case of the former that demographic fluctuations can act as the necessary dynamic for power and status contests between groups.

One might nevertheless ask why small subclans do not make a practice of incorporating non-agnates, if their capacity to defend
their names and prerogatives depends on their own size. As I shall explain in a later chapter, declining subclans tend to create totemic relations with each other or with other larger subclans; these are an effective way for these groups to maintain control of their patrimonies in the face of diminishing size. They involve the sharing of personal names, esoteric lore and ceremonial privileges; the obligation to jointly defend these in debates; and, in some cases but not all, collaboration in affinal exchange. These ties are entirely distinct from those of descent, and they are based on the notion of sharing a common ndja'am - without however, necessarily sharing a common vei. Often, as I shall explain, they evolve from matrilateral sibling relationships between the groups concerned (see Chapter 5).

The sharing of a joint estate by two groups is quite sufficient in itself to oblige them to jointly defend it against challenge, irrespective of whether there is also any patrilineal relationship between them. In order to extend the range of persons sharing in and supporting its patrimonial rights, there is simply no need for the subclan to manipulate its agnatic pedigree. For the sharing of a common ndja'am provides all the necessary validation.
Chapter Three

THE EXCHANGE OF COSMOLOGICAL SERVICES

As the Word is first in origin, it is also supreme in power. Often it is the name of the deity, rather than the god himself, that seems to be the real source of efficacy. Knowledge of the name gives him who knows it mastery even over the being and will of the god (Cassirer 1946:48).

i. Introduction

Every social unit at Avatip possesses an hereditary set of material and intangible assets: origin-myths, personal names, spirit-beings, techniques of magic and sorcery, territory, totemic species, rituals or special functions in ritual, and initiatory sacra. A corporate patrimony of this kind is known as a group's ndja'am or, as I have called it, its estate.

At one level, these endowments provide a symbolic focus of the identity of each group and, taken as a whole, form a system of classifications in which social categories are the template for categorising phenomena. This scheme of totemic classifications will be discussed in later chapters.

But in addition, a group's estate entails the right to perform a set of specific magico-economic and ritual services, many of which are specialised so that these groups are individuated functionally. These entitlements are a source of wealth, prestige and, in some contexts, of political power in inter-group relations. Almost all Avatip politics revolves around disputes over the ownership of such prerogatives. These conflicts, adjudicated in ceremonial debates between the contesting parties, are the central subject-matter of this thesis.

In order to understand the meaning of these disputes, and the procedures used in conducting and settling them, it is necessary to describe the kinds of rights which comprise an estate and the way in which these rights interrelate. When, for example, the men of a

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1 This is the term used by Lévi-Strauss in a discussion to which this chapter owes much of its theoretical orientation (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 109-133).
certain subclan state that they are owners of the sun, yams, the ceremonial house Pakanambor, the ritual of second-stage initiation, and a shamanic spirit called Masawmbangk, we have to ask: in what sense are these the possessions of this subclan, how is the ownership of them exercised and what benefits or privileges does it entail? I will try to answer these questions in this chapter and the one which follows.

It is important to distinguish between two different classes of rights which an estate includes. The first of these are rights in cosmological functions and powers. These are the prizes for which groups contend in debates, and they are the subject of the present chapter. The second are rights in esoteric knowledge. An estate includes a body of secret lore, and it is by means of this lore that the cosmological powers which form part of the estate are legitimated and exercised. Rights in secret knowledge are the basis for the rules and strategies used in disputes over the ownership of cosmological powers, and will be discussed in the following chapter.

In Chapter 2 I explained that there are two orders of social unit which hold estates: the maximal unit of exogamy and, within this, the subclan. Each of these is associated with a named spirit-being which is supposed to punish incest and breaches of exogamous rules on the part of the members of the segment over which it presides. These spirits are regarded as the guardians of the rules which govern marriage, and they symbolise the corporate rights which groups hold in women.

Estates are known by the term for these incest-punishing spirits, ndja'am. Moreover, each group's estate bears a distinctive name, and this name is that of its incest-punishing spirit. Maiyimndjaralimungk, for example, the ndja'am of the subclan Nanggwundaw, is the name both of the estate of this group and of the incest-punishing agency associated with it.

Having shown in the last chapter that the concept of ndja'am refers to corporate rights in women, in this chapter and the one which follows I will try to show that it also refers to corporate rights in 'totemic' competencies and secret lore.

The distinction between rights in magico-economic powers and rights in knowledge is implicitly recognised by the villagers themselves
in the way in which they employ the term ndja'am. Speaking of his subclan's hereditary entitlement to control the propagation of a certain species, a man of Nanggwundaw might say, for example: "that is our ndja'am, Maiymndjarilamungk (nyana ndja'ama, Maiymndjarilamungka)". In other contexts, speaking of his subclan's hereditary corpus of esoterica, he might say: "I have learned the ndja'am Maiymndjarilamungk (ndja'aman Maiymndjarilamungk mbutei lakatutwara)".

The concept of ndja'am refers to the idea of a system of reciprocities between estate-holding groups. As I have explained, marriage is one plane of this reciprocity. Another, which I shall describe in the present chapter, is the exchange of cosmological services. A third level of reciprocity, which will be the subject of the following chapter, is the exchange of secret knowledge.

ii. Avatip cosmology

The basic principle of Avatip cosmology is that social categories are imposed on the universe as a whole, and the world conceptually segmented in the same manner as society. It is in this sense that I will speak of Avatip cosmology as totemic (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1973). In the very beginning, according to Avatip mythology, the world was a level, featureless plain flooded to a depth of several feet. All that existed were three villages, or sakitep ('debating villages'). Each was inhabited by large numbers of totemic ancestors, or ngwa'al-asai ('fathers' fathers and fathers'), belonging to one of the three maximal intermarrying groups at Avatip. The sakitep of Nambul-Sambolap and Wuluwi-Nyawi are placed at indefinite distances to the west and east of Avatip respectively; Ngola'angkw, which is considered the autochthonous groups at Avatip, places its sakitep a short distance south of Walomaw lagoon (see Map 2).

From these villages, sets of totemic ancestors are said to have later dispersed to establish further villages, each of these associated with one specific subclan. These subclan-sakitep are called kusulatop, or 'new villages', while the three original villages

2 Apparently similar ancestors among the neighbouring Iatmul are known as nyat' ngwa'il ('the fathers and the fathers' fathers') or as ngwa'il (Bateson 1932:401-403).
are distinguished as *mawtwp*, or 'base/origin villages'. Each mythical village is named and given a specific geographic location, or at least direction; most of them are placed in a circle just beyond the visible horizon - the limit, in pre-European times, of the known world.

Every estate-owning unit, then, whether a subclan or one of the three maximal exogamous groups, is associated with a specific mythical village. All the *sakitwp* permitted by rules of exogamy to do so are said to have intermarried extensively; and, as I shall explain in a later chapter, the totemic ancestors of marriageable groups stand to one another in specific affinal and uterine relationship recorded in myth. The *sakitwp*, then, are mythological symbols of the status of groups as units in the exchange of women. Secondly, the magical and ritual capacities now held by each estate-owning group are said to have been first created at its mythical village by its totemic ancestors. And finally, each village is the focus of a body of myths and magical spells concerning the totemic ancestors associated with it. Each estate-owning group controls access to its own ancestral lore, which is known by the generic term *sakima'andj* ('debating talk'), and much of which is highly secret. The secrecy of *sakima'andj* is expressed in a geographic idiom; because each mythical village was physically isolated so, it is implied, the events which occurred there passed unobserved by the others. An estate, as I have said, is a set of rights in women, in cosmological powers, and in esoteric knowledge; and the mythical villages are the concrete images in terms of which these estates are visualised.

To return to mythology: once all the mythical villages had come into being, the *nggwa'al-asa'ai* emerged from their villages *en masse* and were transfigured into all the elements of the present-day world, creating the natural universe and establishing Avatip and its ritual system. Some of these ancestors fashioned mountains, lakes, rivers and other features of the topography; others became the local spirits associated with these places. Some issued forth from their villages in the form of astronomical and meteorological phenomena, or in the form of species, populating the terrain with animal, plant and bird life. Some created Avatip, each subclan establishing its ward there; others metamorphosed into ceremonial houses, or parts of these
buildings, initiatory flutes, slit-drums and other ritual sacra and established themselves at Avatip, where they have since remained in the same material forms. Other ancestors again took the form of disembodied spirit-beings: supernatural agencies invoked in shamanic curing and in various types of magic and sorcery.

To the villagers, then, nature and their own society are coeval and were created by the same process. Originally, social segments, together with the natural and other totemic phenomena belonging to them, existed in independence from each other in a ring of villages around the periphery of an entirely empty world. The natural universe, and Avatip at its centre, came into being when these villages in concert released all their contents.

The sakitep, it is said, continue to exist; and, while the totemic ancestors have taken the form of species, topographical features and so forth, it is also thought in some undefined way that they continue to dwell in their mythical villages. But all these supernatural communities - even those whose presumed sites are placed close enough to Avatip to be accessible - are said to be invisible. Invisible, that is to say, except to the dead and those about to die; for the mythical villages are held to be inhabited not only by the totemic ancestors but also by the ghosts of the dead, and under this aspect they are known as wundembatop ('villages of the ghosts'). I explained in an earlier chapter that ghosts are believed to inhabit the houses of the living as domestic tutelaries; it is claimed also that they dwell simultaneously in the mythical villages, the ghosts of men in their agnatic wundembatop and the ghosts of married women in those of their husbands. This dual theory of the afterlife - that ghosts reside at the same time among the living and in the mythical villages - involves no contradiction for the villagers. It is rather a corollary of the basic postulate of their world-view - that society and the cosmos share the same structure.

In short, the villagers conceive of Avatip as lying at the centre of a ring of mythical villages marking the circumference of the world. Each of these villages is the source of one specific social segment, of the elements of the world associated with it, and of the magical and ritual powers which it holds; and it is the place to which its male members and their wives return after death. The mythical villages stand, in relation to the past, for the state from
which the world began and, so far as the future is concerned, for the final destination of all human beings after death. They represent the limits of the world not only in space but also, in a sense, in time.

The Avatip world-view is one of systematic and thoroughgoing sociocentrism, and the mythical villages are in effect simply the village wards, or the social segments associated with them, writ large upon the universe. The villagers of course, were they able to express themselves in these terms, would probably claim that the reverse is the case: that is, that it is the structure of the world that is inscribed in the structure of society.

It is quite possible that the traditions of the sakitep are based on actual historical migrations of groups to Avatip. But whether or not it has an historical basis, the idea of the mythical villages is central to contemporary Avatip ideology, and is more usefully 'explained' in terms of its meaning than of its origins. Social units at Avatip are conceived as being linked together above all by reciprocity: by prestations of women, of magical and ritual services, and of esoteric knowledge. Reciprocity, as Lévi-Strauss has shown, is the most basic means of mediating the relation between self and other (Lévi-Strauss 1949); the traditions of the sakitep are a way of exaggerating the original 'otherness' of social segments in relation to each other, and hence of emphasising their present-day reciprocity. Each group, it is implied, was in the beginning isolated and self-sufficient, and it was only when they forewent this autonomy and entered into a state of exchange with each other that society and the natural world were formed.

The villagers' knowledge of geography has greatly increased since European contact, although it is still often imprecise. The world is now known to extend far beyond the horizon, and to include not only towns, plantations and so forth, of which the villagers have had personal experience, but also more distant places (Sydney, London, America) that are little more than names.

As the horizon has receded, the mythical villages have simply receded with it. For example, the Nambul Sambolap mawtep Malikwulantom, at which the Sepik is said to rise, is now held to lie 'somewhere in Papua'. The Wuluwi-Nyawi mawtep Meipənəmber, the supposed terminus of the Sepik, is now set at the river's mouth. The
subclan Maliyaw claim that their *koulatop* Ambianggai is the invisible counterpart of the coastal town of Wewak (the main town in the East Sepik Province), on the grounds that they both lie in the same direction.

The villagers' attempt to integrate their new geographical knowledge with the traditional cosmography has not been systematic, but the two appear to have been harmonised at least to their own satisfaction. Their still vague understanding of geography beyond their own immediate area has no doubt facilitated this. The positions of the mythical villages relative to each other have remained intact; while these villages themselves have as it were simply moved further away, and such new information as was deemed necessary or possible has been incorporated into this scheme.

iii. Personal names and cosmological powers

Every *nggwa'al-asa'ai* bears at least two personal names. One or more of these names are those by which the figure is known in public, while one or more others are highly secret and are part of esoteric myth. The public names of totemic ancestors are thought of as pseudonyms, devices to make it possible to discuss these beings openly; they are called *ndjambì*. The esoteric names of totemic ancestors are regarded as their real names, representing their true identities; in debating (in which, as I shall later explain, they play a vital role) these names are referred to by a variety of terms, the most common of which are as follows:

- *ap* - the (very) bone; the strong thing (cf. Chapter 2).
- *ndu; ta'akw* - the man (himself); the woman (herself).
- *mutam* - the face (i.e. the identity).
- *maka'ap* - the forehead (a synecdoche for *mutam*).
- *mawma'andj* - lit. the base of the talk (i.e. the kernel of the matter, the crux of the issue).

The relationship of each estate-owing group with its totemic ancestors, and its proprietorship of the elements of the world which they personify, involves the power to invoke and control them. Secret names are thought to be magically efficacious, and they are the basis of all Avatip magic. Only some secret names are in practice employed in magic, but all are considered to have magical power. Those that are used in magic usually form parts of spells; but the magical
properties of secret names are held to be innate, so that these names may also be quite successfully used by themselves. Knowledge of their secret names confers power over the totemic ancestors. Addressed by their public and counterfeit names, the ancestors remain unmoved; but invoked by their true names, they respond.

Each estate-owning group has exclusive rights in the secret names and spells which give access to its own totemic ancestors. By concealing the 'real' names of its nggw’al-asa’ai, it attempts to protect its hereditary magical competences and prevent other groups from plagiarising them. In effect, it maintains around its totemic ancestors a screen of aliases, magically valueless, but making it possible to discuss and refer to them in public. Their true identities hidden, the group is secure— it is hoped—from attempts by outsiders to arrogate to themselves magical control of these beings; it alone possesses the authentic knowledge which permits contact with them. As I shall describe in a later chapter, personal names form part of a system of totemic classifications, and are in this sense a means of talking about the world. Secret names have the added property that they are thought of as a means of addressing the world directly and of acting upon it. They are regarded as a code for communicating, not primarily with other men, but with the forces of nature. This is a communication which each social unit conducts with a defined segment of the universe, and through its own, secret, channel.

The notion that personal names have magical properties has, of course, very wide distribution. See, for instance, Ogden and Richards (1949) for some examples and for a discussion, from the viewpoint of philosophy of language, of the idea that, as the authors put it, "Words and things are related by some magic bond" (ibid:47).

In the same volume, Malinowski, in one of his most penetrating insights, argues that the magical attitude which preliterate societies commonly evince towards words derives from the fact that in these societies language functions as "a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection" (ibid:312).

In an argument very compatible with that of Malinowski, Goody (1977) draws a connection between verbal magic and the absence of writing. "The magic of the spell is dependent, at least in part, upon the virtual identity of the speaker and the spoken"; writing, on the other hand, and the cognitive modes which it fosters, put "a distance between a man and his verbal acts" (ibid:150; see also p.46). Another allied thesis is that of Horton (1967), who regards the magical attitude towards words as resulting from what he calls
The secret names and spells of each estate-owning group are contained in esoteric parts of its origin-mythology. These traditions are, to use Malinowski's term (1954), a mythical charter for the cosmological powers which the group holds, legitimating these powers as the group's rightful patrimony. It is in fact thought that if one group tried to usurp a cosmological function vested in some other group, it would invite affliction by the totemic ancestors. The mythological past is not viewed as an ever-receding memory to which people must attempt to remain faithful, but as a force actively reaching forward into the present. From it flow all the magical powers held by groups, and the mystical sanctions which maintain this scheme.

The myth-corpuses of the various estate-owning groups, especially those of collateral groups, tend to follow the same general narrative pattern and describe a similar sequence of events. Moreover, they often share the same species of actors; as I shall explain in a later chapter, there is an extremely complex overlapping of the totemic species of different groups, and in addition every group includes among its ngqua'al-asa'ai' accessory ceremonial houses, shamanic spirits, canoes, slit-drums, water-spirits and the like. Each corpus of myths is individuated not so much at the level of narrative, nor by the kinds of actors appearing in it, but primarily by these figures' names. Forge has made a very similar observation for the mythology of the Iatmul (1972a:531). A characteristic of Avatip myths is that they are full of personal names; almost every object

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the 'closure' of traditional systems of thought: from the fact that since the traditional thinker "can imagine no alternatives to his established system of concepts and words, the latter appear bound to reality in an absolute fashion ... Hence they appear so integrally involved with their referents that any manipulation of the one self-evidently affects the other" (ibid:159).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a theory of verbal magic (see Tambiah 1968 for another, rather different but ingenious approach to the problem). But I should note that Avatip attitudes towards language are pervaded by the notion that speech, at least potentially, carries an intrinsic 'power' for good or ill, even in contexts which are not strictly 'magical'. I hope to show in another place that the explanation for this is most likely to be found in the directions indicated by Goody, Horton and Malinowski: that is, in the fact that at Avatip as in most oral cultural traditions, the use of language is embedded almost wholly in immediate social interaction.
which appears in them is assigned public and esoteric names and
personified as a totemic ancestor. The most important diacritical
elements in the myths, the textual features which define them most
unequivocally as referring to one group or another, are the personal
names which they contain. In fact I am certain that were one to
erase all the names from one of these myths, even the most
knowledgeable men would in some cases be unable to identify the
precise group to which it belonged.

As a result, the function of myth as a charter for corporate
rights and privileges is to a great extent performed by the ancestral
names embedded in it. In order to remain in legitimate and
undisputed possession of its hereditary entitlements, a group must
above all maintain a close connection with the names of its totemic
ancestors; and it does so by giving these names to its own members.

Each estate-owing group has exclusive rights over the use of
the personal names of its own totemic ancestors. All the names
borne and transmitted by its members refer to its own mythology, and
each of its members is considered the namesake of one or more
nggwa'al-asa'ai believed to have originated at the group's mythical
village. There are no indigenous personal names of any other kind,
and all are in principle the exclusive property of one group or
another. Each of these units has a wholly unique corpus of names;
they are thoroughly distinguished one from another by the names which
it is their members' hereditary right to carry. In this way each
group publicises and affirms its mythological rights, by maintaining a
kind of ongoing collective homonymy between its personnel and the
actors in its mythology.

Both exoteric and esoteric names can be given to children; and
the latter, when they are given, are used quite openly in everyday
life. But their precise mythological referents, the specific ancestors
to whom they refer, are never publicly retailed. Outsiders may know,
or at least may be able to guess, which of the group's personal names
are esoteric simply by virtue of the fact that their significance is
kept hidden from them. But the unauthorised should not know to which
exoteric names any of these corresponds. The 'combination' by means
of which the two sets of names collate is the closely guarded
possession of each estate-owning group.

In short, the esoteric lore - in particular the secret names - which the estate-owning group possesses are its means of legitimating, and of exercising, the cosmological powers which it holds. In the following chapter, I will return in more detail to the part played by secret knowledge in Avatip society. But first, in the remainder of this chapter, I will describe the kinds of cosmological powers which groups are believed to hold, and show that they are conceived as forming a system of functional interdependencies between these groups. These magical capacities do not fall into entirely distinct classes, as will become apparent; but for convenience of exposition I will divide them into the following: powers over land, over edible species, over weather, over spirit-beings invoked in sorcery, shamanism and love-magic, and over ritual sacra and the functions associated with them in male initiatory ritual.

iv. Land tenure and magical powers over land

The primary land-holding unit at Avatip is the subclan; collateral subclans, as I shall describe in a later chapter, hold residual rights in each other's territories and stand to inherit them in the event of each other's extinction.

The rights of the subclan in its lands are based on myths describing their creation by its ngwaa'al-asa'ai. Ideally, the territory of each group should lie in the direction of its sakitep, from which its totemic ancestors first emerged. However, the areas of greatest economic importance and most intensive use - the land on the lower part of the Amoc River, and upriver along the Sepik - are parcelled up amongst the subclans with no such order to their arrangement. It is only as one moves further away from the village, beyond the sphere of intensive exploitations, that reality begins to approximate to the ideal. With increasing distance, the ownership of

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4 Before they begin to learn esoteric names, men are in fact unaware that these are human personal names. One of my informants recalled his amazement when he first learned some secret names: they were simply names of his kin and neighbours. "But", he remonstrated with his instructor, "those are just the names of men!" "Yes," replied his instructor, "for those things (totemic species etc.) are men." Many individuals speak of their first initiation into secret names as a powerful experience, which brought home to them the mystical unity of the human and non-human worlds with the force of a revelation.
land conforms increasingly to the presumed disposition of the mythical villages and, beyond this again, land tenure simply merges into cosmology.

Myth states that the totemic ancestors travelled over the primordial waters causing areas of solid ground to appear and in this way building up the present landscape. These figures deposited other lesser ancestors upon each of the pieces of land they created, and these beings' bodies, decaying and fusing with the land, have ever since continued to give it its fertility. Some of these units of land are present-day hills and mountains, or sections of them; others, in low-lying areas, consist of raised land separated by swales, and are former levees left by the continually shifting course of the Sepik and other rivers. These latter, people claim, often possess the outline of a human figure; and thus bear the imprint of the ancestor who was deposited there - or, as it is more commonly said, "fell down" (vakevand).

In addition to the beings whose bodies fecundate land, other ancestors were also placed upon each tract of territory. These are identified with bush-spirits (apawul or miyengk) and there are usually between two and four of these associated with each tract. These beings are considered the tutelary spirits of the territories on which they are located. In mythology, song and debating, they are often referred to metaphorically as the "posts of the land" (kupapa'aw).

There are certain permanent fixtures of territory which are said to have been created together with the land itself, and which are the subject of the same myths. The most important of these are sago-stands (na'anggungga'ar) of great antiquity, and the more ancient of the wells (makwu) used as a source of water for processing sago. While some sago-stands are recent and known to be the result partly or wholly of human activity, the oldest are believed to have appeared with the creation of the land itself, to have grown spontaneously from the blood of the ancestor whose body combined with the land. Similarly, although all wells are in fact man-made, only those of recent origin are recognised to be so. Others are stated in myth to have been created together with the land of which they are a fixture; these are each believed to contain an ancestral spirit installed in them in mythical times.
According to myth, the creation of bodies of water occurred in a manner similar to the creation of land. Rivers, canoe-passages, lakes and ox-bow lagoons were excavated by the ngwa'al-asa'ai, and then these figures then deposited in each of them - in the case of rivers, at their source - a secondary ancestor, the fluids of whose decomposing body are said to have since continued to permeate the water. Further ancestors, identified with water-spirits (wendjemawar) were then set at specific points on the lake or water-course; like bush-spirits, these beings are considered to act as the guardians of the localities with which they are associated.

As one can see, there are three major categories of ancestors involved in the mythological validation of land- and water-rights: the ancestors who created the bodies of water or tracts of territory; the ancestors whose bodies coalesced with them; and the bush- or water-spirits who were then installed in or upon them. Every one of these beings possesses both exoteric and secret names, and the right to apply and to bear these names is vested in the group which owns the territories denominated in this way, and is a crucial part of its mythological title to these resources. I might note that a very similar system appears to exist among the neighbouring Chambri, of whom Gewertz writes:

...totemic names refer to the ancestors who once held them, to the ancestral spirits and magical powers invoked by their recitation, and to the natural objects, territories and resources owned and lived in by the ancestral spirits (Gewertz 1977b:340-341).

The ownership of the land and water rights is inextricably bound to the ownership of the names which designate them (ibid:341).

Land tenure at Avatip is closely linked with the magical control of land, and the instruments of this control are the secret names of the ancestral spirits associated with territory. By means of their knowledge of these names, the senior men of the land-owning group are considered to have the power to interdict their land and water resources, and to regulate their fertility. The ownership of land is conceived, firstly, as a mystical tie contained in the physical identification of territory with the bodily substance of the ancestors of the land-owing group; and secondly, as the right of magical management or supervision of land. The names of the spirits of territory are not simply warrants of land ownership; they are the
active means of ownership conceived as magical control, and the 
basis of mystical sanctions for the group's territorial rights.

Land is plentiful and for very many purposes the land-owning 
group permits non-members perpetual access to its territories and 
their produce. It allows them to freely hunt and fish, to collect 
wild plant foods and materials and to cultivate gardens. But these 
generalised usufructory rights are nevertheless conditional; if the 
exploitation of its land results in the deterioration of it, these 
rights may be temporarily rescinded. This occurs most frequently 
in relation to hunting and fishing; it sometimes happens that the 
use of a lagoon or area of land for these purposes is considered by 
its owners to have become excessive, and to be threatening to drive 
away the game or fish, or to exterminate them. When this happens, 
the owners may publicly announce a temporary interdiction upon it. 
They sanction this prohibition by invoking the ancestral spirits 
associated with the locality, addressing them by their secret names 
and bidding them to attack trespassers by visiting sickness or 
accident upon them.

There are however certain activities for which the subclan 
permanently prohibits the use of its land by outsiders. These concern 
resources which are a long-term or permanent fixture of land, and the 
exploitation of which is seen to imply an enduring relationship 
between the land and those who utilise it. Normally, only the members 
of the subclan itself are permitted to plant or husband sago-palms on 
the group's land, and other permanently hereditable resources such as 
coconut- and areca-palm, and nowadays also coffee trees. But the 
right to harvest these, on the other hand, is normally granted to 
sisters' children, who enjoy more or less automatic usufruct of them 
for the duration of their lives. The same rights are granted also to 
the spouses and children of these individuals, on the grounds that 
the produce will also be eaten by the sisters' children themselves; 
but they expire automatically once the sister's child dies.

In addition to the magical power to interdict their land, the 
senior men of the land-owning group exercise magical control of its 
fertility. Should a man plant sago-suckers on his land, or clear 
the area around naturally regenerating suckers to promote their growth, 
he may call on the spirit whose substance it is believed nourishes
them, invoking the spirit to cause the plants to burgeon. Or when
leaching sago-pith at a water-hole endowed with a spirit, he may
bid the spirit to cause an abundance of starch to collect in the
trough.

The ownership of land also involves the magical power to
diminish its fertility. If, for example, an unauthorised outsider
were to plant sago- or coconut-palms on the land, the owners might
bid the bush-spirits which preside over the locality to enter into
wild pigs and destroy the plants, if they did not adopt the less
discreet course of uprooting them themselves. Once again, these
positive and negative magical powers over the productivity of land
are the supernatural sanctions with which territorial rights are
defended against encroachment.

The fertility of lakes and rivers is believed to be subject to
an analogous form of control. Their owners possess the power to
augment and diminish their fecundity, by reciting the secret names
of the spirits which are their denizens. Normally, this is only done
when imposing, or revoking, an interdiction on their use.

But the supernatural control of the fertility of bodies of water
is rather a special case, in that the most important fishing-grounds -
the largest of the lakes and lagoons - are all owned by the clan-pair
Nggela'angkw. This group exercises not only magical but also ritual
control over these fishing areas; it controls the rituals of first-
and third-stage initiation, which promote the fertility of these and
of the major fish species, so that the supernatural responsibility
for the productivity of these resources is a specialised ritual
competence of this clan-pair.

v. Magic to control edible species

Each estate-owning group possesses a number of totemic species,
all of which are personified in its mythology as its nggwa'al-asa'ai
and bear secret and exoteric names. These species are held to have
originated at the group's sakitep, from which they later migrated to
furnish the terrain with part of its present flora and fauna. The
directions with which these mythical villages are associated
correspond partly with distinctive ecological zones; and any plant
or animal species particularly characteristic of one of these areas
tend to be totems of the group which locates its sakitep in the same direction.

All edible totemic species are considered to be subject to magical control by the groups with which they are identified; all are potentially subject to the magical diminution of their fertility, while some are in addition amenable to magical increase.

Each group imposes on the community the obligation to treat its edible totemic species with respect and to exploit them in a responsible manner. The abuse of these species by outsiders is treated as an affront and is described as sa'al kwuma, a term which means to vandalise property or, more generally, to treat a person's possessions in such a way as to insult or threaten the owner. The term sa'al kwuma is applied to any act of wilfully and purposelessly destroying, damaging or wasting a totemic food species: for example, improperly harvesting a tree so as to waste its fruit, allowing a yam to rot uneaten, or gratuitously killing an animal without making use of it for food or some other legitimate purposes. The term is also applied to verbal expressions of contempt for important food species.

It is believed that if an act of sa'al kwuma was committed against the totemic owners of a species, the latter would normally diminish the fertility of the species in retribution. A variety of idioms are used to describe this magical reduction of a species' numbers, the most frequently encountered of which are as follows:

- sakitepar kaslana - to send (the species) back to the mythical village.
- aksir kaslana - to send (the species) under the floating vegetation (used only of aquatic species).
- ya'amb tepona - to block the path (of the species).
- watavena - to prohibit (the species).

The secret names employed in reduction magic are those of the totemic spirit of the species. The magic is viewed not as interfering in the natural processes of reproduction of the species, but as invoking the ancestral spirit to recall the species to the mythical village or, with aquatic species, under the floating vegetation at the edge of lakes; in other words the magic is believed to operate by rendering the species inaccessible rather than by affecting its fecundity.
Every foodstuff is held to have been created in mythical times by a specific social segment, and then to have been made available for the consumption of society at large. Each group has claims upon the community in respect of the food species of which it is the totemic proprietor and which it introduced into the common food supply. To conserve these species, and to utilise them for their rightful purposes, is to acknowledge and fulfill these claims, while to squander the species is to repudiate them. Prohibitions against misusing foods apply to their totemic owners as much as they do to others; but men speak of these prohibitions, and the threat of reduction magic, as being directed primarily at outsiders, as though it were assumed that a man is incapable of committing sa'al kwuma against his own totem. The exploitation of the natural environment is part of a scheme of social obligations, and the manner in which it is conducted is interpreted as a message about the general state of relations between groups.

People do not speak of these obligations as abstract rules, but express them concretely by speaking of edible species in anthropomorphic terms (as is done with all ngwa'al-asa'at) and by treating their consumption as the consumption of the bodily substance of these ancestors. As it was once explained to me:

When we eat yams we are eating the flesh of men.

Food species are humanised, made social; although they exist to serve human subsistence, their exploitation and consumption is governed by a morality similar to that which governs social relations. One informant expressed this as follows:

Suppose a man harvests the immature fruit on his breadfruit tree, and carelessly throws them around on the ground, leaving the ripe fruits on the tree. The (totemic) owners of the breadfruit tree see this and they become angry, and they say to themselves "Why has this man damaged the tree? It is not just a tree, it is a man. It has a name, and a father, a mother and a mother's brother (see Chapter 4); and the fruits are his children. Why has he harvested the younger siblings before the older siblings?" Then they will call the (secret) name of the tree, and tell it to stop bearing.

People often speak as if a tie of consubstantiality exists between food species and their human owners, in particular the senior men who possess the esoterica with which to control their fertility; and they sometimes treat the misuse of these species as an indirect physical attack upon these men or upon the entire group to which the
species belongs:

About a generation ago, it happened that a number of people harvested their breadfruit trees by the wasteful and destructive method of felling them; the breadfruit magician punished them by causing all breadfruit trees to cease bearing, and reportedly announced: "Those are my own bones which you have cut." Eventually, his most senior sister's son, a kinsman whose requests cannot in theory be refused, was asked to approach him, and persuaded him to revoke the magic.

To speak contempuously of an edible species is interpreted as a jeer at its totemic owners, and may likewise provoke them to deplete the food:

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the men of Nambul subclan magically diminished mayflies (ka'al), an important totem of their subclan and a prized food delicacy. It had come to their attention that a woman had derided this food, apparently saying: "Mayflies are not a strong food; when I eat them and later defecate, my excrement does not fall close by, it falls far off." They were so galled by this insult that they threw away the Ka'alanyawor, an irreplaceable package of yellow clay necessary for the performance of mayfly increase magic (see below). Thus they are no longer able to increase mayflies, and the insects have, it is said, been scarce ever since.

Social units - or, more precisely, their senior male representatives - are viewed as the custodians of their totemic species, as they are of their land, in that they are responsible for ensuring that outsiders exploit these foods in a responsible manner. They supervise their utilisation by the community, and the spells to reduce these species' numbers are their sanction. While every group in the village has access to all types of animal and plant resources, the community is regarded as holding these resources in a form of usufruct from their totemic owners. The right of the community to hunt, fish, cultivate and collect all species necessary for its subsistence is axiomatic, and has its mandate in the myths of the primordial exodus of species from the sakitop. But it is nevertheless conditional on this exploitation being conducted prudently; if a species is squandered or misused, its totemic owners are considered to have the power and legitimate right to render it, if only temporarily, unavailable.

But only temporarily; reduction magic is essentially retributive,
a means of 'teaching people a lesson', of compelling them to recognise the importance of the species by depriving them of it for a time. But it should go no further than this; it would be a misuse of his powers if the magician were to disrupt the village's food supply for long or, even worse, to do so without justifiable cause, and it is said that he would be afflicted with sickness by the ancestral spirit of the species until he revoked the spell. The use of diminution magic is itself, so it is considered, kept in check by moral and supernatural sanctions:

A party of women once took a canoe belonging to Y., without asking his permission, and went out on to the Malomaw lagoon to fish. Preoccupied with their task, they allowed a firestick they had brought with them to burn a hole through the stern of the canoe. Y. had learned diminution magic for fish, as a sister's son of one of the subclans which possess these spells; and when he discovered his ruined canoe, he revenged himself by performing this magic upon the lagoon. But it was unjustifiable to threaten the whole village's livelihood over such a small matter; a large swelling appeared on his neck and, taking this as a warning from the spirits to relent, he lifted the spell.

Depletion magic is purely negative; all that the magician is able to do is to temporarily diminish the species and then restore its members once again to their natural level. Left undisturbed, the species is viewed as reproducing itself in a largely naturalistic manner. But there are certain species which in addition to being subject to depletion magic can also have their abundance magically increased; and indeed, most of these are held to be unable to propagate themselves in adequate numbers without periodic assistance.

Increase magic is known as ndja'andj; to perform it is usually described as 'summoning' (wandjalina) the species. Once again, it is viewed as causing the ancestral spirits of species to release large numbers of them from the mythical villages, rather than as augmenting the species' fecundity. The foods subject to this form of control are as follows, roughly in descending order of economic importance: fish, yams, crocodiles, areca-nut, breadfruit, mayflies, crayfish, frogs, turtles and certain duck species.

Yams and fish, which are two of the three staple foods, have a paramount place in this scheme. Yams are a totem of Wuluwi-Nyawi

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5 The Iatmul apparently possess similar forms of increase magic employing secret totemic names (see Bateson 1932:446).
clan-pair, while the major fish species are totems of the clan-pair Nggala'angkw. Each of these groups - or, more accurately, certain subclans within them - possess increase and depletion magic for the totem; and, in addition, each clan-pair has proprietorship of one or more male initiatory rituals which have as one of their most important objectives the increase of the totem's abundance. Nggola'angkw is said to "own" the first-stage initiatory ritual of scarification, and the Ndumwi ritual of third-stage initiation, both of which are intended to promote the abundance of fish; while Wuluwi-Nyawi owns the annual harvest ritual for the Dioscorea alata gardens, which promotes successful yam crops and, in the more elaborate of its two forms, also initiates novices into the second initiatory grade. Thus each of the two largest and widest-span descent-groups of the three in the village is charged with the responsibility for the totemic management of a foodstuff of primary importance in the economy; management not only by means of magic performed by individuals, but also by means of major collective rituals. This division of economic functions between Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw constitutes a summation of the whole scheme of specialised corporate rights in the control of edible species - in the importance of these two foods, in the segmentary scale of the groups concerned, and in the fact that it is an integral part of the organisation of male initiatory ritual.

Yams and fish, standing as they do at the apex of this system, are in many respects especially sacred foods, and their exploitation is subject to a number of restrictions which do not apply to other foodstuffs. The most important of those which apply to yams is a prohibition on harvesting the alata gardens, lasting from the middle of the year, when the gardens are planted, until the yam harvest ritual is performed in December; the right to determine the precise timing of this ritual being a joint prerogative of certain Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans. The transgression of this rule, it is said, would result in the sickness and inevitable death of the offender.

An analogous prohibition exists with regard to fishing. Several times a year, fish appear in one or more of the lagoons in vast numbers for a day or two, and when this happens the villagers go out onto the lagoons in large parties to spear them. It is forbidden during these expeditions to unnecessarily disturb the surface of the lake in any way; people may not, for instance, bail out their canoes on the open water but must pull in to the shore to do so. A capsize
of a canoe, it is said, or any other breach of this rule, would offend the totemic spirits of the fish and of the lagoon and would result in the disappearance of the fish. The offender would be expected to make an immediate sacrifice to appease them; the offering might consist of a hand of areca-nut, a fowl, or even a pig, and it is eaten by the senior men of Nggela'angkw.

In keeping with the sacred character and ritual importance of yams and fish, an act of sa'al kaumma against them is a far more serious matter than it is with other foods, and is treated as a ritual offence. It would not simply provoke their totemic owners to perform depletion magic, but would also automatically call down sickness on the offender; if, as one informant expressed it, a man were to waste or misuse yams, "the yams would eat him." Once again, it would be necessary to make an offering of areca-nut, a chicken or a pig, to appease both the punitive spirits and the human totemic owners of the food.

Fertility-magicians are prohibited, either permanently or periodically, from eating those species which they control by means of increase magic. In some cases, the proscription applies only during the period between the laying of the spell and the production of its result; while with some species the prohibition is absolute and the magician must abstain from eating the species for the whole of his career. Kunggwianmeri of Yuanamb village, who performs crocodile-increase magic prior to the large-scale hunts which take place in the dry season, explained these dietary restrictions as follows:

When the men hunt crocodiles, it is I who tell the crocodiles to come out into the open and not to be afraid of the hunters' spears. Because I know their (secret) names, they call me their father and they obey me. It is because they call me their father that I cannot eat them. If I was to eat them, they would say: "Why is he eating us? He cannot be our true father"; and then they would no longer obey me. I make those things plentiful, but other men eat them.

The increase magician performs wholly for the benefit of others; if he himself ate the species it would render his magic ineffective.

While the magician alone is required to abstain from eating the totemic species, all individuals express, in varying degrees, a special respect for their own edible totems and those of their mothers'
subclans. Men sometimes say, for example, that they exercise restraint when exploiting these species and feel obliged to kill or eat them less than others do. Some say that at times they have a spontaneous physical aversion to consuming them. Thus while abstention and restraint are favoured, the precise behaviour of people towards their edible totems varies according to individual preference and the degree to which particular foods can be dispensed with.

These dietary regulations echo, if in a weak form, those of the classically 'totemic' societies of central Australia, which Lévi-Strauss made the basis of his discussion of ideological schemas of this kind (Lévi-Strauss 1966:Ch.4). Perhaps the major difference between the system at Avatip and its Australian counterparts, apart from the more diluted form which dietary prohibitions take, is the importance of depletion magic at Avatip and the concept of sa'al karana. But I would argue that essentially the same effect is achieved, either by a rule prescribing that one increase one's own totem for the benefit of others and forgo consuming it oneself, or by a rule compelling others to consume it (i.e. rather than squander it) under the sanction of depleting the totem; or, as at Avatip, by some combination of both of these.

The totemic group at Avatip always remains, to borrow Lévi-Strauss' term, partly endofunctional and, as Lévi-Strauss writes of castes, it does not prohibit rendering also to itself the differentiating services it is called on first of all to provide for (others) (Lévi-Strauss 1966:126).

But this is a compromise with the requirements of subsistence which does not alter the logical form of the system; such alimentary rules and preferences as exist at Avatip clearly show their governing principle to be that of reciprocity.

vi. Weather magic

As one can see from Appendix A, most totemic astronomical and

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6 Bateson (1932:431) records among the Iatmul a similar informal, sentimental respect for edible totems of the maternal and paternal clans.
meteorological phenomena belong to Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair, or to certain subclans within it: the sun, moon, the planet Venus, the Pleiades (?), rain, fog, thunder, lightning, and the sky itself. Other totemic phenomena of this kind, not specifically of Wuluwi-Nyawi, are earthquakes, various winds, and heat-haze.

All these phenomena are personified as nggwa'al-as'a'ai and are stated in myth to have originated at the sakitep of the groups which own them, from which they later emerged to take up their present places in nature. Because their totemic ancestors created the sun, for example, Wuluwi-Nyawi men claim credit for the existence of daylight:

It is because we Wuluwi-Nyawi made it so that there is an alternation of night and day, night and day. If we had not done so there would now be no daylight, only darkness all the time.

Many of these totemic phenomena retain a close connection with the mythical villages from which they originally came. The heavenly bodies belonging to Wuluwi-Nyawi, for instance, are said to rise each day from the primary sakitep of this clan-pair, which is placed at an indefinite distance due east of Avatip. The subsidiary mythical villages of this clan-pair, each identified with a specific subclan, are placed in an arc beginning at the primary sakitep and terminating in the west as though following the ecliptic; and each of these subclans owns, as a nggwa'al-as'a'ai, the position which the sun takes as it lies over its own mythical village.

Winds are also said to come from the mythical villages, and are owned as totems by social groups according to the quarter from which they blow. Heat-haze is likewise held to emanate from these villages, and every subclan at Avatip claims as a totemic ancestor that sector of the haze lying in the direction of its sakitep.

Many of these phenomena affect the community's economic pursuits, and those that do are characteristically the subject of magical control and regulation. The most important of these forms of magic is the weather magic known as Nyava'at, which is held by Wuluwi-Nyawi and which is associated with the clan-pair's totemic ownership of the sun, rain and the east wind. This is a complex of techniques employed at the start of the dry season to promote a long period of hot weather,
prevent rain, cause the river to fall, and to summon the east wind which prevails during the dry season and is held to be causally related with it. The last Nyava'at magician died prematurely during the 1930's as a result, it is said, of having neglected to make the sacrificial offerings required after having learned it. Because of this mischance, a contagious pollution, or supu, is considered to attach to the magic, and no-one has since been willing to perform it in its full form. One informant described the effects of Nyava'at as follows:

Nowadays, the east wind is not summoned by a man; it just comes by itself and so it is only a small wind. But when it is summoned by a man, it blows strongly and the river goes almost completely dry. Thick bush grows up on its exposed bed. Fish, crocodiles, crayfish and turtles lie stranded in the shallow water, and the women just go down to the water's edge with palm-spathes and collect them with their hands. Many of those things just rot, because there is more than we can eat.

A specialised part of the Nyava'at complex is a technique for causing rain; this, it is said, is employed as a corrective when the wells used in the processing of sago run dry. There is also a negative or anti-social version of Nyava'at which has the effect of stilling the east wind, causing unseasonal rains and ruining the dry season; but it is held that to perform this would recoil upon the magician and afflict him with sickness.

There are a number of other forms of magic associated with the totemic control of weather and other environmental phenomena: an anti-social magic for summoning the north-west monsoon, which prevails during the months of high-water, thereby causing floods and a prolonged and severe wet season; magic to produce earthquakes; and to summon storms and call down thunderbolts. There are techniques to cause rivers and channels to flood their banks, and which are held by the groups which own these resources. Nggela'angkw possesses magic to dry out areas of swamp and which, in keeping with the special functions in respect of fishing, has a potential destructive use as a means of silting-up fishing lagoons. Wuluwi-Nyawi, which holds totemic ownership of the sky, is considered to have the magical capability of causing the sky's collapse. The totemic ancestors of this clan-pair are stated to have originally separated the sky from the earth and to have set it in its present position, shoring it up on posts placed at the primary mythical village of Wuluwi-Nyawi; one
informant compared the sky to the roof of a mine gallery supported on piles\(^7\). The magic of sky-collapse apparently addresses these posts by their secret names, bidding them to break.

vii. Sorcery, shamanism and love-magic

Another class of magical techniques are those of sorcery and other forms of magic directed at human subjects.

Every group includes among its ngwa'\(a\)-asa'ai a number of shamanic spirits, or waken; there are generally from two to four of these to a tonomb, or twice that number to a subclan. At his induction into the status of shaman, or wakendu, the novice acquires an exclusive relationship with one, or sometimes two, of his group's waken, a relationship to which he ideally succeeds by primogeniture. He learns the esoteric names of the waken which have become his familiars, and secret formulae employed in their invocation. The shaman is possessed both by waken and by the ghosts of the dead (wundemb), and these beings reveal through him the mystical causes of his clients' afflictions and detail the sacrifices or other courses of action necessary to remedy these. Secondly, shamans possess bodies of curative and sorcerous techniques called yanu, involving the magical use of varieties of ginger with which their shamanic spirits are associated, and the invocation of the personified spirits of these plants by means of their secret names. Employed in sorcery, these spirits of ginger are sent to attack the intended victim; used curatively or preventatively, they are bidden to repel sorcery or other forms of spirit or ghost attack. An important responsibility of shamans is to protect the village as a whole from external sorcery, most of which is held to emanate from the Western Iatmul.

Some subclans possess techniques of love-magic; these formulae invoke the secret names of wooden effigies called mbangwi which these groups possess, and which represent the ancestral spirits of certain totemic species of vine. While this magic is nowadays performed for and by individuals alone, in the past an elaborate and

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\(^7\) This informant had not seen a mine himself, but had had one described to him by a Local Government Councillor, who had seen a mine while on a Government-sponsored visit to Australia.
public version of it was performed during the rituals for celebrating homicide, and inaugurated a period of licensed sexual promiscuity which formed part of these events.

Most subclans possess techniques of non-lethal sorcery called *ndjamb*ī, which produce disfiguring sores or the paralysis of limbs. Each *ndjamb*ī formula is said to produce a specific form of affliction, each of them associated with a particular *nggwa'al-asa'ai* or set of such ancestors to whom the formula is addressed. A *ndjamb*ī is "placed" (*takan*a) on some object habitually used by the intended victim, and is said to operate by proximity, leaping onto the first person to approach it. These spells have a legitimate use as a means of protecting areca-palms and other fruit-bearing trees from theft. Employed in this way, a special sign is erected near the tree to indicate the presence of the *ndjamb*ī.

At the Old Avatip site there is a small area of elevated land called Tupwinombuk. This hillock is said to have been created, together with the village site itself, by the totemic ancestors of Nggola'angkw clan-pair, and to be inhabited by ancestral spirits belonging to this group. Nggola'angkw possesses two sorcery techniques which invoke these spirits, both of which operate by ensnaring the victim's life-force, or *kaiyik*, in a bespelled lime-gourd.

Another form of Nggola'angkw magic which invokes these spirits, is a technique to infest the village with a plague of venomous insects and snakes. Most species of this kind, and all of those involved in this magic, are Nggola'angkw totems, so that the technique is in effect a form of anti-social increase magic. It is considered capable of exterminating the village, and is regarded as the Nggola'angkw equivalent of the Wuluwi-Nyawi magic of storms and of sky-collapse:

We Nggola'angkw control the things of the earth, while Wuluwi-Nyawi control the things of the sky. Wuluwi-Nyawi could destroy the village from the air; but we could destroy it from the ground.

One very important class of magic is war-magic, the right to perform which is held exclusively by hereditary functionaries known as *simb*ūk. There are five *simb*ūk-ships, and each is vested in a specific *tonomb*. These offices, and the distinctive spirit-beings and
sacra associated with each of them and which each simbuk inherits from his predecessor, are considered to have originally been created by the nggwa'al-asa'ai of these groups at their sakitep, or to be totemic ancestors themselves. Succession is governed by strict genealogical seniority, and the position is ideally passed down the most senior line of descent within the tanomb; in default of an agnatic successor, a sister's son may accede temporarily to the position. He cannot, however, pass it on to his own sons, and on his death it returns either to the tanomb or to another of its sisters' sons. The office is open only to men who have reached the highest ritual grade, and its tenure is ended by death.

Each simbuk is the ritual leader of a named ceremonial division called a laki, to one of which every male child is assigned by his father early in life. The simbuk has two closely connected spheres of responsibility regarding the laki over which he presides. Firstly, he is responsible - or rather was in the past - for the administration of fighting-magic to the members of his division prior to raiding expeditions, a service which is considered essential for success in warfare. Secondly, the laki divisions play a part in the organisation of initiatory ritual (see following section), and each simbuk has the duty of overseeing the inductions of the men of his division into successive initiatory grades, and of performing certain magical services for them during these initiations. These two functions are closely related; symbolically and in every other way, ritual is inextricably linked with warfare and with the ethos of warmaking, and the dispensation of successively more potent forms of fighting-magic has always been, as it continues to be, a central part of all initiations.

There are a number of forms of lethal sorcery which are an exclusive prerogative of simbuk, and these may be legitimately used to punish those who commit certain ritual offences. A second mystical privilege of simbuk is that they are said to remain completely protected by their spirit familiars, so long as they perform their magical duties correctly and so do not alienate these beings, from all forms of ghost and spirit attack and sorcery apart from exuvial sorcery (wa'ai).

Each simbuk possesses an hereditary assistant, and these
positions are also vested in tonombs, in all cases tonombs other than those which hold simbuk-ships. Succession to these positions takes place in the same way as to simbuk-ships themselves; but the two are entirely distinct offices, and cannot be converted one into the other. There is no vernacular term for these assistantships, and the holder is simply described by the phrase watakama'andj kwumand ("he does [the simbuk's] bidding"). Simbuka's assistants have two principal functions. Firstly, there are certain episodes during initiations when the simbuk assumes a ritually potent condition, and cannot be approached or addressed by men ritually junior to himself without mystical danger to them. His assistant is exempt from these hazards, and it is his task to communicate between the simbuk and the junior men and to convey the former's instructions to them. Secondly, a simbuk may become increasingly unable to carry out the physically more arduous of his ritual duties as he ages, in which case he delegates these to his assistant.

viii. The initiatory ritual system

Most subclans possess an exclusive set of ritual sacra, and these all bear personal names and are personified as totemic ancestors of these groups. These named sacra include a ceremonial house and various parts of it - the posts, beams, spires, loft-floor, sitting-platform, hearths and the ceremonial mound in front of the building; secret initiatory flutes and bamboo trumpets; slit-drums and many other items of ritual equipment, some permanent, and some constructed during the course of certain rituals and abandoned or destroyed afterwards. Of a subclan's corporate hereditaments, it is perhaps its ritual sacra which represent its most tangible links with its mythological past. A ceremonial house or any other ritual appurtenance is believed to embody an ancestral spirit brought from the sakitep itself to Avatip at the founding of the village. The many replacements of the ceremonial house which have taken place since then have simply been so many renewals of the ancestor's material form. And as a symbol of this continuity, the building continues to bear this ancestor's name or names.

The ownership of ritual sacra by groups entails the exclusive right to use or construct them, or in some cases to supervise or inaugurate their use or construction. But in addition, the ownership of sacra is associated with other, broader, functions in ritual as I
shall describe below.

There are four initiatory rituals, two of which are 'owned' by Wuluwi-Nyawa and two by Nggola'angkw. The nggwa'ai-asa'ai of these groups are said to have first created their rituals at their respective mythical villages, from where the rituals were then made available to society as a whole. The ownership of a ritual effectively consists, first of all, in the prerogative of inaugurating all performances of it. No initiatory ritual can take place without its owners authorising its performance by certain ceremonial acts. Secondly, its owners have the exclusive right to decide and announce its timing. The owners may also hold a number of other responsibilities and privileges varying from one ritual to another; examples of these will be given later. The ownership of a ritual does not, I should note, entail the function of initiating novices into it; this is performed wholly by the hierarchy of ritual grades, each of these grades, which is drawn from all the descent groups in the community, inducting the grade junior to it.

Every group has a specific and mythologically sanctioned part, however nominal, to play in each of the initiatory rituals, whether or not it is an owner of it. Often this consists in no more than the right to have, during the ritual, a specific hearth and sitting-area in the ceremonial house in which the ritual is held, and the right to construct the section of the initiatory enclosure nearest its hearth. But these objects too are personified as named totemic ancestors of the group concerned, and its exclusive claims over them are jealously guarded.

In fact, almost all the elements of the ritual system are personified and named: the ancestors who first performed the rituals in mythical times, the spirits whom the rituals invoke and, as I have said, the sacra and equipment used in ritual. It is upon its possession of the personal names of these ancestors, its exclusive right to magically invoke them and, ultimately, its control of access to their secret names, that each group's title to its position in the ritual system depends. Initiatory ritual is thought to activate extremely powerful supernatural forces. Correspondingly, the mystical sanctions guarding each group's hereditary prerogatives are regarded as more potent in the sphere of ritual than in any other.
This thesis is concerned primarily with debating, and I cannot give a detailed account of Avatip ritual here, for it is a very large subject. But the hereditary functions of groups in initiatory ritual is the primary focus of conflict between them in debates; and in order to understand these disputes, it is essential to give an - unavoidably condensed - outline of the organisation and symbolic themes of the ritual system.

One of the major themes of Avatip ritual is the promotion of natural fertility. The clan-pair Nggala'angkw has ritual jurisdiction over the exploitation and the fertility of the community's main fishing-lagoons; while the ritual control of the yam-gardening cycle and of the fertility of yams is held by the clan-pair Wuluwi-Nyawi. The exercise of these complementary powers is represented in the symbolism of ritual as an exchange between these two groups; and it is symbolically equated with the exchange of goods and services along the affinal and uterine ties between them in secular life. The villagers view themselves as actively involved, by regular expenditures of ritual 'labour', in maintaining the productivity of their environment. This is conceptualised as taking the form of a reciprocity between two moiety-like groups within a closed kinship universe. Outsiders are regarded as by definition playing no part in this reciprocity; and the unauthorised use by them of any territorial resources is treated essentially as theft of the products of this labour.

Viewed in the context of the political relations of Avatip with its neighbours, the community's claim to ritually control the productivity of its land is a kind of collective assertion of its territorial rights. The villagers and, so far as I can tell, neighbouring groups as well, conceive of the ownership of land by a community as lying ultimately in its ritual jurisdiction over the land's fertility.

This raises the second major theme of Avatip ritual: warmaking. The supernatural forces conjured in ritual are said to protect the community and ensure its success in warfare. The performance of ritual is viewed as the means by which the community arms itself supernaturally and keeps itself in readiness for fighting. The obverse of this is that the community's possession of a single ritual system prohibits lethal fighting within it under the most
powerful supernatural sanctions. Ritual is the ultimate symbol of its political unity and autonomy; the essence of the villagers' idea of a ritual congregation is that it is politically and territorially independent, and combines in warfare and has a common focus for its aggression. One can see that warmaking and natural fertility, the twin main themes of Avatip ritual, are closely connected; for they both stem from the relationship of the community with its territory.

They are also linked with each other in Avatip ideas about personal ritual status. When a man is initiated he is said to acquire a personal spiritual potency called a ngqelaka'aw. His ngqelaka'aw is thought to protect and foster his physical well-being, and to act as his guardian in warfare, keeping him from harm and striking confusion into his enemies. A ngqelaka'aw is regarded as the key to two of the most highly admired qualities an Avatip man can possess: productivity and warlike prowess. These attributes are spoken of in general terms as developing with ritual status; for as a man is promoted into higher ritual grades, the potency of his ngqelaka'aw is said to increase.

Because the ritual system is entirely in their hands, adult men are regarded as ultimately responsible for the continued existence and well-being of the community. The possession of a ngqelaka'aw is their exclusive prerogative; and they alone are charged with ritually controlling natural fertility and supernaturally maintaining the community's fighting ability. Appropriately, men's ngqelaka'aw are said to take on an especially heightened power during ritual, in which condition they are inimical to women and to males uninitiated into the ritual in question, and will automatically attack them if they do not keep at a respectful distance.

The ritual system maintains differences in social status not only between adult men on the one hand and women and children on the other, but also between adult men themselves. Women and children are dependent upon men; but so are men of junior ritual status upon their seniors. Ritual seniority carries with it a number of economic, sexual and other privileges; some of these are rather nominal, but all are highly valued as indexes of personal status. In addition, each ritual grade is responsible for the promotion of the grade below it and has complete authority over it in ritual
contexts; each controls the access of its juniors to the values which the ritual system as a whole celebrates.

In order to describe the kinds of entitlements and responsibilities which descent groups hold in the organisation of the ritual system, I will now give a brief outline of the initiatory cycle. But first, it is necessary to mention some simple rules which govern ritual promotion.

A man cannot enter any initiatory grade while any men of his father's generation within his own tonømb (or within his subclan, if it is small) are active members of the grade, under the sanction of affliction by spirits. In other words, men of different generations within the same tonømb may not be members of the same grade simultaneously; it is not until all the men of one generation have died or been promoted that their juniors may enter the grade which they occupied. Secondly, a man may not be promoted before his real and classificatory elder brothers within his own tonømb, although it is permissible for him to be promoted at the same time as them. These rules do, however, admit of some flexibility, particularly if the tonømb is large; as with all the tonømb's internal ritual affairs, this is a matter for the discretion of the ritually senior men of the group. In some rituals, all the men of the same generational level within each tonømb are inducted together; in others they may be inducted in small sets in the course of several performances, in the order of seniority of the internal segments to which they belong. In short, promotion is governed not by age but by genealogy. There is a general correlation between age and genealogical status, but it is not uncommon for them to get out of kilter (cf. Needham 1966). For example, some men are the same age as, or even older than, some of their fathers' classificatory tonømb-brothers; in these genealogically disadvantaged positions, they may not enter even the earliest stages of the ritual hierarchy until they are elderly or may die without having done so. A few men, on the other hand, may find themselves inducted into the highest ritual grade while still in their teens, if they are genealogically senior.

I explained in the previous section that all males at Avatip are divided into five ceremonial divisions called laki, each of which is
under the authority of a ritual leader known as a simbuk. These laki are grouped together into two ritual moieties, called Waroman and Mbanggwos, each moiety in this way being composed of the men of a specific set of laki. Laki and initiatory moiety membership is usually inherited by patrifiliation; but while men of the same tonomib generally belong to the same laki and initiatory moiety, these ritual divisions are independent of totemic and descent group organisation and cross-cut it. Table 3 gives the moiety affiliations of the five laki and the groups in which the five associated simbuk-ships are vested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual moiety</th>
<th>Laki</th>
<th>Group holding simbuk-ship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mbanggwos</td>
<td>Nyakawlaki</td>
<td>Valik Yiraman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ndjmboi</td>
<td>Ambasarak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waroman 'senior'*</td>
<td>Nggambak Waikisawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waroman</td>
<td>Pukandu</td>
<td>Maliyaw Malikomban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waroman 'junior'*</td>
<td>Kambuli Kwaru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These are two quite separate laki which, for historical reasons, happen to have the same name. As one is vested in a tonomib of the senior Nggola'angkw clan, and the other in a tonomib of the junior Nggola'angkw clan, they are called 'elder brother' and 'younger brother' simply as a convenient means of distinguishing them; there is no difference between them in ritual importance. Neither is to be confused with the initiatory moiety Waroman.

Table 3. The initiatory moiety and laki organisation.

Every initiatory ritual involves two phases: the first, in which the novices of the Waroman moiety are initiated, and the second, in which the Mbanggwos novices are inducted. Depending on the ritual, the two initiations may take part on the same day as part of the same performance, or several months apart and require two separate performances of the same ritual. The reasons for this procedure, and for the ritual moiety division itself, seem primarily logistical. An initiatory ritual may involve several hundred novices, and for organisational purposes it is easier to induct such a large body of men in two sets than all together. Because its men are always inducted first, the Waroman moiety is spoken of as the 'elder brother' of Mbanggwos; but this designation is purely nominal and does not imply any difference between them in ritual status.
This is in contrast to the initiatory moieties of the Iatmul, among whom the men of the two divisions initiate each other's sons and each moiety stands as 'elder brother' to the other in alternate generations (Bateson 1958:244-46). It is possible that the Manambu adopted the notion of initiatory moieties from the Iatmul, but discarded the alternating and reciprocating relationship between the two divisions. In any particular Avatip ritual the initiators of the Warsman and Mbanggwas novices are the same: they are the men of the next senior ritual grade of both moieties combined.

When any initiatory ritual is performed, the ceremonial house or houses in which it takes place are enclosed with a screen, to hide the proceedings from the unauthorised. Women and the uninitiated are prohibited, above all, from seeing any of the secret musical instruments used in ritual, and are supposed not to know even of their existence. The most important of these are the sacred flutes, which are played in the ceremonial enclosure on almost every ritual occasion. The uninitiated are supposed to believe that flute-music is produced by spirits called ndakwul wapi ('ndakwul birds'), summoned by the initiated men to all their rituals.

In the past, the first stage of initiation took the form of a ritual scarification (wa'ara mba'angkw), during which the sacred flutes and certain other sound-producing instruments were revealed to the novices. This ritual became due when, for reasons I will explain later, the ritual cycle had reached a point at which all the males in the village were either uninitiated or else members of the very highest ritual grade, the intervening grades being empty. All uninitiated males, except for unweaned infants, were then inducted en masse into the first stage of the ritual system and scarified, at least all who were genealogically qualified. In this way they began their progress up the ritual hierarchy, which would eventually culminate in their displacing their initiators. This ritual, or rather two closely spaced performances of it - one for the Warsman moiety and the other for Mbanggwas - was in the past held about once every generation, but it has not been performed at Avatip since the mid-1930's. Nowadays, novices are initiated singly or in small groups, and without being scarified, on any occasions when the flutes are played, such as during repairs to a ceremonial house. The scarification ritual is said to have been created by totemic ancestors.
of Nggola'angkw, and one of the subclans of this clan-pair holds the hereditary right to inaugurate it. The ritual is connected with the ownership by Nggola'angkw of the principal fishing-grounds, one of the aims of performing it being to promote the fertility of these lakes and lagoons.

Three or four years after their scarification, the novices were then initiated into the yam harvest ritual (nya'ankanggaw mba'angkw), at which point they became members of the second ritual grade, the Mândja Sə. A version of this ritual is performed every four years or so, and nowadays it is during this that novices are inducted into the Mândja Sə. Another, simpler, version of this ritual is performed annually, but this does not normally involve initiations; it is the special prerogative of Wuluwi-Nyawi men to perform this form of the ritual alone, without the participation of other groups.

The yam harvest ritual, in all its versions, belongs to Wuluwi-Nyawi, and is associated with the magical and ritual control which this clan-pair is said to exercise over the fertility of yams, and with its right to determine the timing of the yam-gardening schedule. The ritual is believed to promote abundant yam-crops; it is held at the maturation of the levee yam-gardens, usually in December, which cannot be harvested until this ritual is held, and it is the ritual authorisation of this harvest.

The ritual is performed simultaneously by three separate ceremonial associations, each under the authority of an hereditary ritual office vested in a specific Wuluwi-Nyawi tənəmb. During initiatory versions of the ritual, two of these tənəmbs each supervise the construction of a large decorated effigy, or məndj (hence Mândja Sə, or 'məndj grade'), representing a vine-covered yam-pole; and in addition they have the right of inaugurating the ritual in all its forms.

All preparations for the ritual are kept secret from the women and uninitiated, as it is meant to take them by surprise. The Wuluwi-Nyawi men of the Mândja Sə grade secretly harvest the first-fruits of their yam-gardens, and the following morning awake the village

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8 These offices are simultaneously simbuk-ships (see Chapter 5).
with slit-drum signals. Each ceremonial association then carries the first-fruits in procession along the village, presenting the tubers to the households of their sisters' children. It is this act, which is said to recapitulate the myth of the primordial emancipation of yams from one of the Wuluwi-Nyawi mythical villages, which lifts the interdiction on the levee gardens and gives the community license to harvest them.

Initiation into the Môndja So is followed by induction into the third and highest ritual grade, the Maiyira So or Ndjôpas. Two alternative rituals give entry into this stage, one belonging to Nggôla'angkw and one to Wuluwi-Nyawi. One is a ritual called Ndumwi, usually performed every four years or so a few months after a performance of an initiatory version of the yam harvest ritual. It belongs to Nggôla'angkw and, as with the scarification ritual, it is said to increase the fertility of the Nggôla'angkw fishing-grounds.

Ndumwi is supposedly a female spirit brought into the village on a raft at the climax of the ritual in order to initiate the novices. During the first part of the ritual, the men of the Ndjôpas grade spend four or five weeks in the initiatory enclosure beating slit-drum signals continuously. These signals are supposed to be Ndumwi's personal call-signs (ndja'amb), notifying her to make ready to be fetched into the village by the Ndjôpas men. The representatives of each subclan have their own hearths and sitting-areas in the ceremonial house during the ritual, with those of the two most senior Nggôla'angkw subclans sharing a place of honour at the front of the building. These two groups have the right to inaugurate the ritual, and Ndumwi is usually performed in the ceremonial house which they jointly own, although any of the Nggôla'angkw ceremonial houses is a permissible venue. They also hold a number of other prerogatives; that of beginning every session of drum-beating, for example, and of constructing the gate through which the spirit is said to enter and leave the initiatory enclosure.

Once the spirit - or rather the men impersonating her - is brought into the village on the raft, the initiands are led into the ceremonial house where their initiators beat them with nettles as their initiatory ordeal. Women and the uninitiated are told that this is done by Ndumwi herself. They are made to leave the village while this takes place; but once it is over they are summoned back
to the village and allowed to stand at a distance from the initiatory enclosure while Ndumwi, purportedly, dances within it. All that is visible to them are two palm-fronds which bob and sway above the screen, said to be held by Ndumwi as she dances. These are part of a kind of puppet operated with vines by the men in the enclosure, and the mechanism of which is revealed to the novices during their initiation; the 'dance' of the spirit is accompanied by a number of sound-effects. The ritual ends the same night with the departure of Ndumwi from the village. At nightfall all the women and uninitiated are confined to their houses. The men impersonating Ndumwi break open the initiatory enclosure; accompanied by flutes and other instruments, they stamp along the village to its outskirts where Ndumwi, it is said, vanishes into the ground.

As owners of the Ndumwi ritual, one entitlement which Nggôla'angkw men enjoy is an easier induction into this ritual than men of other groups. Usually, once one or two men from any non-Nggôla'angkw tonomb have been initiated into Ndumwi, no more men of the same tonomb are permitted to enter the Ndjôpas grade via this ritual until the previous initiates have died or retired from ritual life. No limit of this kind is placed on the induction of Nggôla'angkw men. The effect of this is that as the initiatory cycle continues, with performances of Ndumwi every four years, Nggôla'angkw men comprise an increasingly large part of the Ndjôpas grade.

This imbalance is redressed in a ritual called Maiyir, which belongs to Wuluwi-Nyawi and is the alternative means of induction into the final initiatory grade. In the past, it was performed once a generation and closed the initiatory cycle, taking the form of a mass induction of all the remaining Môndja Sô into the Ndjôpas grade. The original Ndjôpas now retired from ritual life, having initiated into their own grade the men whom they had inducted into the first grade years earlier, and transferred control of the ritual system to them. In this way the initiatory cycle returned to the point from which it had begun. All the initiated men were now members of the Ndjôpas grade, the two lower grades were unoccupied, and a new generation of the uninitiated was ready to be introduced into the first grade.
Maiyir was last performed at Avatip in the 1920's. Long overdue, it was hoped to resurrect it in 1978; but because it involved homicide and ritual cannibalism, it was decided that it was impossible to perform it in its traditional form. Instead, a novel, composite ritual was held which fulfilled the same function as Maiyir but was essentially an augmented version of Ndumwi combined with some elements of the traditional Maiyir ritual.

Because of schooling, employment and so forth, it is nowadays difficult to assemble large numbers of novices at the same time and for any long period. It is largely for this reason that Maiyir and the scarification ritual, the two initiations in which all the males of a particular ritual level were promoted en masse, are no longer performed. Because they involve smaller batches of novices, Ndumwi and the initiatory version of the yam harvest ritual on the other hand have remained viable, and seem likely to continue to do so. But because of the smaller numbers of novices available in the village at any one time, it seems that these rituals involve a smaller group of initiands than was the case in the past but that they are performed more frequently.

ix. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to describe the kinds of magico-economic privileges which groups hold and for which they compete in the institutionalised disputes over the ownership of personal names to which I shall turn in the second part of this thesis. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall try to explain why so high a value is attached to the possession of these entitlements: why, that is to say, they are so important that they are the single main focus of conflict in this society.

At least some of these privileges are, or imply, economic rights, and one obvious example of this is the ownership of land. Many name-disputes do concern titles to land and are thus conflicts over the control of a productive resource. However, the ownership of land as I have described entails only very limited rights of exclusive use. With the conditions that I have mentioned, all groups enjoy access to each other's land for hunting, fishing, collecting and gardening; and, as far as sago-stands and other restricted resources are concerned,
all individuals have usufructory rights in those of their affines and matrikin. There are a number of subclans at Avatip which have, for example, insufficient sago-stands, or prime gardening-land, at least in convenient proximity to the village, and yet for the reasons I have given they suffer no economic hardships. Disputes over titles to land in no way have at stake the economic livelihood of groups, and whatever their outcome they could never threaten the ability of either party to meet its subsistence needs.

Some magical and ritual prerogatives confer economic rewards on the groups which possess them. The services of the shaman and of the yam-planting magician are repaid by gifts of food and wealth. The traditional public performances of love-magic were rewarded by similar though larger gifts made to the entire subclans in which these techniques were vested. During the initiatory versions of the yam harvest ritual, the men of Wuluwi-Nyawi receive ceremonial prestations of shell valuables from their sisters' children. And, as I described earlier, sacrificial food-offerings made in expiation of acts of sa'al kurna against yams or fish are eaten by the totemic owners of these foods. However, all these payments, even when they include wealth, are in the long-term minuscule in comparison with the wealth which every group regularly receives in the form of bridewealth and mortuary payments. Moreover there are many magical and ritual services for which their practitioners receive no material recompense whatever, and yet the rights to these are also an important focus of name-disputes. Although the economic prerogatives attached to some of these competences may contribute to their value, they do not by themselves explain it.

I will try to show that these services are thought of as representing a system of prestations, and that the value attached to the rights to perform them derives from the value which these services are felt to have in themselves as media of exchange between groups.

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the segments with effective functions in the marriage-system are also those which hold rights in magico-economic capacities; in other words, that the groups between which the exchange of women is conducted, and the groups which discharge 'totemic' services, are one and the same. This principle has its expression in the form of the ndja'aman, the incest-
punishing spirits which give both their generic name, and their individual personal names, to the corpuses of magical competences vested in the social units with which they are associated.

Not only are rights in women and in magico-economic functions held by the same groups, but they are also symbolically identified with each other, as is suggested in the use of the same term, nāja'lam, to refer to both. When people speak of the enduring relationships between intermarrying groups, it is not so much affinity as uterine kinship that they employ as the paradigm of these ties. Exogamous units are described as standing to one another in corporate matrifilial relationships, and as exercising the magical competences with which they are endowed for the benefit of each other; and the provision of these services is habitually referred to in the idiom of matrilateral kinship as "giving mother's milk" (amei mōī karīna) or, from the point of view of the intended recipients, as "drinking mother's milk" (amei mōī kena). This ideology has its paramount expression in ritual, in which the promotion of the fertility of yams and of fish is symbolised, as well as explicitly described, as a reciprocity between Nggola'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi represented as each other's corporate matrixin.

There is however, as I said earlier, one important difference between the exchange of women and of magico-economic services: the rules enjoining exogamy are absolute, but social units are partly 'endofunctional' in terms of the totemic specialisations which they exercise. But this, as I have suggested in agreement with Lévi-Strauss, is at least partly due to the nature of these services, which makes it difficult or impossible for groups to entirely forgo the fruits of their own magical labours; while no such disadvantage attaches to a prohibition of consanguineous unions. And yet there are, wherever feasible or convenient, clear rules and preferences in favour of abstention from the benefits which it is one's own group's hereditary right to disburse: the most definite example of which is the prohibition laid upon magicians against eating the species which they multiply. It is revealing that the magician Kunggwanameri cast this prohibition in the idiom of consanguinity: it is in the fact that the subjects of his magic call him their "father" that prevents him from consuming them.

According to myth, each estate-holding group was originally
independent residentially and occupied a village of its own. Now these communities, as I shall later describe, are considered to have intermarried, but their contact with each other is portrayed as otherwise having been minimal. There are, for example, myths which describe them concealing the existence of their totemic foods from each other, and retaining them for their own secret consumption; yams, for instance, are stated to have originally been treated in this way. Many myths describe totemic ancestors killing and eating those of other sakitep and committing other outrages against each other. The nggwa'al-as'a'ai are repeatedly referred to in myth and debating by epithets which stress their powerful but anti-social or semi-social attributes: *apēl* (wild and uncontrolled), *ka'awmānu* (the ferocious one), *sepamembi takowm* (lethally potent with war-magic) and so on.

Not only society but the natural world as well is portrayed in myth as having originally existed in a disjoined or dismantled state. Each group's totemic species, shamanic spirits, ceremonial houses and the rest are described in its mythology as having existed at its sakitep in the form of totemic ancestors before the creation of nature and human society. Each sakitep was as it were a partial and incomplete world, containing only those elements of the universe belonging to one specific social segment. Mythology operates as a charter for the departmentalisation of the cosmos amongst social groups; and it does so rather in the manner of an 'exploded' diagram of a piece of machinery, which attempts to show the design of the mechanism more clearly by representing it as if it had been taken apart.

Mythology describes, I would suggest, one possible permutation which, as Lévi-Strauss has shown (1966:115-120), a totemic model of society may be made to undergo: one in which the homology between society and nature is conceived to consist in the relations not

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9 In short, mythology portrays a society of monocarpellary parishes (Hogbin and Wedgwood 1953-4). A number of interesting problems, which cannot be dealt with here, are raised by the fact that the community thus in effect imagines in its myths a form of local organisation which is an ethnographic reality in many parts of Melanesia, but the existence of which it had in pre-European times no knowledge.
between the discontinuities within each, but between actual social segments and the species with which they are associated. Society and nature are represented not as two separate but parallel realms, but as an undifferentiated reality broken into a series of independent "socio-natural" subuniverses. It is, I would argue, the idea of such subuniverses that the sakitep represent. Their inhabitants are human and yet simultaneously members of different species; and each of these communities constitutes simultaneously a truncated society and a fragment of the natural world (ibid:115):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{species 1} & \neq & \text{species 2} & \neq \\
\text{group 1} & \neq & \text{group 2} & \neq \\
\text{species 3} & \neq & \ldots & \text{species n} \\
\end{array}
\]

The metamorphoses of the totemic ancestors and their issuing forth from the sakitep, the creation of nature and the establishment of Avatip, represent a transformation of the model in which, to use Lévi-Strauss' terminology, the homology between nature and society is shifted from terms to relations. The inhabitants of the sakitep are separated into two sets: human beings and elements of the natural universe. The former are assembled together as the representatives of human society at Avatip; while the latter are in a similar manner brought into conjunction with each other to form the world of nature. Society and nature are extracted from each other, and each becomes integral yet symmetrical with the other; and it is in the contrasts within the two realms, rather than in the actual entities which comprise them, that the homology between them is made to lie (ibid:115):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{species 1} & \neq & \text{species 2} & \neq \\
\text{group 1} & \neq & \text{group 2} & \neq \\
\text{species 3} & \neq & \ldots & \text{species n} \\
\end{array}
\]

Social segments are portrayed as forgoing their autonomy and isolation and as coming together to form a single unified multi-clan village, and this event is paralleled by the release of natural phenomena into the world. The emancipation of species and the rest from the mythical villages makes them available for the use and benefit of the newly-formed society, and it is in effect a series of multilateral prestations through which social segments attest to their
newly-inaugurated solidarity and mutuality. The separation of nature and society converts natural objects into media of a communication between social groups, and the interdependencies within nature into a model of the interdependencies within society:

If our ancestors had made it so, we Nggala'angkw would now build our houses only with mbangger and marek (two Nggala'angkw totemic trees) while Wuluwi-Nyawi would build theirs only of tawuk and miyemb (two Wuluwi-Nyawi totemic trees). Similarly, we Nggala'angkw would be able to drink only the black water of lagoons (a Nggala'angkw totem), while Wuluwi-Nyawi would drink only rain-water and the pale water of the rivers (Wuluwi-Nyawi totems). And so it would be, with house-building timbers, with drinking-water, with food, with land, with everything. But our ancestors did not do that. They shared all these things with each other, and so we must share them too. It is impossible to change this now. It is too late.

Having been established, this reciprocity can never again be revoked; the dissemination of phenomena from the mythical villages was an irreversible event. And yet, as I have explained, this is not entirely the case. For the human totemic owners of these phenomena have since retained, in the form of their secret names, the means of magically controlling and manipulating them. My informant's statement that it is "impossible to change this now" was meant to express a moral imperative as much as a factual observation. In an important sense the release of natural objects into the world is an act continually repeated or sustained by human agents: either positively, as in the performance of increase magic or the inauguration of an initiatory ritual, or else passively, as in holding in abeyance one's power to interdict a fishing-lagoon or to bring down the sky.

It would be possible, following Durkheim (1947) as closely as the character of the society permits, to interpret the concept of the sakttep simply as an ideological expression - of a somewhat extreme kind - of the internal unity and solidarity of groups; and the totemic phenomena of these groups as symbols of their corporate identity and foci for their members' loyalties. I would argue that such an interpretation is correct, but that it is at the same time in a very important way incomplete. Rather than representing an hypostatisation of society, an essential significance of the mythical villages is that they portray on the contrary a pre-social or semi-social state of
existence; they represent society and nature as these are thought to have lain in a primordial state of disassembly. Myth and cosmology operate by means of a kind of ideological *reculer pour mieux sauter*, initially defining sociality in reverse in order to throw its principles into heightened relief. Their method is essentially dialectical, in that they begin by positing a negative image of society, and then show it being transformed and resolved through the inauguration of reciprocity. This is a dialectic which social groups, by virtue of the magical competences which they possess, are viewed as being fated to continually re-enact. Their capacity to perform, and to refrain from performing, competences of both positive and negative kinds, sustains the view that these groups are vitally interdependent and, at the same time, that this interdependence is fragile and conditional. To go out and catch a fish is seen, in a quite literal way, as the acceptance of a gift from a certain social segment; to show respect for an animal is a way of showing respect for a man; a man who knows magic capable of destroying the village with thunderbolts is not so much feared, as respected for the responsibility and self-control which the possession of this knowledge is said to demand. The magical powers over nature which these groups claim to have are, paradoxically, both an expression of the narrow segmentary allegiances which divide the community and, at the same time, of an equally vigorous attempt to multiply and diversify to the greatest extent possible the channels through which these groups communicate and conduct their relations; an attempt, ultimately, to increase the number of ways in which they are accountable to each other.

However, I would suggest, *pace* Lévi-Strauss (1966:109), that it would be simplistic to view the exchange of totemic services as a means only of expressing or creating social solidarity amongst groups. For this reciprocity, as I shall try to show, is the basis of implicit - and sometimes explicit - power and status relations between them. Whether it is possible to speak of institutionalised differences of status or rank between descent groups at Avatip is a question to which I shall turn in later chapters; here, I will limit myself simply

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10 For another Melanesian society in which a dialectic is conceived to exist between the principle of reciprocity and a legacy of an anti-social past, see Errington 1974.
to describing the kinds of power which the rights to perform magico-economic functions make available to groups.

There is one respect in which these competences have an economic value of the very highest order. The right to control the fertility of a fishing-lagoon, to punish incursions onto an area of land, to perform weather-magic, or to augment or diminish an edible species, are each of them economic prerogatives in themselves, in that they consist in the presumed power to regulate the access of others to valued resources. Much the same is true of rights in sorcery and curative techniques and in ritual functions, which can be viewed as forms of control over the distribution of such values as health, longevity, ritual status and success in warfare. The magical competences I have described in this chapter are all of economic importance - using the term broadly - but to those in respect of whom they are exercised, or capable of being exercised, rather than only to those who perform them.

Each group's saki-tso represents the fund of material and intangible values which its ancestors brought into general circulation at the beginning of the world; and with the periodic re-creation or maintenance of which the group has ever since remained charged. Almost all the resources which the society deems necessary for its well-being are considered to emanate ultimately from one social segment or another; even, as we have seen, such a commonplace utility as daylight. In terms of such a conceptualisation, it is impossible for individual or collective needs to be met without at the same time incurring relations of debt and credit between social groups. The capacity to perform any magico-economic service, and to suspend the exercise of any of a negative or destructive kind, confers as Mauss termed it (1966:72) the status of magister, the dominance or superiority which attaches to the role of donor; and places those who benefit from this in a corresponding position of dependence and obligation. The exchange of these services is considered to be, as I have described, the origin and basis of society; and to possess rights to perform them is therefore to fulfill what is held to be the most central of all social values. The competition between groups for these rights in name-disputes involves competition for this pre-eminence in terms of a view of society as a scheme of reciprocities.
The possession of such rights at the same time entails the capacity to withdraw one's services, or to exercise those of a destructive kind. Some of these negative powers may, at least in certain contexts, be legitimately exercised. It is legitimate for a group to temporarily interdict land, or diminish an edible totemic species, if these are over-exploited or wasted; and the simbuk may justifiably employ his sorcerous powers against those who commit ritual offences. But there are, as I have mentioned, supernatural penalties for the wrongful or anti-social use of such negative powers.

Nevertheless, the possibility that they might be used in the heat of disputes between groups is considered a very real one, and threats of employing them form an important part of political rhetoric at Avatip. When a subclan interdicts an area of land or threatens to do so, it often happens that other groups, considering the grievance unjustified, try to prevent the interdiction by threatening to do the same themselves. Disputes of this kind, in which groups threaten each other with withdrawing their land from general use, occur relatively often; and they are considered to be the form in which a temporary collapse of magico-economic reciprocity between groups would be most likely. The ownership of an important piece of gardening land, or a major fishing-lagoon, does in this respect confer real economic power; for its owners can use the threat of interdicting it as a weapon which to compel others - and particularly the owners of less vital territorial resources - to keep their lands open for general exploitation.

The exclusive right to inaugurate a ritual has as its corollary the power to refuse to perform this office and so to prevent the ritual from proceeding; the right to lift the prohibition on the yam-gardens has as its obverse the latent capacity to leave the prohibition in force and prevent the harvest. Powers such as these - to cause the sky to collapse or to destroy the village with poisonous insects and snakes, and so on - are on the whole conceived as merely potential or residual and as never intended to be used under any circumstances. And yet they form the implicit background against which much of Avatip politics takes place.

They can have, for example, an important rhetorical value during disputes. At the height of the dispute between the two subclans Yimal
and Maliyaw over the ownership of the personal name Tapasawun, which I shall describe in a later chapter, the senior men of Yimal announced their intention to evict Maliyaw from the village under the threat of mystical sanctions which they claim to wield as owners of the village site: to make them, in the words of one of the Yimal men,

uproot their domestic houses and their ceremonial houses, and carry them back to where they came from (i.e. to the Maliyaw sakitep).

Threats of withdrawing services, or of performing anti-social competences, are viewed as threats of returning the universe to an approximation of its pre-social state, of bringing the mythical world of the sakitep once again to life. From the villagers' perspective, the sakitep represent the form which the universe could take were social segments to allow themselves to use in their conflicts with each other the most basic kinds of powers they hold. This image is a spectre habitually raised during disputes, as both a threat and simultaneously an appeal for conciliation. Groups are considered to possess capacities to dislocate nature and the social fabric in such radical ways that their disputes are brought under control more effectively the more aggressively these powers are paraded.

The villagers believe that their ancestral home, the village of Asiti (see Chapter 1) was destroyed by magic during an internecine feud. The destruction of Asiti is not totemic myth (sakima'andj) but legend (wasokima'andj); it is regarded as a plain historical event, involving ordinary human actors, which occurred some seven generations ago. It is one of the most important of Avatip legends, and is known by everyone. It is pointed to as the ultimate example of a catastrophic collapse of cosmological reciprocity.

The destruction of Asiti

A certain man was so simple-minded that some wags were able to persuade him to cut off his wife's breast to make soup with it, as a result of which she died. According to another version, he was driven mad by sorcery and cut his wife's throat. His brothers-in-law decided to avenge the killing of

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11 Douglas (1975:230-48) discusses the manner in which beliefs about nature and its relation to the social order may operate, as at Avatip, as a means of social control.
their sister. They ambushed the man's two children, their own sister's children, while they were fishing in a canoe and speared them to death. The husband belonged to the Sarambusarak tanamb Kapuwus, which owns magic to call down thunderbolts (or rather thunderstones; thunderbolts are thought to hurl down stones); and he resolved to take revenge by destroying the whole village with this magic. He waited for a day when all the villagers were out fishing on Kamiar, Asiti's main fishing-lagoon. He placed a bespelled stick against a coconut-palm, called on the thunder-spirits by their secret names, and broke the stick with his foot. A large storm-cloud immediately appeared over Kamiar, and the thunder-spirits came hurtling down upon the villagers in the form of thunderbolts. Everyone was killed except a few who managed to capsize their canoes and take shelter under the hulls. These survivors abandoned Asiti, moved upriver, and founded Old Avatip. One man from every tanamb had survived, and they are the progenitors of the present-day Avatip tanombs. What became of the storm-magician is not known.

The important point about this tale is that it describes the destruction of Asiti as having been triggered by a radical breakdown of affinal and uterine ties: that is, by a man cutting off his own wife's breast, and her brothers murdering her children. The villagers regard both acts as unthinkable, horrifying repudiations of the bonds set up by marriage; the only consequence which the destruction of these ties can have, it is implied, is the destruction of society. First, the ties between affines and matrikin break down, and then groups use their magical powers to destroy each other. Like totemic mythology, the Asiti legend presents a kind of radical negation of society as a way of stressing what are conceived as the fundamental bonds which hold society together: the exchange of women between groups, and these groups' use of their magical powers for their mutual good.

The magical competences vested in each group represent, at least potentially, instruments of coercion in their political relations with each other; and they create not simply social solidarity so much as a field of power relations. Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw clan-pairs are by far the two largest of the three primary estate-holding groups, and it is between them that the most basic cleavage within the community lies. Their relationship is cast in a moiety-like model (see Chapter 5); marriage, and the exchange of ritual and totemic services, are spoken of as essentially being conducted between these two groups
alone. One, as we have seen, controls the fertility of fish, and 
the other that of yams; one controls the ritual of first-stage 
initiation and the more common of the two third-stage rituals, while 
the other controls second-stage initiation and the rarer of the third-
stage rituals; and finally, as my informant expressed it (above, 
section vii) one could destroy the village from the ground, and the 
other from the air. Between the two largest potential political blocs 
in the community there is, in other words, an approximate equilibrium 
of magical and ritual powers.

To the villagers, in short, society and the cosmic order rest 
on what is essentially a balance of power. Conceptually, Wuluwi-Nyawi 
and Nggala'angkw are totally interdependent and neither could exist as 
an independent society. There can be little doubt about the 
contribution which their moiety-like relationship, with its 
complementary division of cosmological functions between them, has 
made toward counterbalancing the tendencies of this large community 
to split apart. In effect, full play is given to these segmentary 
forces, and the community represented as *already divided* into two 
halves: but in such a way that neither could be thought of as 
existing without the other.
Chapter Four

THE EXCHANGE OF ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE

In this way, language and exogamy represent two solutions to one and the same fundamental situation. Language has achieved a high degree of perfection, while exogamy has remained approximate and precarious. This disparity, however, is not without its counterpart. The very nature of the linguistic symbol prevented it from remaining for long in the stage which was ended by Babel, when words were still the essential property of each particular group: values as much as signs, jealously preserved, reflectively uttered, and exchanged for other words the meaning of which, once revealed, would bind the stranger, as one put oneself in his power by initiating him, [since by understanding and by making oneself understood one surrenders] something of oneself and acquires some power over the other (Lévi-Strauss 1969:496).

i. Introduction

As I described in Chapter 2, the corporate identity of a social segment is held to consist in its combined possession of "one vei (or apical ancestor) and one ndja'am," The first of these two terms refers to the principle of descent from a common ancestor, while the term ndja'am refers to the rights which the group holds in certain kinds of exchange capacities.

A ndja'am is, first of all, a named spirit-being identified with the social unit, the supernatural function of which is to punish incest and contraventions of exogamous rules on the part of the members of the segment. While all descent groups, from the clan-pair to the tanemb, possess vei, only those groups which are significant for the regulation of marriage and which hold rights in relation to women possess a ndja'am. These are, firstly, the three most inclusive exogamous descent groups in the village; and secondly the subclans within each of these, the units which effectively arrange marriages.

Each of these groups also possesses what I have called an estate. An estate, as I explained in the last chapter, includes exclusive rights in a body of material property and ritual and magico-economic specialisations. All estate-holding groups have the prerogative of performing distinctive cosmological functions, by means of which they

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1 This is a lacuna in the English version (Lévi-Strauss 1969:496), which omits translating the words puisque en comprenant et en se faisant comprendre on livre ... (Lévi-Strauss 1949:615-616).
are conceived to be linked together in enduring exchange. This scheme of reciprocities parallels the exchange of women between them, and the correspondence between the two systems of exchange is expressed in the polysemy of the term ndja'am. In addition to denoting the incest-punishing spirits with which these groups are identified, the term is also used to refer to the cosmological powers which they hold, and the personal name of a group's ndja'am-spirit also denotes its specific set of powers. The ndja'am Maiyimndjaralimungk of the subclan Nangwundaw, for example, is the name of the spirit which punishes breaches of exogamy and of the incest prohibition committed by the members of Nanggundaw, and also the term used to denote the distinctive ritual and magico-economic competences vested in this subclan.

A further category of rights which comprise an estate are rights in information: in myths, song-cycles, personal names, and magical and sorcerous formulae. To use Lévi-Strauss' terms, these forms of property are not only signs but also values, as I shall try to make clear in this chapter. But the value which they have is in an important sense derivative, in that they are essentially the means either of validating or of exercising the rights which social segments hold in the magical and ritual powers I described in the previous chapter. Magical spells are the instruments with which land, edible species and so on are controlled; while myth legitimates the prerogative of exercising this control. Personal names, on the other hand, have both these attributes: firstly, they constitute the crux of all charter-myths; and, secondly, esoteric names are considered to have intrinsic magical properties and form the essential element of all magical spells.

The term ndja'am, or the name of a specific group's ndja'am-spirit, is often used in a specially narrowed sense to refer specifically to the informational component of the group's estate. To teach myths, secret names and magic is, for example, often spoken of as "to give ndja'am" (ndja'am kwína). Used in this sense, the term ndja'am denotes a discrete corpus of knowledge vested in a specific social unit. This third and final sense of the term is the focus of the present chapter. Firstly I shall describe the nature and distribution of rights in esoteric knowledge; secondly, I shall try to show that the concept of ndja'am refers to a system of exchange of information between estate-holding groups, an exchange which parallels and is closely interlinked with the exchange of women
between them; and lastly that this exchange of knowledge is an important dimension of these groups' political relations.

ii. *Sakima'andj*, or totemic mythology

Mythology, magic spells, and ancestral names are generally taught and learned together; a spell, and an associated myth and set of personal names are usually given as a single narrative. In addition to *ndja'am*, another term used to refer to this lore is *sakima'andj*. These two terms each have, however, a slightly different emphasis. *Sakima'andj* denotes mythological narratives as a general class of oral tradition standing in implied contrast to the two other major types of narrative: legends (*wasekima'andj*) and fables told to children (*ngga'ambama'andj*); while the term *ndja'am* on the other hand suggests the segmentation of myth into distinct corpuses vested in descent groups, and thus implies the manner of its social distribution.

*Sakima'andj* is quite distinct from legends and from children's fables. Firstly, so far as its content is concerned, it deals exclusively with the exploits of the totemic ancestors, or *ngga'a*'ai-*asa'ai*, and with the etiology of society and the natural world. Secondly, it is a charter both in the sense that it invests the basic features of the social order with legitimacy, and at a much more specific level in that it provides the grounds on which titles to land and to magical and ritual functions are held by groups. Thirdly, *sakima'andj* narratives are vested in descent groups, which hold rights in their transmission. Fourthly, much *sakima'andj* is highly secret, and the range of persons qualified to learn and teach the secret parts of a group's *ndja'am* is very circumscribed, and normally includes only the agnatic members of the segment itself and their allies. There are, moreover, additional restrictions relating to age, sex and genealogical and ritual seniority. Finally, *sakima'andj*, especially its secret aspect, is believed to be magically powerful, and its transmission is felt to be surrounded with potential mystical dangers to the teacher, the pupil and to their close kin. It is imparted under strictly controlled conditions, and requires the pupil to make offerings of food and wealth, ostensibly to appease ghosts and the ancestral spirits mentioned in the narrative, but which are in most cases in effect a form of fee paid to the teacher.
The secret parts of sakima'andj consist, firstly, of narrative details omitted in the public versions of the myths; secondly, the esoteric names of totemic ancestors; and, lastly, magical formulae. Thus the exoteric versions of sakima'andj consist of abbreviations of the secret myths, specifying only the public names of the ancestors who appear in them, and excluding all magical spells. While formal restrictions, reinforced by supernatural sanctions, govern the transmission of esoteric sakima'andj, analogous but informal rules also regulate the retailing of its mundane counterpart. Anyone may listen to public versions of myths, but men are reluctant, unless invited by the owners of the narrative, to recite public myths the secret versions of which they are not entitled to know, because this might be taken to suggest an improper familiarity with them.

The rules of secrecy surrounding sakima'andj are of two kinds. Firstly, there are those which relate to exclusive rights held by descent groups, and which automatically define in relation to each ndja'am a range of individuals entitled to learn it. Secondly, there is a further set of restrictions which grade access to this knowledge according to age, sex and seniority. I will first discuss rights vested in social segments, and their significance for the political relations between these groups. Afterwards I will turn to the secondary restrictions relating to personal status, and the relationship which they have to leadership.

iii. Rights in cosmological powers and rights in esoteric knowledge

As I shall describe in the following chapter, all ngga'a-l-asa'ai are regarded as the agnatic descendants, by specifiable but secret genealogical ties, of the apical ancestors of the tønømbs. Thus every totemic ancestor is identified with a specific tønømb; and the public and esoteric names of all such figures associated with a tønømb comprise its corpus of personal names. The tønømb possesses the primary right to use these names, so that it may be spoken of as the name-owning unit.

I have explained that the social units which hold estates are of two orders: firstly, the maximal exogamous group and, secondly, the subclan. An estate includes a body of myths, so that each estate-holding group possesses ipso facto a discrete myth-corpus. These origin-mythologies are each focussed upon a specific mythical village
or sakitep: the mawtep, or origin-village of the maximal exogamous group, provides the central setting of this group's myths; while the kwulatep, the subsidiary villages stated to have been subsequently established by the totemic ancestors of each subclan, are the loci of the myth-corpuses of these groups. Thus the distinctions between these bodies of lore are expressed in a spatial or geographical idiom.

Of the totemic ancestors of the tonomb, some have their place in the mythology of the most inclusive exogamous unit to which the tonomb belongs; while others are actors in the mythology of the subclan of which the tonomb is a segment. The nggua'al-as'a'ai of the tonomb consist, in other words, of two sets, according to the level of myth-corpus in which they are found. Those located in the myths of the exogamous group as a whole are known as the mawtepa wa'a'i, or mawtep progeny, of the tonomb; while those figuring in the subclan myth-corpus are referred to as the tonomb's kwulatep wa'a'i, or kwulatep progeny.

Although the tonomb holds the primary right to use the names of its own nggua'al-as'a'ai, tonombs of the same subclan are normally enjoined to allow each other free use of their respective names, and in effect to pool them to form a single reservoir from which they both draw at will. While the tonomb may be referred to as the name-owning group, the constituent tonombs of the subclan effectively hold joint rights in personal names, so that the subclan may be spoken of as the name-holding unit.

This hierarchy of rights in personal names is paralleled by an identical hierarchy of rights in sakima'andj. The tonomb holds the primary rights over the transmission of all the secret lore concerning its own totemic ancestors: the esoteric details of their mythological exploits, their secret names, and the spells to invoke them. Tonombs of the same subclan are, however, expected to extend these rights to each other, so that it is the subclan which effectively holds rights in this esoterica, and which is therefore the operative entity in reference to which this information may be spoken of as secret.

The constituent tonombs of the subclan are in any case normally closely linked together in myth; firstly, of course, in the mythology of the subclan itself, but also in that of the mawtep as
well. Indeed it would in some cases be impossible for both tonombs to keep information concerning their respective totemic ancestors concealed from each other; for there are, for example, spells which contain secret names belonging to both tonombs of the same subclan. Usually, however, an area of land, a totemic species, an item of ritual sacra or the like, is regarded as an embodiment of a nggwa'al-as'a'ai, or set of such entities, of one tonomb alone; and usually of the senior of the two. But irrespective of any differentiation between them of this kind, tonombs of the same subclan hold almost identical rights in these assets; and these include the entitlement to learn all forms of esoterica concerning them.

These rights in esoterica relate both to the subclan's own ndja'am, and to that of the maximal descent group of which it is a part; to the mythologies of both the kualatep and of the mawtop. The subclan holds exclusive rights in the secret parts of its own ndja'am; and also in those parts of the mawtop mythology, or mawndja'am as it is called, which concern exclusively the totemic ancestors of its constituent tonombs. As a consequence the maximal exogamous group, although it possesses an integral myth-corpus, holds no rights in the restricted parts of this mythology; rather, these rights are distributed amongst the subclans which comprise it, and which hold these rights not only against outsiders but also against each other. The secret parts of the mawndja'am consist of quite independent segments, each one held by a specific subclan.

It is important to distinguish between rights in totemic functions and rights in secret knowledge, because their distribution does not coincide entirely. The estate of the maximal exogamous unit invests all its segments with certain magico-economic competences; and this entitles each tonomb within it to the possession of a distinctive set of names, spells and other secret information on the basis of which its members are authorised, and enabled, to exercise these capacities. But because rights in these arcana are effectively held by subclans, it is not in fact always necessary for every tonomb within the wider group to possess such esoterica, so long as one tonomb of each subclan does so; when this is the case, the tonomb concerned is usually the senior within the subclan. The same holds for the subclan estates: because the subclan as a whole is invested with specific cosmological functions, each of the tonombs which comprise it
is thereby licensed to have the magic to perform them. But because the subclan is the unit which holds rights in such lore in the first place, it is not essential for more than one of its tonombs - again, usually the most senior if this is the case - to do so in order for them all to be able to legitimately perform the subclan's totemic specialisations.

While the widest exogamous group has certain corporate ritual and magico-economic functions, it holds no equivalent rights in the esoterica in which the titles to these functions and the mystical means of performing them lie. While a group of this kind might possess, let us say, the capacity to cause the collapse of the sky, each subclan within it holds a different formula of this magic, containing a different set of secret names. The magic has the same objective in every case, and indeed may also follow an identical textual format, but the identities of the ancestral spirits to whom the magic is addressed vary from one subclan to another; and the spell, and the names it contains, are highly restricted information in which the subclan concerned holds exclusive rights. The same principle applies to the ritual specialisations which these groups possess; collateral subclans hold many identical ritual prerogatives, but each possesses a different, and secret, series of ancestral names on which it bases its titles to these privileges. This theme also pervades the system of totemic insignia, as I shall describe in Chapter 6: while the widest-span exogamous units have their own distinctive totems, each subclan within them is individuated by the ancestral names which they have for these species.

Collateral subclans may be largely indistinguishable in terms of those specialisations with which their joint estate invests them: they possess rights in the same, or essentially the same, function or set of functions. But the secret information on the basis of which they hold these similar or identical competences differs in crucial details from one subclan to another. And although this knowledge devolves from a unitary corpus of public myths which comprises part of their collective estate, it is in the subclans concerned, and not in the group as a whole, that rights in this restricted information are vested. Only in the case of the subclan estates does the allocation of rights in knowledge, and in the resources which this knowledge is intended to control, coincide. Specialised functions
in respect to these resources are held by segments of two orders: by the maximal descent group, and by the subclan. But subclans are the most inclusive units which hold franchises in secret information, irrespective of the level of estate to which these esoterica pertain.

Let me sum up the preceding points as follows. Each tonomb possesses a set of magical and ritual prerogatives; some of these derive from the estate of the widest-span exogamous unit of which it is a part, and as a consequence it shares them with all other tonombs collateral with itself within this group. Others devolve upon it from the estate of the subclan of which it is a segment, and it shares these only with the other tonomb or tonombs of this subclan. Secondly, the tonomb possesses an exclusive set of totemic ancestors, some of whom are located in the mythology of the mawtep, while the others are actors in the myth-corpus of the subclan. The tonomb holds control of the transmission of the secret names of these figures, the esoteric details of their exploits, and the spells to invoke them; these arcana are its warrant for the prerogatives which it derives from these two estates, and the supernatural means of exercising them. The names, both public and secret, which these texts contain are totally specific to the tonomb and shared by no other group; and the tonomb has the primary rights to use these to name its own personnel.

However, tonombs of the same subclan normally pool their rights in their respective esoterica and personal names, so that the subclan is usually the effective name-holding group and the unit which holds rights in the secret details of sakima'andj. As a result it is in principle sufficient for only one tonomb of each subclan - ideally the most senior - to be formally invested with the kinds of entitlements I have just described, in order for the system to operate; such a bias in favour of seniority does in fact exist, and I shall explore its consequences in the next chapter.

iv. Marriage alliance in Avatip myth and magic

While the tonomb is the most elementary unit which holds rights in personal names and in esoteric sakima'andj, it is normally the subclan which effectively does so. In Chapter 2 I described a further class of rights which are also distributed in the same way: rights in women. The tonomb holds corporate rights in its female members such that the marriages of these women are the affair of the tonomb as a
whole, and through these unions alliance relationships are created which involve the tonemb as a unit. However, each of the two tonemsbs which normally constitute the subclan extends to the other rights of this kind equivalent - or nearly so - to those which it holds itself. This has the result that in all matters relating to marriage the two tonemsbs co-ordinate their activities closely, so that the subclan operates more or less as a unit. One corollary of this is that the two tonemsbs in effect pool their contributions and receipts of bridewealth payments. And, since the sisters' children of each tonemb stand, both terminologically and in terms of the rights and obligations which uterine kinship entails, as the sisters' children of the subclan as a whole, the subclan acts as a unit in paying and receiving kəkətəp, or mortuary prestations.

There are a number of important connections between rights in women, in personal names and in information. They are, firstly, closely intertwined in mythology. Each tonemb possesses a very important and highly secret class of sakima'andj known as ndja'amama'andj (lit. "talk concerning the ndja'am"); I will refer to these esoterica as alliance narratives, a translation which, I think, most closely approximates to the meaning of the indigenous term. These narratives are the derivation of all the magical spells which the tonemb possesses and the basis upon which it defends its mythological titles in debates.

As I shall explain in more detail in the next chapter, the tonemb's totemic ancestors are considered to comprise a lineage of some four generations in depth, with the founding ancestor of the tonemb as its progenitor. Before the metamorphoses of the totemic ancestors and their final emergence from the sakitep, these communities are stated to have intermarried intensively and every ngwa'al-asa'ai without exception is regarded as standing in specifiable affinal and uterine relationships with specific totemic ancestors of other marriageable tonemsbs. The details of the agnatic, uterine and affinal ties between ngwa'al-asa'ai, and the esoteric names of these figures, are the subject-matter of the ndja'amama'andj narratives.

The tonemb's alliance narrative describes the marriages which each of its totemic ancestors made; the name of his or her spouse or spouses and, in the case of a male ancestor, also that of his wife's
brother; the tonomb or tonombs to which the spouses belong; and the offspring which each of these unions produced. All these figures are specified by their secret names during the course of the narrative. A ndja'amama'andj runs essentially as follows:

The ngwa'al'asa'ài A married the woman B of tonomb X, the sister of the man C, and begot the children D, E, F and G. He then married the woman H of tonomb Y, the sister of the man I, and begot the children J, K, L, M and N. His sister O married the man P of tonomb Z and bore the children Q, R, S, T and U

and so on; the narrative begins with the marriages of the tonomb's apical ancestor, and then describes the marriages made, and offspring begotten or born by each of his male and female agnatic descendants for the four or so generations which this mythical lineage encompasses. Each full sibling set of totemic ancestors is known as a meldk, the term for a segment of bamboo or cane, and these sets consist of between two and forty or more male and female ngwa'at-asar a i.

These marriages are distributed across the whole of the tonomb's field of matrimony, and in this respect they reiterate the policy, in real life, of spreading its alliances as widely as possible. The tonomb's alliance narrative exhausts the set of tonombs into which its members are permitted to marry, and the result of this is that all marriageable tonombs are linked in myth by reciprocal exchanges, each being both wife-giver and wife-taker to every other. Thus these mythological marriages confirm, again, to the ideal pattern in real life of a balanced flow of women between these groups. But more importantly, the ndja'amama'andj mythology considered in its totality thereby saturates every legitimate avenue of marriage within the society, and registers all marriage possibilities between tonombs. Every human marriage which takes place, at least every correct marriage, necessarily recapitulates a mythical one. Informants explicitly state that alliance narratives are the precedent for present-day marriage practice: where the totemic ancestors of each tonomb married, so must marry the human representatives of the groups. It is the function of the ndja'am-spirits to punish with sickness, infertility or death any contraventions of this precedent.

Moreover, the tonomb is represented in its alliance narrative as a group holding rights in its female members, and as standing in an immemorial connubial relationship with a specified set of groups of the same kind. The narrative enumerates these tonombs - those
with which its totemic ancestors have affinal and uterine ties - and in doing so it acknowledges them to be groups endowed by myth with the same alliance functions as itself. Similarly, it makes available to these tonombs, in the form of its own totemic ancestors, the means by which they in turn pronounce it a unit of the same kind in their own alliance narratives. Thus the system is entirely relative: the status of the tonomb as a group holding rights in women is ratified in myth, only in relation to a specific set of other marriageable tonombs which themselves define this aspect of their identities in the same way. Clearly, only if it possesses an identifiable corpus of named totemic ancestors can a group be admitted into this circle of mutual ratifications; to be qualified for recognition by its marriageables as having a mandate to contract alliances, the group must be a name-owning unit. The connubium which the totemic ancestors are considered to comprise, entails, at least in terms of the logic of this indigenous model, that the groups which possess discrete name-corpuses, and the groups between which the exchange of women is conducted, are one and the same.

The corporate rights in women which the tonomb holds have as a symbolic counterpart the group's possession of an exclusive corpus of personal names. Similarly, the higher-level alliance functions of the subclan have their parallel in its status as the name-holding segment. The rights which each tonomb extends to the other in the use of its personal names correspond to, and in fact signify, their extension to each other of rights in their female members.

An alliance narrative specifies the public and secret names not only of a tonomb's totemic ancestors, but also of these figures' affines and uterine kin: their mothers, mothers' brothers, spouses and sisters' children. The tonomb's secret mythology thus always includes within it fragments of the secret myths of each of the tonombs with which it stands in a marriageable relationship. Conversely, these latter groups each possess a small fraction of its own alliance narrative, so that this narrative is distributed detail by detail among these marriageable groups. Each tonomb holds the entire version only of its own alliance narrative, but this incorporates within it elements of the narratives
Fig. 7. The structure of ndja'amama'andj
of all the tonãmbs with which it exchanges women. Although an alliance narrative is extremely secret information vested in a tonãmb, access to it cannot by its very nature be confined to the tonãmb itself because the elements of which it is composed form a permanent part also of the alliance narratives of its marriageables. The alliance narratives of marriageable tonãmbs interpenetrate, and they do so through the medium of the totemic ancestors who appear in one text as the agnatic members of a tonãmb, and in others as mothers, mothers' brothers, spouses and sisters' children. Alliance narratives are built from an exchange, between marriageable tonãmbs, of highly secret details of their totemic ancestries, a reciprocity which takes the form of mythological ties of affinity and matrifiliation between them. The manner in which these narratives intermesh is illustrated schematically in Figure 7.

There are two main reasons for the fact that alliance narratives are the most closely guarded type of secret myth. Firstly, all magical spells are based upon these narratives; every spell contains the secret names of the ancestor or ancestors to whom it is addressed, and of each of these figures' fathers, mothers and normally also mothers' brothers. It is from this co-presence in the spell of the secret names of a minimum of four ngwa'el-asa'ai that the formula is considered to obtain its full efficacy: two belonging to the tonãmb which owns the spell, and two belonging to another with which it exchanges women. For the totemic ancestors to respond to magical invocation, they must be specified not only by name but also by their exact kinship position. A spell is essentially the frozen record of an alliance relationship; each spell encapsulates an instance of that constellation of ties which Lévi-Strauss refers to as the atom or irreducible element of kinship, between a man, his wife, their offspring and a representative of the woman's consanguines (1963:31-54). A tonãmb derives the means of discharging its hereditary magical competences partly from its marriageables; marriageable tonãmbs mutually cede to each other knowledge of their esoteric ancestral names, and in doing so they acquire from each other the complement of supernatural power necessary for operating their respective forms of magic.

The second reason for the importance of alliance narratives is that they are the decisive factor in the adjudication of debates, as I shall explain in more detail in Chapter 7. To win a debate
conclusively, one side must be able to demonstrate that it has exclusive knowledge of the secret name of the figure who is the central focus of the dispute and for the possession of whose public name the two sides are contending; and secondly, exclusive knowledge of the secret names of the father, mother, and mother's brother of this ancestor. If one side can prove beyond doubt that it alone knows these names, it thereby renders its opponents' claims to the disputed name void in the eyes of all third parties and, in doing so, their claims to the mythological right which the two parties are contesting. In order to protect its mythological privileges against challenge, a group must preserve the security and secrecy of its alliance narrative above all other types of secret sakima'andj; for this is information which can enable outsiders to publicly invalidate its titles and strip them from it. The interpenetration of the alliance narratives of marriageable tonombs carries with it, I would suggest, an implied mutual assent to the authenticity of each other's mythological rights. Because these narratives share the same configurations of names, they reciprocally validate each other and, in doing so, also the claims which each tonomb bases upon this lore. The fact that other tonombs are in permanent possession of parts of its own alliance narrative could, one might think, put the tonomb at a disadvantage; for these groups could accidentally or otherwise expose this esoterica, or use it against the tonomb to defeat it in debates. But the genealogical details which two marriageable tonombs share in common are an equally crucial part of both their mythologies, and their loss or exposure would be equally disastrous to both of them. For these reasons it is normally very difficult for two such groups to use this knowledge in an attempt to undermine each other's mythological claims in debate. They can normally rely on each other to treat with the greatest discretion their knowledge of each other's secret ancestral names.

The alliance narratives of tonombs of the same exogamous unit do not, of course, intermesh in this way. Formally, collateral tonombs - outside the same subclan - possess as groups no access whatever to each others' narratives, and these esoterica are entirely separate and independent of each other. This is connected with a phenomenon to which I shall turn in the following chapter: the fact that the majority of name-disputes take place between agnates, and most
competition for mythological titles occurs between segments of the same clan or clan-pair. It is therefore normally against the interests of these groups to permit each other acquaintance with their respective esoterica.

It is necessary to take into account the nature of relations between agnates in order to fully understand the significance of alliance narratives, the interlocking of those of marriageable tonombs, and the mutual ratification which this implies. Not only can a tonomb not expect consistent acknowledgement of its mythological claims from its agnates beyond its own subclan, but the fact that these groups are likely to frequently challenge them makes such support, however mute, all the more a necessity; and one that therefore can be supplied only by the groups with which it marries. The principle that agnates compete, while marriageables support each other in these disputes, pervades Avatip social organisation, under a number of different forms, and it is a theme to which I will frequently recur in the following chapters.

While marriageable groups are linked together in myth in a connubium of totemic ancestors, they are also linked by the exchange of important and secret details of this mythology. Their totemic ancestors stand to one another as affines and uterine kin; and this movement of ancestors between them in marriage consists in the transmission of the secret names of those involved. The rights which the tonomb holds in information and in women are closely interconnected; and alliance narratives, considered as a species of mythical charter, operate as the simultaneous warrant for both. A tonomb is acknowledged by its marriageables as the source of certain of the secret affinal and uterine names in their alliance narratives only on the basis that the tonomb possesses in the first place a recognised exclusive name-corpus. Once again, according to the logic of these narratives the same groups possess rights in esoteric knowledge which possess similar rights in the employment of personal names. These narratives are best viewed as a specialised system of communication between groups, the signs employed in which consist of the personal names that the members of these groups are entitled to bear. The mode of operation of alliance narratives is such that a segment which holds a unitary name-corpus will thereby be acknowledged by the groups with which it intermarries as endowed by myth with the legitimate function of exchanging women and information with them. Whether a
tanomb, subclan, or some other order of segment, the unit whose members are recognised to occupy an integral corpus of personal names signals to other groups, through the medium of these narratives, that it holds rights in women, in cosmological powers and in secret knowledge.

v. The marriage system and the politics of exchange of esoteric knowledge

By virtue of the fact that the subclan holds rights in women, the adult male members of the subclan stand as I described in Chapter 2 in a corporate relationship with a dispersed set of allies: their sisters' husbands, sisters' sons, and sisters' daughters' husbands. These individuals are expected to give their assistance and support in all enterprises which the subclan undertakes as a group. Of particular importance among these are, firstly, the affinal and matrilateral payments which the subclan makes on behalf of its members, to which these men are obliged to contribute wealth. Secondly, these allies are expected to support the subclan in any disputes in which it may become involved. The political and economic unity of the subclan therefore derives in large part from the rights it holds in relation to its female members.

The subclan's allies are entitled to learn all of its secret and public sakima'andj. It is in addition quite acceptable for them to teach this lore to each other, and the transmission of this mythology can in principle continue indefinitely amongst these outsiders without consultation with the agnatic members of the subclan. But they are under a strong obligation to preserve the security of this information and not to alienate it to persons with no authority to know it, and who could therefore employ the information to force the subclan to capitulate to them in debate. For example, a man may not teach the secret myths of his mother's subclan to his own subclan agnates other than those who themselves have legitimate alliance relationships with it; not even to his own son, unless the latter has renewed the alliance - as I explained in an earlier chapter it is possible to do - by marrying into his father's mother's subclan.

It is because the subclan's mothers' husbands, sisters' sons and sisters' daughters' husbands stand obligated to it through marriage
and matriliation that they are called upon to act as trustees of its secret myths. In granting them these rights in its mythology, the subclan is taking a calculated risk; hence it grants them only to those men whose allegiance is felt to be assured by the debt they owe to it as the source of their wives, mothers, or wives' mothers.

The rights which the subclan's allies have in its mythology are thus entirely unilateral. The subclan cedes access to its myths, to its sisters' husbands, sororal nephews, and sororal nieces' husbands, but these ties in themselves entail no reciprocation of these rights. Wife-givers extend them to their wife-takers, but never the reverse; the transmission of rights in information beyond the subclan follows the flow of women and may take no other direction.

It sometimes happens, particularly if the subclan is small, that its senior men die without having passed on all of their esoteric knowledge to their agnates, and when this occurs the subclan's allies are normally able to supply the missing information. To extend to the subclan's external supporters the right to learn its mythology is partly a means of insuring against the loss of this lore. Because at least part of the subclan's sakima'andj is at all times known by outsiders, interruptions in its transmission within the subclan itself are not necessarily disastrous, as they would otherwise almost certainly be.

The subclan's allies are also entitled to perform all the techniques of magic and sorcery which the subclan possesses; however, this right is in practice often restricted to sisters' sons alone, the class of ally whose interests are considered to be the most closely identified with those of the subclan. These individuals are furthermore entitled to succeed, in default of the subclan's own members, to any ritual offices which the subclan may possess, such as a simbuk-ship. On the death of a sister's son who accedes to such an office, the position reverts either to another sister's son, or to an agnatic member of the subclan; the sister's son may not transmit the office to his own son, who, because he is necessarily matrifiliated elsewhere, is automatically disqualified from holding it. The capacity of the subclan's allies to depute for it in this way can once again be of great utility should the subclan be temporarily without knowledgeable men of its own. It can continue to have the
magical and other functions with which it is endowed discharged on its behalf by its allies, until such time as its own members are able to reassume them.

I think one can see that there is a very close connection between corporate rights in women and in secret information. The transmission of esoterica is an important part of the alliance relationship; and the consequence of this is that the order of segment which holds rights of one class must at the same time be that which holds those of the other, if it is both to satisfy the claims which its allies have in its secret myths and, at the same time, preserve the security of the information which it thus places at their disposal.

The fact that tonombs of the same subclan share joint rights in each other's esoterica and personal names is regarded as imposing on them an important mutual obligation: the responsibility to jointly defend these names, and the integrity of this lore, in debates with other groups. When one tonomb becomes involved in a name-dispute outside the subclan, the dispute is considered the affair of the subclan as a whole, and in the ensuing debate or debates the subclan acts as a unit.

Subclans are the effective units in political action within the village, and name-disputes are the most common type of conflict in which they become embroiled. I mentioned that the subclan's allies are expected to support it in disputes, and the most important form this support takes is their advocacy in debates. Their assistance in debating is not only verbal, but also has an economic aspect. Outlays of food and wealth are required for a debate, and the subclan's allies are expected to contribute to these. Their contributions are in effect part of the system of affinal and matrilateral exchange. The obligations of sisters' husbands, sisters' sons, and sisters' daughters' husbands to help defray the expenses of debating are simply one of the many forms which their economic duties to the subclan take. But their most important responsibility in debates is to lend their oratorical skills and expertise in mythology in support of the subclan. The subclan thus employs its alliances to extend beyond its own boundaries the range of persons obligated to defend its mythological rights, and to equip them with the esoteric knowledge necessary for them to do so. This external support is often of
of critical importance, particularly to small and weak subclans; there are some groups of this kind whose interests, without any of their own members able to do so, are defended in debate wholly by their allies standing proxy for them.

I explained in Chapter 2 that while collateral subclans do not stand in directly marriageable relationships with each other, they are nevertheless indirectly linked by marriage. Each is forbidden intermarriage with its own sisters' children and, because there is almost a moiety system at Avatip, this prohibition in effect sets up an exchange of sisters' children between them. The alliances which a marriage establishes involve, eventually, a minimum of three subclans. It creates a relationship between the wife-giving and the wife-taking subclans, and between both of these and the subclan or subclans into which the children of the union marry; and these latter groups are, more often than not, collaterals of the original wife-givers. Subclans of the same exogamous group provide potential spouses for each other's sisters' children, and so engage in oblique wife-giving and wife-taking relationships with each other; the exchange of women between exogamous units sustains an analogous but indirect exchange within them. I also mentioned that subclans deliberately spread their marriages as widely as possible, and that the effect of this preference is, ideally at least, that each subclan has at any one time either direct or indirect alliance ties with every other. From the perspective of any one of these groups, there should never if at all possible be any subclan in the village into which either its own members, or their sisters' children, are not currently married.

The transmission of rights in secret myths follows, as I have said, the movement of women. And so just as marriage may be said to perpetually link all subclans in the community, so are all these groups perpetually interconnected in an exchange of information. Each subclan preferentially has at any one time sisters' husbands and sororal nephews in all of its marriageable subclans; and husbands of its sororal nieces in all those collateral with itself; so that in consequence all these groups possess at least some members entitled to learn its secret sakima'andj. The transmission of esoterica beyond the subclan is referred to by the same idiom
used, as I described in the previous chapter, for the performance of totemic services: that is, as giving mother's milk, or, from the recipients' perspective, as drinking mother's milk. The use of this uterine symbolism gives recognition to the fact that the groups to which the subclan communicates knowledge are those to which its sisters' children belong and those into which they marry. As with the exchange of women, this reciprocation of secret information is, as I shall shortly try to show, an important medium of the political relations between subclans.

The secret parts of sakima'andi are almost invariably taught in return for payments of food and wealth, and as a result these goods flow from wife-takers to wife-givers in return for information just as they do in return for the transfer of women. Now should the subclan's allies be required to teach its mythology to the subclan's own agnatic members, no recompense is made to them; for they are considéréd to be fulfilling a duty which they owe the subclan and which warrants no reward. They are not teaching their own myths, but returning the myths of another subclan to their rightful owners. Wife-takers give food and wealth in exchange for the esoterica which their wife-givers impart to them; but should it be necessary for them to re-teach the latter their own myths, no such return is made. In almost every context in which wealth moves between subclans, it flows from wife-takers to their wife-givers, and the movement of wealth in relation to the rights in information which wife-givers extend to their wife-takers follows this rule entirely. Wealth moves between subclans against information, except when these messages are returning to their original source. The wealth which the subclan receives from its allies in return for secret sakima'andi is part of the affinal and matrilateral exchange nexus, and the rights which the subclan holds in women, in totemic competences and in knowledge are the joint basis of its economic unity.

Viewing this system from the perspective of the individual, there are a minimum of four mutually exclusive subclans the secret lore of which a married man is entitled to learn: his own, his mother's, his wife's, and that of his wife's mother. Now his duties to support all of these subclans in debates may sometimes conflict, because these groups may themselves on occasion become involved in debates against each other. Because of this possibility, the obligations to support each of these groups in debate are
differentially weighted: there is a convention that a man should support his own subclan against that of his mother, his mother's against that of his wife, his wife's against that of his wife's mother, and this last against any groups with which he has none of the foregoing ties. But as a consequence, his access to the mythologies of these four subclans is graded accordingly, for a subclan protects its own interests by entrusting to each category of ally only so much of its esoterica as is justified by the degree of loyalty they can be expected to owe it. Hence men habitually divulge their secret myths to their subclan agnates in preference to their sisters' sons, to their sisters' sons more readily than to their sisters' husbands, and to their sisters' husbands rather than to their sisters' daughters' husbands.

A sister's son is regarded as eligible to learn the subclan's esoterica as soon as he is considered to be of an age to comprehend, remember and keep them secret; and a sister's husband once the fruitfulness of his marriage, and long-standing and consistent support in debates, indicate that his ties with his affines are secure. The case of the sister's daughter's husband is rather different; for most of these men are clan- or clan-pair agnates, who are as I have mentioned the subclan's most frequent opponents in debates. As a consequence, whether the subclan permits a particular sister's daughter's husband access to its arcana depends very much on the current state of relations with the subclan to which he belongs; and observation suggests that the possibility of teaching these individuals is one which is used cautiously by most subclans.

While the exchange of information between subclans is tied indissolubly to the relations which marriage sets up between them, the rules governing the transmission of esoteric knowledge feed back and have an important effect upon the marriage system. I referred earlier to the fact that groups prefer to spread their alliances as widely as possible; and the main reason which informants give for this preference - so far as I can see, with every justification - lies in the potential political consequences of the communication of secret myths between groups. If the subclan were to concentrate its alliances exclusively in any one sector of its total field of marriage possibilities, the persons entitled to learn its myths and obliged to support it in debates would no longer constitute an entirely dispersed category. These individuals' alliance ties with the subclan could be
brought into competition with their agnatic ties with each other. Because its claims upon the support of these men are in general weaker than their loyalties to their own subclans, it would be vulnerable to these subclans in debates. Were it to become involved in name-disputes with them, it could be deprived of a major part of its external support, while its erstwhile defenders employed their knowledge of its myths to its disadvantage on behalf of their own agnates. Moreover, should it happen that the subclan's own experts in sakima'andj died without passing this lore, or important parts of it, on to their agnates, the subclan could become politically dependent on these other groups for up to two generations; for the latter could withhold this esoterica from the subclan's own members, and so keep the subclan powerless to defend itself in debates without their support. During this period it would be their members who effectively exercised many or all of the magical and ritual competences vested in the subclan; they alone would be in possession of the relevant spells and the secret mythological titles to them and, because they could therefore at any time defeat the subclan in a debate over their ownership, they could with little effort engross these prerogatives permanently. For these reasons then, it is essential that the subclan spread its alliances as thinly and evenly as it can, so as to ensure that its allies always remain no more than a dispersed class of individuals drawn from the entire spectrum of groups with which it intermarries, and united by no stronger loyalties than their collective relationship with the subclan itself.

There is a further respect in which the political implications of the flow of esoteric knowledge between groups affects the marriage system. As I explained earlier, subclans attempt to maintain equivalence in the movement of women between them, and the preceding discussion suggests, I think, one important reason for this policy. Because rights in information are ceded by wife-givers to wife-takers, a balanced exchange of women between subclans represents, among other things, an attempt to preserve equilibrium in their rights in each other's secret mythologies. And, at the same time, it is a means of ensuring that they remain equals in terms of the right of each to draw from the other men obligated to support it in debates. An imbalance in the movement of women between them would threaten to place one at an advantage over the other in a name-dispute. Thus it
is at least partly with a view to the possibility of becoming involved in debates against each other, that subclans attempt to maintain parity in their exchanges of women.

The exchange of esoteric sakima'andj between subclans evinces, as I think one can see, two competing tensions. On the one hand, it is to the advantage of the subclan to have as much external support for its mythological claims as it can. And yet, because this necessitates divulging its secret myths to outsiders, the subclan must entrust itself to the good faith of these supporters.

The benefits which it gains from confiding its esoterica to outsiders are thus of an equivocal kind, and involve risk. The compromise adopted is to keep the mythology as 'close to home' as possible, by imparting it only to those men in its debt through the rights which the subclan holds in women; and, even then, to entrust it in great part only to those of these allies whose bona fides are most certain: its sisters' sons. But despite these precautions, or rather because of them, it remains essential for the subclan to manage its alliance relationships judiciously, so as not to place itself in a vulnerable position.

vi. Knowledge and leadership

Expertise in sakima'andj is a precondition for leadership at Avatip. It is the basis, firstly, for a reputation as a magician or sorcerer; and secondly it is necessary for prominence in debates. The roles of magician and sorcerer relate to the scheme of magico-economic specialisations vested in descent groups; while that of orator arises out of the disputes between groups over titles to these prerogatives.

In some cases, a man may learn no more sakima'andj than that necessary for the performance of some magical specialisation he wishes to acquire. The heir to a simbuk-ship, for instance, may if he wishes learn only the class of lore called sokapima'andj specific to his office; a novice shaman may restrict himself to acquiring only waken yanu, the magical and sorcerous techniques associated with shamanism; or a man may be a respected yam-gardening magician and yet have no wider competence in sakima'andj.

But an extensive knowledge of sakima'andj is essential for effective participation in debates, and for this reason orators are
almost invariably also expert in magic and sorcery. They do not necessarily exercise all the techniques which they possess, or perform the roles associated with all of them; in the case of hereditary capacities such as that of shaman or *simbuk*, they may not necessarily be genealogically qualified to do so. But if they are not willing or entitled to perform them themselves, they stand ready to teach those men who are, and act as repositories of the techniques concerned.

The distinction between these two kinds of role is however largely an analytical one; on the whole, magicians and sorcerers tend also to be the men who are prominent in debates, and there is a general expectation that this will be the case. Both kinds of competence are avenues to leadership and so, one would expect, would attract the same type of personality; they are based on the possession of the same class of secret knowledge; and finally, a single set of norms - concerning age, sex and genealogical and ritual seniority - determines those who may legitimately perform both kinds of role and acquire the necessary esoteric expertise.

The authority of the magician tends not to extend beyond the sphere of his own specialisation; he is deferred to, often without question, but only in the context of those activities to which his services are a necessary adjunct. The orator, on the other hand, exerts an influence of a more generalised kind and performs a genuine leadership role. This is so because, on the basis of an exhaustive knowledge of the esoterica of his own subclan, and often, as I shall explain, also of a number of other groups, he plays a crucial part in disputes.

Ideally, each subclan or *tanumb* should possess at least one man of this kind: an individual recognised, both within the group and outside it, as the paramount expert in its *sakima'andj* and most authoritative teacher of this lore; whose opinions on all matters relating to his group's land, personal names, and magical and ritual prerogatives carry the most weight; and the man who mobilises his subclan-mates to defend or assert their rights to personal names and mythological titles in debates, and who is the group's principal spokesman in these and all other external affairs. He is in other words the senior manager or trustee of the group's patrimony on behalf of all its members, and the principal defender of this
patrimony against challenges by outsiders.

In debates these men are spoken of as *simbuka*. This usage is an honorific extension of a term which, as I have described, refers to an hereditary ritual office. Men clearly distinguish between these two usages, saying that these experts in mythology are really only "like *simbuka*" (*simbuk katok*), in that both they and true *simbuka* - the most important category of magical functionary - possess highly esteemed proficiencies. But neither the position of "debating-simbuk", nor indeed of any magical specialist other than that of true *simbuk*, is a formal office; there is no theoretical limit placed on the number of men within a subclan or *tonomb* who could be eligible for the designation of *simbuk* in debates. Employed in this way, the term is a relative one, and its application contextual; many subclans and *tonombs* possess several men whose skill in oratory and expertise in myth is generally held to warrant their designation as *simbuka* in debates, and from the point of view of these groups this is highly advantageous.

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<th>Number of 'simbuka' per subclan</th>
<th>Number of subclans</th>
<th>Average number of living males per subclan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Numbers of 'debating-simbuka' per subclan.

As one can see from Table 4, the number of 'debating-simbuka' per subclan at Avatip ranged in 1978 from zero to six; and it can be clearly seen that these variations are largely a function of the size of these groups.

Before describing the manner in which a man achieves the status of magician or orator, I should mention that this status has certain supernatural attributes. The knowledge which the orator or magician possesses - of the esoteric names of totemic ancestral spirits, of the secret details of their exploits and of the magical means of invoking them - is believed to create an intimate mystical tie between them and himself. When he eats, it is said, these beings eat with him: the spirits of the yams invisibly participate in the meals of the yam-magician, shamanic spirits in those of the shaman, the spirits of
rain in those of the rain-magician, and so on. Knowledge of sakima'andj places a man in a privileged contact with the supernatural world; mystical agencies are his familiars and commensals, and his identity is partially fused with theirs. As I shall later explain, these beliefs are connected with certain economic privileges which these men enjoy.

To live in such close contact with the world of spirits is, however, considered to eventually exact a toll; it is believed that an extensive knowledge of sakima'andj generally induces a rapid senescence. Elderly experts in sakima'andj do sometimes become senile, and when this occurs it is said to be a direct consequence of their vast knowledge. Informants state that the signs of this deterioration are palsy, asthma and confused and rancorous speech in debates: "his mind no longer understands; he speaks as if mad" (masul ma'an vak; kwam tona pek mbulanand). Once these aberrations begin to occur, it is thought that the supernatural forces which the expert harbours have at last started to waste and consume him; and his career, at least as an orator, is brought to an end by his juniors, who prevent him from henceforth speaking in debates, and lead him from the debating-ground if he tries to do so. The expectation that leaders are destined for this somewhat Faustian end, provides a pretext under which they can if necessary be legitimately removed and replaced by more effective successors.

I will turn now to the criteria which govern accession to the status of magician and orator. Women, while they are not formally or absolutely prohibited from learning secret sakima'andj, are permitted to do so only under exceptional circumstances. Men justify their exclusion on the grounds that the primary purpose of learning this esoterica is to be able to defend mythological claims against attack in debates; it would be pointless to teach women this lore because, men assert, they are by their nature incompetent public speakers, and for this reason are allowed to play no verbal part in debating.

While all males are entitled to learn secret mythology, according to the subclans in whose esoterica they have legitimate rights, their access to this lore is graded by genealogical and ritual seniority and by age. It is considered appropriate for the old and senior alone to
be competent in mythology and in the magical techniques it contains; and the two other terms apart from simbuk most frequently used to denote men with this expertise are synonyms for elderly men: sapulwandu (the elders) and rekasp (the dry skins; a reference to the supposedly lustreless skins of the old). There are a number of supernatural sanctions which reinforce the criterion of age. As I mentioned earlier, there are certain mystical hazards attendant on learning the secret parts of sakima'andj, and it is believed that any young children which the learner may have are particularly vulnerable to these. As a consequence, many young married men prefer to postpone acquiring esoteric mythology until they are middle-aged, when their children are mature and hence more immune to these dangers. Secondly, as I have described, the possession of large quantities of sakima'andj is expected to eventually enfeeble the bearer both mentally and physically; the spectacle of a senile orator being escorted from a debate, held up as an example of the unsavoury effects of excessive erudition of this lore, is a strong disincentive to younger men, who take much pride in their bodily vigour and appearance, and indeed also to many of their seniors. These and other beliefs concerning the mystical dangers attached to learning mythology are sufficient to discourage some twenty percent of all adult men, according to their own statements, from ever acquiring or intending to acquire any sakima'andj, or any more than a minor amount.

Despite the privileged position of older men, and the mystical sanctions which support it, some individuals nevertheless begin learning secret mythology early in their lives, in some cases on their own initiative but more often at the insistence of a senior kinsman who then instructs them in this lore. An early start of this kind is a considerable advantage; the majority of the currently pre-eminent authorities in sakima'andj began acquiring it while still in their teens, most of them under the tutelage of a father or mother's brother who was, in his time, equally pre-eminent; most had gained all their knowledge by the age of thirty. But however expert a man may be, it is nevertheless considered inappropriate for him to begin displaying this expertise until middle-age; he may well learn secret myths and magical techniques while young, but he should neither start to perform magic, nor attempt to take too prominent a part in debating, until he is forty or fifty and his seniors are dying away.
At Avatip there are 39 men who are generally referred to as *simbucks* in debates; and their estimated ages, and their relative age-statuses within their own *tonombs*, are given in the following two tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of 'simbucks'</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>No. of living male</th>
<th>No. of non-'simbucks' older than each 'simbuk' within own <em>tonomb</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Estimated ages of 'debating-simbucks'

Table 6: Age-statuses of 'debating-simbucks' within own *tonombs*

In addition to age, a further principle regulating the transmission of *sakima* and *j* is that of genealogical seniority. The members of senior generations within the same *tonomb* or subclan should acquire this knowledge before their juniors, and elder brothers before younger brothers. Juniors should refrain from performing magical techniques of which their seniors are still active practitioners, and should not attempt to overshadow their seniors in debates. This rule applies with any stringency only to close agnates, but it extends in principle to the subclan or *tonomb* as a whole, so that the group's experts in mythology are expected to be senior men of its more senior descent lines. The convention that these men should be those of senior patrilines is, however, by no means a strictly enforced rule. It is rather that the responsibility or prerogative of learning esoteric mythology, and of performing the roles associated with this, is weighted in favour of men in these positions; these men are, and normally sense themselves to be, the focus of greater expectations than their juniors. Even in the frequent cases in which the principle of genealogical seniority is overridden, nominal respect usually continues to be paid to it, sometimes of a rather ironic kind, as the following example illustrates:
K. is the most senior representative of his tonomb's most senior patriline; approximately sixty years old, he is slow-witted and has never learned sakima'andj, despite his genealogically favoured position. The tonomb's recognised authority in sakima'andj is W., his coeval and classificatory younger brother, and by genealogy the third senior living man within the tonomb, although a member of one of its most junior branches. W. is a highly respected speaker in debates, and an expert in the totemic song-cycles which accompany many ceremonial events. Whenever he attends one of these affairs, he always makes a point of seating K. on a large stool in a conspicuous position near himself and among the other prominent men; proferring K. this honour ostensibly because, he says, "K. is the elder brother of all of us (within our tonomb)." But these acts of deference to K.'s genealogical seniority only serve to embarrass the latter; for his habitual confusion during the proceedings and ignorance of mythology, are made all the more patent by the incongruous attention shown to him. W.'s apparently courteous acknowledgements of his own formal juniority serve to advertise K.'s non-fulfillment of the expectations held of his genealogical position, and to place K. in an unfavourable comparison with himself. W. permits himself a little private amusement at these scenes; he jokes that he is so solicitous of K. that he always takes him to debates in other villages in the same canoe as himself - but really just so as to have someone to paddle him there.

The genealogical statuses of the 39 debating-simbuka referred to earlier are given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of living male non-simbuka genealogically senior to each 'simbuka' within own tonomb</th>
<th>No. of 'simbuka'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Genealogical statuses of 'debating-simbuka' within own tonombs

I mentioned in the previous chapter that ritual promotion is governed by genealogical seniority. There are certain kinds of sakima'andj which are, in theory at least, available only to the ritually senior; since this seniority itself follows genealogical
precedence, this rule in effect further reinforces the relationship between genealogical status and access to esoteric mythology. Firstly, men who are genealogically disqualified from holding the office of true simbuk may nevertheless learn the lore associated with it, so long as they do not practise the techniques concerned; but whether they are heirs to a simbuk-ship or not, these esoterica are accessible only to men of the highest ritual grade, under the sanction of supernatural affliction. Secondly, a man may not learn the secret parts of myths concerning the origins of initiatory rituals into which he has not been inducted; observation suggests, however, that this rule is applied with strictness only in regard to the rituals of the third and most senior grade. But the effect of these restrictions upon such a highly important class of myths, is that it is unusual for a man to attain the reputation of debating-simbuk, which implies a thorough competence in sakima'andj, while still a member of a junior grade. The ritual statuses of the 39 debating-simbuk are given in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual grade</th>
<th>Total membership of grade</th>
<th>No. of 'simbuks' per grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First and uninitiated</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Ritual statuses of 'debating-simbuk'

I will turn now to the manner in which succession to leadership takes place. Sakima'andj is corporate property, and a debating-simbuk should in theory accordingly teach, to any man entitled to know them, any esoterica that the latter may consider it appropriate for himself to learn. Indeed it is important for a debating-simbuk to impart his subclan's esoterica to as many as possible of the men with the right to learn it, both in order to protect this lore against loss, and to maintain the capacity of the subclan to defend itself in debates. However, as I mentioned earlier, the sons of debating-simbuk are in a particularly favoured position to acquire this knowledge. It is normal practice for a leader to pass as much as possible of his subclan's mythology on to his eldest son at a relatively early age, if the latter displays a good memory and a potential aptitude for public speaking; and if the latter does not,
then to the next eldest son who does so. In some cases he may impart some of his knowledge to all of his sons who evidence these abilities; but only the eldest son, other things being equal, is expected to receive the whole of his father's expertise. After their father's death, he is then responsible for teaching his younger brothers the esoterica they did not receive. Ideally, a leader begins to teach his son or sons while they are still single, for this obviates the mystical hazards which, when they are married, will threaten their young children. Paradoxically, an unmarried man is better placed to learn this lore than a married man a few years his senior; once he marries, it may be twenty years or more until he considers it entirely without risk to his children for him to acquire extensive competence in sakima’andj. One effect of this belief is, I think, that by discouraging younger married men from learning esoteric mythology, it reduces the potential challenge which they pose to their seniors; unmarried youths, on the other hand, are too young and too firmly under paternal authority to present a threat of this kind, and so may be allowed a less restricted access to sakima’andj. I should also note that since the only agnates whom leaders generally teach at such an early age are their own sons, they thereby teach those who, even as they grow older, are the least likely to offer them such competition; for men retain until their deaths considerable control over their sons' conduct.

In effect, leaders tend to prepare their sons from youth to succeed to their status; and as a result the future leaders of a tanamb or subclan, or at least the sets of siblings from which they will eventually emerge, are usually known well in advance, while the individuals concerned are still in their twenties or thirties. If a tanamb has more than one expert in mythology, these men are likely to be brothers or first cousins, usually with the most senior regarded as the most pre-eminent; in most cases, it is he who has taught his junior co-leaders much of their expertise, or is in the process of doing so. If he should die without teaching his own sons, his juniors are expected to do so before they teach their own sons, in accordance with the principle of genealogical seniority, and so to prepare their elder brother's sons to succeed to the leadership of the tanamb after their own deaths. Table 9 gives the agnatic relationships of 23 current debating-simbuks with former or current leaders of their tanambs within the range of first cousin:
Table 9: Close agnatic ties between 'debating-sirribuks'

Table 10 gives the genealogical ties of these 23 orators with the debating-sirribuks from whom they acquired their own subclans' sakima'andj. I should point out that some of the teachers were still active at the time these data were collected, so that they appear in the table both as teachers and as pupils; and that more teachers appear than pupils, because some of the latter acquired their agnatic sakima'andj from more than one source.

### Learned from F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin Type</th>
<th>Cases</th>
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<tr>
<td>F <em>eB</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FeBS</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFeBSS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFFyBSSS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subclan &quot;FeB&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFyB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFFyBSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFFFyBSSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Kin Type</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F <em>ZH</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin Type</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F <em>ZS</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFBDS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Sources from which 'debating-sirribuks' learned their own subclans' sakima'andj
So far, I have dealt only with the transmission of agnatic sakima'andj between patrikin. However, in order to warrant the designation of simbuk a man must be proficient in the esoterica of other subclans besides his own. All of the current 39 debating-simbuke are well versed not only in their own subclans' esoteric mythologies, but also in those of their wives' and mothers' subclans; and many have acquired at least part of those of their wives' mothers' subclans. They are all, in varying degrees, important and valuable supporters of these groups in debates; and it is because of their extensive expertise, and because they are therefore frequently involved in debates and play a prominent part in them, even in those in which their own subclans are not directly engaged, that they are acknowledged by the term simbuk.

Marriage plays an important role in succession to leadership, and in the procedures which established leaders use to consolidate or extend their influence. It is marriage which gives men an opportunity to acquire rights in the esoterica of groups other than their own and their maternal subclans. Every marriage which a man makes can in theory entitle him to learn the sakima'andj of two additional subclans: his wife's, and his wife's mother's.

It often happens that a wife is bestowed on a leader in order to procure his support in debates. Because it is considered probable that his own sons will in time be debating-simbuke, the bestowers hope in this way for the union to eventually supply them with sister's sons who are also orators and similarly obliged to take their side in debates. A single marriage can provide the wife-givers, for two generations, with valuable external support in any name-disputes in which they may become involved.

In many cases, an orator bestows his own sister or daughter in this way, and the marriage thereby creates an alliance between two patrilines of debating-simbuke lasting for two generations in the wife-takers' line. This situation is represented in Figure 8.

Once the marriage of X has produced sons, and if he has in the meantime shown himself a consistent supporter of his affines in debates, the latter may consider it safe to impart their esoterica to him. They do so on the explicit understanding, firstly, that he will teach this lore to his own son, their sister's son, when the
Fig. 8. Transmission of sakima'andj between allied patrilines
latter is sufficiently mature; and secondly that the latter will himself eventually re-teach it to his cross-cousins should they have been unable to obtain it from their own ascendants. In this manner, the wife-givers attempt to secure in advance the status of debating-simbuk for their own descendants, even if they themselves should die before passing their sakima'andj on to them.

In some cases, the wife-givers may omit teaching their esoteric myths to X, if they are in any doubt as to his loyalty, and teach it instead directly to his son; again, on the understanding that the latter will if required transmit it to his cross-cousins. The alliance is still valuable to X, even if he is by-passed in this way; for having married the sister or daughter of an orator, his son by this marriage is destined to eventually receive, whether directly or by way of himself, these experts' thorough knowledge of their own subclan's esoterica. This knowledge, together with the equally complete proficiency in his own subclan's sakima'andj which he will in time bestow on his son, is very likely to ensure the eventual status of debating-simbuk for the latter. X's marriage is almost certain to assure the succession of his son to his own leadership position, whether the latter receives his maternal esoterica, a precondition for attaining this status, via X or directly from his own matrikin.

Even if X's affines decline to teach him their secret myths, he will nevertheless be expected to support them in debates, and his marriage can still thereby enable X to extend his position in the debating system. For when an orator is recruited by marriage, it is in fact not always necessary for him to learn his affines' sakima'andj in order to effectively support them in debates. What is important is that he possess the secret myths of other subclans; it is this knowledge - of the esoterica of his affines' potential opponents in debates - that makes his support valuable. For his wife-givers gain an ally who is a strong deterrent against these other groups, and one whose defection could moreover do no harm, since he does not know the secret parts of the mythological titles in defence of which he argues. Up to a point, the more marriages a man contracts, the more expert he can become in sakima'andj; and the more expert he is, the more attractive he becomes as an individual upon whom to bestow women.

In summary, it is common for debating-simbucks to contract alliances with each other in order to recruit each other as advocates
in debates; in order to acquire the sakima'andj of other subclans from the recognised experts within these groups and so to extend their own influence in the debating system; and to ensure the likelihood of their agnatic descendants acceding to the same leadership roles as themselves. The effect of this is that, firstly, leaders tend to have a higher rate of polygyny than other men, and secondly that they tend to be close affines and uterine kin of one another, linked together in a somewhat exclusive nexus of affinity and uterine kinship. Leaders tend to make alliances with men of the same social status as themselves, and this creates common interests between them and, as I shall later explain, has important consequences in name-disputes; for the close ties between the men who are the major actors in debates are a factor which - more so in the past than at the present time, as I shall describe - regulates these affairs and facilitates their resolution. The following table gives the relationships of 26 current debating-simbuke to those of their immediate affines and uterine kinsmen who were, or are, also leaders. As can be seen, the most common types of alliance tie between orators are those between wife's father and daughter's husband, and between wife's brother and sister's husband.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WF,WB,MB,MBS and FZS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF,WB,MB and ZH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF,WB and ZH</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF,WB and MB</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF and WB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB,ZH and FZS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB and ZH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZH and FZS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZH and MB</td>
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<td>ZH</td>
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<td>MB</td>
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<td>ZS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** these kin types in some cases include more than one individual.

Table 11: Affinal and uterine ties between 'debating-simbuke'

It sometimes happens that a subclan is unable to successfully maintain agnatic transmission of its secret lore, and when this
occurs it becomes vitally important to teach affines. A debating-
simbuk, particularly if he is the leader of a small and declining
subclan, may have no subclan-agnates able or willing to inherit his
knowledge, and may therefore find it necessary to impart the whole of
this lore to a sister's husband or sister's son, or to bestow a wife
on an orator in order to do so. When this happens, the subclan's
esoterica thereby pass entirely into the hands of outsiders, where
they may remain indefinitely circulating amongst its allies until
the emergence of an agnatic member of the subclan able or willing
to reacquire them.

During this period, the subclan remains dependent on its allies
for defending it in debates; for eventually returning its mythology;
for preserving this lore from groups which could use it against the
subclan in debates; and lastly, for refraining from employing this
esoterica to enable their own groups to attack the subclan in
debates. The individuals in whose custody this lore is placed,
thereby effectively hold political control of the subclan; the fewer
the number of these individuals, the fewer the hands in which this
control is concentrated. This knowledge is most likely to fall into
the trusteeship of a single individual, or of a small set of men, if
the subclan which owns it is itself small, since such a subclan
usually has a narrow circle of allies.

The most influential leaders in the village are men of this kind;
those who are not only pre-eminent within their own subclans, but who
have in addition gained a partial or complete monopoly of the
sakima'andj of one or more other groups. They are, of course, capable
of turning against the groups with whose esoterica they are entrusted,
and attacking them in debates on behalf of their own subclans or of
other subclans of which they are supporters. But it appears that it
is in general more advantageous to them personally to continue to act
as the defenders of these groups, and even - if they are not sole
leaders of their own subclans - in debates against their own agnates.
For by doing so they perpetuate, and publicly demonstrate, the
dependence of these groups upon their support and their own personal
authority over them.

Because they often have more wives than other men, and alliance
ties with a wider range of subclans, leaders are not only involved in
debates more frequently, but they have in addition a greater degree of
choice in the manner in which they align themselves in these disputes. And because of the extensive knowledge which an orator possesses, it is often a matter of great concern to the two opposing groups as to which of them he will choose to support. Often, these men find that they can increase their standing in the debating system more by aligning themselves with the side that is the more dependent on them, than with those to whom they are relatively dispensable. For these reasons, as I shall describe in a later chapter, small and weak subclans, unable to defend themselves adequately on their own strength, can usually find a sufficient number of orators to rally to their support in debates. But the price which they normally pay for this protection of their mythological rights is the partial or complete loss of their political autonomy.

It is in the context of competitions between groups for mythological entitlements that leaders arise and exercise their distinctive role. But the interests of leaders are only partly identified with those of the groups which they represent. The alliances which they contract, and the critical importance to other groups of the knowledge they possess, emancipate them from what Sahlins has termed, in a different context, their segmentary enclavement (Sahlins 1963; and cf. Strathern 1971:2). Men become leaders not simply by attacking other groups in debates on behalf of their own, but more importantly, and more subtly, by becoming their defenders; by proving themselves reliable supporters of any group that might wish to recruit them and bestow esoterica on them. An important feature of politics at Avatip is the need of every group for external support - particularly small, declining subclans, which often experience difficulties in preserving continuous agnatic transmission of their sakima'andj and in defending themselves in debates - for this opens up avenues for leaders to extend their influence beyond their own subclans.

vii. Economic aspects of the circulation of esoteric knowledge

Certain magical services are rewarded with food and wealth; and, of these, the most substantially remunerated are those of the shaman and the yam-gardening magician. While administering to a sick person, a task which may take several weeks, the shaman is supplied with food and areca-nut by the patient's kin and, if the cure is successful, he is presented with a shell valuable (ndja'ap) and a cooked fowl.
Similarly, a yam-planting magician is presented by the owners of the garden at the end of the work with certain food delicacies and a hand of areca-nut. It is said that in the past his payment included a shell valuable, and that a greater variety and quantity of food was given.

The role of orator is, or rather was in the past, associated with economic prerogatives of a more generalised and informal kind. Formerly, older men relate, an orator could expect his younger agnates to supply him with regular gifts of food, and with special assistance with tasks such as gardening and house-building. These were his due, it is said, because of his position as the repository of his group's esoterica and guardian of its mythological rights; or, as informants sometimes express it, because it was he who gave names to the younger men's children. If informants' statements are correct, the orator's rights to food and economic services have become greatly attenuated since the pre-European period. Orators do not nowadays receive food gifts or labour from their juniors as a special privilege, nor is there any convention that they should.

There is however one economic prerogative which orators continue to hold as formerly. On the night prior to a debate, the two opposing groups meet separately with their respective supporters to rehearse their arguments, and to recite song-cycles describing their respective mythological origins. Each presents one shell valuable to every tonomb which, by sending representatives to the gathering, pledges its - at least partial - support for the morning. These valuables, which are referred to euphemistically as "areca-nut for filling the string bag" (ma'as vanggawanggek kwasembi) are given to the most prominent orator present from each of these tonombs, ostensibly in repayment for the assistance which these experts give in chanting the long and difficult song-cycles. If they value a reputation for generosity, the recipients should at least occasionally pass them on to their tonomb-mates afterwards, but often as not they keep them for themselves, as they are entitled to do.

All forms of reimbursement for the services of a magician or orator are spoken of as being made to the supernatural agents associated with him as much as to the man himself. They are made not only to reward the man, but at the same time to procure the goodwill of these ancestral spirits. A performance of magic, for example,
would be rendered ineffective if no payment was made to the magician. The same verb, *karumakɔna*, is used to refer to remunerating a magician or orator as is used to denote the act of propitiating ghosts and spirits; while it is a man who receives the payment, he does so on behalf of his supernatural familiars.

The most substantial economic benefits which an expert in *sakima'andj* receives are those which he derives from teaching his knowledge. All instruction in esoteric mythology takes place in complete seclusion, either in the bush or, more commonly, in the pupil's house after he has had his household vacate it for this purpose. The pupil is expected to present his teacher with his payment within, at the most, three or four months after he is taught. The payment, once again, is spoken of not as a fee but as an offering to propitiate the ancestral spirits referred to in the mythology and to the ghosts of the descent group to which the lore belongs. Too long a delay of the payment would result, firstly, in disorders in the natural world: floods, storms and the like, depending on the nature of the information divulged. Secondly, it would result in supernatural affliction; the pupil's children are considered the most likely victims of this, but it may also fall upon the pupil himself, his wife, or the instructor. While the payment is represented as a propitiatory offering to ghosts and spirits, the supernatural power of these beings is considered in an important sense to reside in the actual words which the teacher speaks, particularly in the secret names which he imparts; the phrase normally used to describe the making of a payment for esoterica translates literally as "he makes a sacrificial offering to the *sakima'andj* he has received" (*karumdɔl sakima'andjɔk va'al andaka karumand*).

Having taught a specified amount of esoterica, the teacher is normally presented by his pupil with the carcass of a wild pig and a single shell valuable. While the valuable is kept by the teacher, the pig is butchered and the larger part of it is retained by the instructor's household and the rest distributed amongst his subclan- or *tanɔmb*-mates. The precise quantity of lore divulged in return for this payment is within certain limits a matter for the discretion of the instructor and is announced to his pupil beforehand. However, for imparting a small and minor magical formula, a single valuable is usually considered sufficient; while for teaching an extensive and
and highly important class of esoterica such as *sokapima'andj*, the lore associated with the office of *simbuk*, a payment equivalent to a brideprice is required.

There are certain circumstances under which the payment is reduced or omitted. As I described earlier, no recompense is given when the members of a subclan reacquire their own *sakima'andj* from their allies; instead, the pupils simply make a private sacrifice of a wild pig. Secondly, when a man teaches his own son or brother, it is improper for him to keep the valuables he is given, and these are surreptitiously returned; a subterfuge which, it is said, escapes the notice of the ghosts and spirits. Finally, unmarried men are permitted to learn esoterica for smaller payments than married men, and sometimes without payment, because they have no children who might be put at risk. All these conventions, I suggest, tend to advantage the close agnates of debating *simbuka's*, and particularly their sons, enabling them to acquire expertise in their own subclans' esoterica at relatively small expense. For orators, as I have explained, make a practice of training their own sons thoroughly, and while the latter are still single; and, as part of the alliances which they contract with each other, leaders often pre-arrange to have their sons taught their agnatic esoterica by their cross-cousins. In none of these cases would any expenditure of valuables be necessary. Table 12 compares the total expenditures made in learning *sakima'andj* by a sample of orators whose fathers were likewise debating *simbuks*, with those of a sample of orators whose fathers were not. For a further comparison, I include the expenditures of 11 non-orators who have also learned some *sakima'andj*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pigs</th>
<th>Valuables</th>
<th>Fowls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fathers were orators (4 cases; 45-65 years)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers not orators (5 cases; 45-65 years)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av:</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-orators (11 cases; 30-60 years)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av:</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Four of the younger of these men are considered potential orators.

Table 12: Expenditures involved in learning *sakima'andj*

Because the sources of their knowledge may be challenged by their opponents during debates, men make every effort to acquire esoteric mythology only from acknowledged experts so as to have
unimpeachable credentials. While some eighty percent of all men learn at least some *sakima'andj* during the course of their lives, only a small minority of them, perhaps less than one in twenty, would ever come to be considered sufficiently outstanding to attract many pupils. As a result, the total of the payments which these experts receive during their lives in return for teaching often greatly exceeds the total which they themselves expended in acquiring their proficiency. But with lesser debating-*eimbuku* on the other hand, those who never attract many pupils, there is often little difference between their total income from teaching and the payments they originally made to their own teachers. In the table below, the first case is that of an average orator of this kind; the second is that of one of the four most outstanding current authorities in esoteric mythology at Avatip, whose pupils have even included men from Malu and Yuanamb.

**Case 1:** Age: 65 yrs. Teaching career: 8 yrs. No. of pupils: 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pigs</th>
<th>Valuables</th>
<th>Fowls</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case 2:** Age: 58 yrs. Teaching career: 10 yrs. No. of pupils: 17

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pigs</th>
<th>Valuables</th>
<th>Fowls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
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**Table 13:** Two examples of *sakima'andj* expenditures and incomes

While both of these men are the sons of orators, the father of the latter of the two appears to have held a near-monopoly of his subclan's esoterica; he bestowed this on his son at an early age, as a result of which the latter is now considered the only authoritative teacher of these myths. The first, on the other hand, belongs to a subclan which until recently possessed three other men regarded as authorities in its mythology.

Informants claim that payments for learning *sakima'andj* still remain at their traditional levels while, as I have mentioned, other economic benefits of expertise in this lore have tended to decline. Older men also point to a number of other changes in the pattern of leadership: they say that access to *sakima'andj* was more restricted
in the past than it is now, that the number of magicians and orators was smaller, their average age greater, and that the principles governing accession to these statuses were followed more strictly. While I am unable to substantiate these statements directly, there is circumstantial evidence to corroborate them. I think it is possible to show that these changes could in principle all be accounted for as the interrelated effects of one important change which is known to have taken place since pre-contact times: the increase in the availability of shell valuables and their consequent inflation (see Chapter 2).

The quantities of shell valuables in circulation within the village have greatly increased, and the size of bridewealth and, particularly, mortuary payments, have increased as a result; but the size of payments required for sakima'andj is said to have remained unchanged. One explanation for the lack of response of these payments to the inflation of shell valuables lies in the ideology concerning their nature and purpose. As I have explained, they are treated not so much as fees, open to negotiation, but as a form of sacrificial offering\(^2\), and as such fixed in quantity; and it is perhaps because they have this character that they have remained immune to the forces which have inflated other types of payments. But since they have remained stable, while shell valuables have increased in availability, this has resulted in sakima'andj becoming accessible to a greater proportion of men than was the case in traditional times.

I might also mention that prior to pacification, the risk of ambush discouraged hunting pigs, and also limited the opportunities to do so because of the necessity of first organising an armed party. Nowadays, hunting is free from these complications, and has also improved in efficiency with the introduction of the shotgun.

Both the shell valuables and the wild pigs required for sakima'andj payments are more easily obtainable than they were in the past; and I suggest that for this reason a greater proportion of men are able to acquire expertise in this lore, and that the average

\(^2\) This is also perhaps shown by the fact that if one forgets any mythology one is entitled to be re-taught it by one's original instructor without payment of a further fee. The novice does not pay his instructor so as to reimburse the latter for his teaching services, but so as to acquire the permanent right to know the mythology concerned.
age, and genealogical and ritual seniority, of orators and magicians has decreased. As one can see from Table 5, a disproportionately large number of the current debating-simbucks fall into the 45-49 age group; as many as those aged between 50 and 59. It may be significant that these men are those who would have begun to learn esoteric mythology during the decade following the end of the Second World War; precisely the period of most rapid inflation of shell valuables. They represent, perhaps, the first generation of debating-simbucks to have benefited by this greater availability of wealth.

But if, as it seems, the number of men competent in esoteric mythology has increased, they therefore no longer hold the same monopoly in expertise in magic and debating as did their traditional counterparts. To use the language of the market, the supply of the services of leaders - as magicians and orators - has in general increased in relation to demand and, as a result, the economic privileges of these men have weakened. This also suggests an additional factor which possibly contributed to the stability of sakima'andž payments: the increasing demand for sakima'andž would have been paralleled by a corresponding increase in supply, and any tendency which these payments might have had to grow in size would be checked by the growing numbers of men competent as teachers.

Not only were the emoluments which leaders received for their services in pre-contact times more substantial in absolute terms than they are now, but the payments of wealth which these included would have had a greater relative value prior to the inflation of shell currency. It is possible that their expertise in sakima'andž, and their smaller numbers, gave leaders a greater degree of control than ordinary men over the quantities of valuables then in circulation; and that, given the smaller size of bridewealth, mortuary and other payments, it was the source of a type of economic power that leaders no longer possess.
Chapter Five

TOTEMISM AND DESCENT

i. Introduction

As I have explained, the apical ancestors of descent groups are known as *vei*, or spears. Each order of descent group possesses a named *vei*; the clan-pair, clan, subclan and the minimal named segment, the *tanomb*. *Veis* are quite distinct from *nggwa'al-asa'ai*, the totemic ancestors whose attributes I have discussed in preceding chapters. They have no 'totemic' characteristics, they do not take the form of species or other totemic phenomena, nor does mythology ascribe to them an important part in the creation of the world.

The founding ancestor of the *tanomb*, the *tonembavei*, stands as the progenitor of a mythical lineage of about four generations in depth and composed of several hundred ancestors; these figures are the *nggwa'al-asa'ai*. Their ties with the *tonembavei* are highly secret, and form an important part of the myths known as *nda'umama'andj*, or alliance narratives, which I described in the last chapter. This is a further respect in which they differ from *vei*, the agnatic relationships between whom are public knowledge. Moreover while the members of the *tanomb* claim descent from their *tonembavei*, they claim no descent from their *nggwa'al-asa'ai*; these figures are posited as collateral and not as lineal ancestors, and the genealogical ties between *nggwa'al-asa'ai* play no part in the internal segmentation of the *tanomb*.

One might therefore say that the universe of totemism begins where the universe of descent ends: with the apical ancestors of the *tanombs*. These and their ascendants are all nodes in a hierarchy of agnatic descent groups. But moving downwards from the *tonembavei*, one leaves the domain of descent in that all successive ancestors are located below the genealogical level at which the minimal descent groups are defined and play no role as reference-points of segmentation.

As I have said, the members of the *tanomb* hold both themselves and their totemic ancestors to be the unilineal descendants of their *tonembavei*; in their own case by presumed though unspecifiable ties, and in the case of the *nggwa'al-asa'ai* by ties which are precisely
specifiable but highly secret. Thus the relationship which the members of the tonsomb claim to have with their totemic ancestors is, as the term ngwa'al-asa'ai suggests, that of membership of the same tonsomb based on common agnatic descent. But this is not so in all cases. It sometimes happens that a totemic ancestor is associated with a particular tonsomb not on the grounds of descent from its tonsombevi, but on the basis of a myth which describes its transfer from another tonsomb while still specifying its genealogical link with its original source. Conversely, some of the ngwa'al-asa'ai stated to be descended from a particular tonsombevi may nevertheless be considered totemic ancestors of other tonsombs, again on the basis of myths detailing and legitimising their transfer while recording their original provenance. I will explain the causes of this phenomenon later; here, the important point is that while the relationship between the members of the tonsomb and their totemic ancestors is broadly treated as one of joint patrilineal descent from the tonsombevi, in fact the definitive feature of this relationship is simply that it is sanctioned and validated by myth, and that it entails rights in the use of these ancestors' names. Whether mythology, in different cases, describes the relationship as based upon descent or upon some other mode of incorporation is in itself considered to be of secondary importance. Matrifiliation, fosterage and co-residence are employed in myth as modes of 'recruitment' of totemic ancestors to tonsombs, and are treated as more or less as valid as patrilineal descent.

In short, every totemic ancestor is identified with a specific tonsomb, though mythology uses a variety of means to achieve this, and the tonsomb is therefore the elementary and irreducible name-owning, totemic and mythological unit. Totemism and mythology are the basis of a type of association between tonsombs which is conceptually entirely distinct from that of common descent. In the simplest case, that of a totemic relationship between two tonsombs, the tie has its mandate in a mythological partnership between a pair of their ngwa'al-asa'ai. The two figures are stated to have adopted the form of the same species, performed certain exploits together,

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1 Recruitment of the human members of the tonsomb is, by contrast, very strictly agnatic (see Chapter 2). As I explained, this is due not to an ideological emphasis placed on patrilineal descent so much as to the principles of the affinal and matrilateral exchange system.
and resided at the same mythical village. Many other subsidiary totemic ancestors usually appear in the myth: the weapons, tools and ornaments which the two figures bore are personified as totemic ancestors, as are the canoes in which they travelled together, the house or houses in which they dwelt and various parts of these, and even in some cases certain of the two actors' body-parts. Each of these ancestors, and their public and secret names, belong to one or other of the two tonombs, so that each derives a specific set of personal names from the myth which links them together; and the possession of such name-sets is treated as an important corroboration of the partnership between the two groups. The two tonombs often share the secret details of the charter-myth, including knowledge of the esoteric names of all the totemic ancestors that appear in it. A relationship of this kind, employing exactly the same principles, can exist between three, four or more tonombs.

A myth such as I have just described, and the derivation of series of personal names from the myth, is quite sufficient in itself to authorise a variety of important and binding relationships between tonombs. These totemic relationships are conceived of as entirely distinct from those based upon descent. Firstly, they can link tonombs either related or unrelated by agnation; they are independent of the presence, absence or degree of a patrilineal relationship between the tonombs concerned. Secondly, as one can clearly see they do not employ the notion of descent in any way whatsoever.

As I explained in Chapter 2, the co-ordinate segments of any descent group stand to one another as elder and younger 'brothers' according to their order of genealogical seniority. Totemic relationships also employ the notion of relative seniority, and tonombs linked together by ties of this kind similarly stand in elder brother-younger brother relations to each other. Again if we take the simplest case of a totemic tie between a pair of tonombs, one group always occupies a position of formal precedence or priority in the myth which links them, and the other a position of juniority. The typical paradigm is that the senior group is that at whose sakitep the pair of totemic ancestors settled together; that it is the group in the form of whose totemic species the two ancestors are represented; and that it is the ancestor of this tonomb who is described as having laid his hands first to all the cosmogonic tasks which the pair undertook together. Often, the totemic ancestor of the senior tonomb
is the principal creative figure in the myth, while that of the junior group is simply portrayed as his assistant or follower. In other cases, the primacy of the senior ancestor may be quite nominal, and indeed the ancestor of the junior tənəmb may effectively play a more important part in the myth than his senior, as I shall describe later. There is considerable latitude for amending or qualifying the asymmetrical relationship between the two figures while yet preserving it; and all that matters is that the tənəmb which stands as elder brother is that whose totemic ancestor is recognised to have some type of formal seniority.

The relative agnatic seniority of co-ordinate descent groups is calculated by reference to the genealogical relationships between their apical ancestors. The differential seniority involved in a totemic relationship between two tənəmbs, though it also employs the elder brother-younger brother idiom, does not imply common descent in any way whatever, but is simply a means of referring to the form of a mythological partnership between a particular pair of their ngwa'al-asa'ai.

Having distinguished totemic relationships from those of agnation, I will describe in this chapter the manner in which these two types of tie articulate with each other. In the first three sections of the chapter I approach this from the point of view of indigenous theory, and discuss the villagers' model of the manner in which totemism and descent intermesh. This can be summarised as follows:

(a) All the tənəmbs which constitute a maximal descent group are linked together in a single corpus of mythology, and stand as a totemic unit possessing a nəja'am, or estate; they are in other words united simultaneously by totemism and by common descent. In addition, the component tənəmbs of the subclan are linked in a further and separate corpus of myths, so that the subclan similarly constitutes both a descent group and a secondary totemic unit within the larger one, possessing its own subsidiary estate.

(b) The relative mythological seniority of collateral tənəmbs corresponds to their order of genealogical seniority.

(c) Genealogically junior segments hold reversionary rights in the totemic patrimonies of their seniors. Should a descent group, of whatever status, become extinct, its entire mythological legacy and all its personal names then escheat to the co-ordinate segment genealogically immediately junior to it within the same segment of next higher order.
In the second half of the chapter I examine the actual totemic alignments of tɔnɔmbς current at the time of my fieldwork. Not only are descent and totemism conceptually distinct means of aggregating groups, but the influence which agnation exerts upon totemic organisation is in fact only partial and often overridden. The distribution of totemic relationships departs frequently from theory, and I will try to show that their pattern can be fully explained only by taking into account competition, within the clan and clan-pair, for personal names and the prerogatives associated with them. Paradoxically, this contention between agnates is itself largely the outcome of the close relationship between totemism and descent.

ii. The clan-pair and subclan cosmological estates

As I described in Chapter 2, there are three intermarrying descent groups at Avatip: Nggɔla'angkw clan-pair, Wuluwi-Nyawì clan-pair and Nambul-Sambolap clan. I mentioned that in demographic terms there is almost a moiety system at Avatip, and that Nggɔla'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawì together account for about 93% of the population of the village; and that the villagers partly assimilate their marriage system to a moiety-like model, speaking of Nambul-Sambolap as "standing in the middle" and as "the space in the middle", so that the triad of intermarrying groups is conceptually subsumed under a dualism. In this manner of representing the marriage system, the emphasis is upon the relationship between Wuluwi-Nyawì and Nggɔla'angkw alone; and when men speak of this relationship it is its matrifilial rather than affinal component which they stress. The two clan-pairs are described as perpetually and corporately linked to each other as mothers and children, and as mothers' brothers and sisters' children. This bipartite model - of two groups standing in an immemorial and self-reciprocal uterine relationship to one another - provides the basic organising principle and symbolic theme of ritual, totemism and mythology.

Each of the three groups possesses a set of distinctive totems; the most important totems of Nggɔla'angkw being the Goura pidgeon and the major fish species, those of Wuluwi-Nyawì yams and the sun, and those of Nambul-Sambolap the egret, tern and domestic fowl (see Appendix A for a synopsis of the totemic organisation). Mythology places the Nggɔla'angkw mawtɔp, or original mythical village, some two miles south of Old Avatip, on the southern shore of the Walomaw...
lagoon, and Nggola'angkw is considered the autochthonous descent group at Avatip. The other two groups are both regarded as immigrants: Nambul-Sambolap places its mawtep in the west at the presumed source of the Sepik, and is the totemic owner of the river on the basis that it was created by its nggwa'al-asa'ai; the Wuluwi-Nyawi mawtep is held to lie to the east, at the postulated terminus of the Sepik, whence the sun and other heavenly bodies which are numbered among its totems are said to rise. Upriver and downriver are the two cardinal directions in this riverine society; the Sepik River is the axis of the villagers' geography, and it is along this armature that the three most basic social divisions are represented. A pervasive way of thinking about space is at the same time a way of thinking about society.

Informants derive the name Nggola'angkw from the term nggelanggur, or "black water", a reference to the dark, clear water distinctive to lakes and ox-bow lagoons, with which this clan-pair is specially identified. The name is also said to refer to the widespread notion that Nggola'angkw totems are "dark" or "black" (nggelanggel): dark-plumaged birds, plants with dark leaves and flowers, and so on. Wuluwi-Nyawi totems, in contrast, are held to be typically red (nyikinyiki) and those of Nambul-Sambolap white (wamakawam). Some individuals, however, claim that both red and white are the typical colours of Wuluwi-Nyawi totems, while there is no particular colour characteristic of those of Nambul-Sambolap. Harbouring, one can only presume, a more dualistic view of their social organisation, they oppose the black totems of Nggola'angkw to the red-and-white ones of Wuluwi-Nyawi, while leaving those of Nambul-Sambolap chromatically unmarked.

This totemic classification of colours is held to apply also to the human members of these groups, and on this subject I found no disagreement between informants. As is common among Melanesian populations, there is considerable variation in skin-colour at Avatip, a variation which the villagers classify by means of two terms: nggalasep (black skin) and nyekisep (red skin). The members of Nggola'angkw clan-pair generally have, it is stated, black skins, while the skin-colour of Wuluwi-Nyawi people is typically red. In the Manambu language, nyekisep is also the term for Europeans. On this basis, and because Europeans are 'immigrants' like
need say that observation does not bear out this generalisation; but no number of exceptions can compromise the theory, as most of these can be accounted for as cases in which an individual has inherited the skin-colour distinctive of his or her mother's clan-pair. Once again, this is a dualistic scheme from which Nambul-Sambalap is effaced; the members of this clan are regarded as having no corporate skin-colour and most informants, if pressed, speculate that they probably inherit their skin-colour matrilaterally.

The most important distinguishing attributes of the three groups are, however, functional ones: their respective ritual and magico-economic specialisations. Here, the principle of dualism becomes quite explicit. Of the totemic specialisations of Wuluwi-Nyawi, the most central is that it is considered to have been responsible for the creation of yams; it holds the right of magical and ritual control of the fertility of yams and of the timing of the yam-gardening cycle; it has jurisdiction over the associated second-stage initiatory ritual, and over the Maiyir ritual of third-stage initiation. Nggala'angkw clan-pair owns the larger lakes and lagoons in the Avatip area, the village's principle fishing-grounds. The control of the fertility of these bodies of water is the principal magical and ritual competence of this clan-pair, and all the economically most important fish species are Nggala'angkw totems. Nggala'angkw owns the two other initiatory rituals, and these are means specifically of promoting the abundance of fish: the scarification ritual of first-stage initiation, and the third-stage ritual Ndumwi. In contrast, Nambul-Sambalap

F.n. 2 cont'd.

themselves, Wuluwi-Nyawi claim some vague kinship with whites. This has led to the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan Maliyaw laying claim to European clothes as a totem, though the reasons for this specific claim are unclear. Ambasarak and Sarambusarak subclans, the main political antagonists of Maliyaw within Wuluwi-Nyawi (see Chapter 8), have countered this with a rival assertion of their own. They point to the fact that the emu (which they interpret as a cassowary, an important Ambasarak/Sarambusarak totem) appears on the crest of the Australian Government. On the grounds of this, they claim Queen Elizabeth II as a joint totem of theirs.

Much of Avatip totemism, I suggest, developed in this way: that is, it was an essentially competitive process, in which the rivalries between groups impelled them to make increasingly grand cosmological claims (see Conclusion).
possesses no equivalent ritual proficiency; it holds fertility-magic for certain of its totems, but many groups, including subclans, possess magic of this kind.

Fishing and the cultivation of yams are two of the three bases of subsistence at Avatip, the third being the exploitation of sago. Of the three foodstuffs, it is fish and yams, the one wild and aquatic, the other cultivated and terrestrial, that present most clearly a naturally opposed pair; while the characteristics of the sago-palm, a swamp-growing plant neither domesticated nor wholly wild, are more indeterminate. Moreover, the opposition between yams and fish relates to the basic bipartition within the village's mixed economy: between horticulture on the one hand, and fishing, hunting and gathering on the other.

In addition then to their paramount places in the economy, yams and fish are indeed also "good to think" (Lévi-Strauss 1973:162). It is perhaps for these reasons that the relationship between the two major intermarrying groups in the village is given symbolic form in their ritual control specifically of these two foods. It is here that the tripartition of groups is most clearly and concretely converted to a dualism: the two largest of these three groups stand as the 'owners of fish' and the 'owners of yams.' The exercise of their respective ritual and economic functions is habitually spoken of as a reciprocity between these two groups. This exchange is modelled upon the relationship between mother's brother and sister's child, and more generally between mother and child, and is referred to as giving, or drinking, mother's milk.

It is this binarism, I suggest, couched in the strongest terms in ritual and totemism, which facilitates the conceptual assimilation of the triadic marriage system to a dualism, and encourages the villagers to think in terms of a moiety organisation. Nambul-Sambolap is both maritally a peripheral group, because of its tiny size, and ritually an 'empty' group. In demographic terms, by far the greatest proportion of marriages take place between Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggala'angkw, just as the primary and most fundamental division of ritual and magico-economic functions in the society is a division between these two clan-pairs. Finally, it is recognised that the myth-corpuses of Wuluwi-Nyawi and of Nggala'angkw are both far more extensive than that of Nambul-Sambolap; and that, insofar as esoteric
sakima'andj is transmitted across exogamous boundaries, the greatest quantity of these messages are those exchanged between Nggala'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi.

The units which act corporately in marriage transactions are however, as I described in Chapter 2, not these groups but subclans; subclans are the groups which arrange marriage and between which debts and credits in women are reckoned. Because of the rights in women which the subclan holds, each subclan within the clan and clan-pair is a separate entity for reckoning matrilateral kinship. Each holds its own set of sisters' children, with whom its members are forbidden to intermarry and, because there is almost a moiety system at Avatip, most of the members of Nggala'angkw and of Wuluwi-Nyawi marry sister's children of other subclans of their own clan-pair; and these collateral subclans are regarded as involved in an exchange of sisters' daughters. The villagers speak of two levels of reciprocity in their marriage system: an exchange between the 'moieties' Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw, and a secondary system at one remove, involving the exchange of sisters' daughters within each of these groups.

While the subclan is the unit which contracts alliances, it also stands as the secondary totemic unit within the exogamous group as a whole. The subclan normally possesses its own mythical village, which the totemic ancestors of its constituent tonombs established after having left the mawtep, the original sakitep of the clan or clan-pair. It usually possesses a set of distinctive totems, its own ceremonial house and ritual sacra, a number of exclusive forms of magic and sorcery and, finally, it is the group which holds land. For reasons of space, I will not describe each of the subclan estates here, and a synopsis of these may be found in Appendix C.

While the primary division of ritual and economic functions, summed up in the opposition between yams and fish, is a division between the clan-pairs Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw, there is thus a further specialisation of magico-economic functions at the level of the subclan, involving the control of subsidiary totemic species, the ownership of various secondary forms of magic and sorcery, and of land. Just as with those of the clan-pair, these subsidiary specialisations are conceived as the basis of an exchange of services
between the groups which possess and perform them, an exchange which parallels the movement of women between them. Each subclan is represented as providing these services for all other groups in the community; which is to say, for directly marriageable groups, and for its own collaterals, with which it exchanges sisters' daughters. Once again, this magico-economic reciprocity is spoken of in the idiom of uterine kinship as giving and drinking mother's milk; and it is appropriate that the relations between subclans which these services are conceived to express are symbolically identified with matrifiliation, because they are viewed as being rendered by each subclan both to the groups to which its own sisters' children belong and to those into which its sisters' children marry.

Subclans, as I described in the previous chapter, are the units which hold franchises in all secret sakima'andj; each subclan holds exclusive rights in the esoteric parts of its own myth-corpus, and in those esoteric parts of the clan or clan-pair myth-corpus concerning the totemic ancestors of its own constituent tonombs. These arcana are taught not only to its own agnatic members, but also to sisters' husbands and sisters' sons, individuals who are drawn ideally from all the subclans with which it intermarries; and to sisters' daughters' husbands, who are in principle representatives of all the subclans collateral with itself. Viewed from the perspective of the total society, each subclan is therefore engaged with every other in a perpetual exchange of secret information, a reciprocity which follows the movement of women between them; and these communications are once again referred to, again for the same reasons I have given above, as giving and drinking mother's milk.

iii. Totemic and genealogical seniority

Each of the three primary totemic groups possesses a large body of origin-myths, in which all of its constituent tonombs are normally represented; each of these tonombs possesses a set of totemic ancestors who figure in these myths, and who are known as its mawtdpa wa'äni, or mawtep progeny. It is on this basis that all these internal segments stand as the legitimate coparceners of the group's totemic and ritual patrimony. The public and secret names of these ancestors are the property of each tonomb concerned, and it is

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3 This term was suggested to me by Dr. A.F. Gell.
primarily the possession of these names that validates the tonumb's rights in the group's estate.

Totemic and mythological ties between tonumbs necessarily involve differential seniority, which is expressed as a relationship between elder and younger brothers. Ideally, the relative mythological seniority of tonumbs of the same exogamous group should parallel their order of seniority in terms of descent. The tonumb, or at most the two or three tonumbs, of paramount genealogical seniority within the group should occupy positions of formal precedence in the group's mythology, and their nggwa'âl-asa'âi should ideally be the most significant and creative figures in these myths. Again in principle, the same tonumb or tonumbs should possess on this basis certain prerogatives regarding the group's ritual and totemic legacy: the right to inaugurate the group's rituals, to perform other special functions during these rituals, and to exercise magical control of the group's totemic species in non-ritual contexts. The greater part of the control of the group's estate ideally devolves upon the genealogically senior, who exercise this as primi inter pares on behalf of the group as a whole.

The same principle applies to the internal organisation of the subclan estates. Each subclan is normally identified with its own kwulatep, or subsidiary mythical village, and possesses a corpus of myths concerning the exploits of its totemic ancestors there. Again, these myths specify the subclan's estate to have been the joint creation of nggwa'âl-asa'âi of both of the two tonumbs which the subclan normally encompasses; and the personal names of these figures are a crucial part of the title which each tonumb holds in the subclan's patrimony. These ancestors are known as the tonumb's kwulatepa wa'âni, or kwulatep progeny.

The genealogically senior of the two tonumbs should ideally have the dominant position in the subclan's mythology; the majority of the subclan's more important and prestigious nggwa'âl-asa'âi - the ancestral spirits of its territories, of its ceremonial house, and of its totemic species - should be those of the senior tonumb alone. But these are nevertheless the property of the subclan as a whole, in that all, or almost all, of the rights and responsibilities which they entail devolve upon both tonumbs equally. There are
however certain prerogatives which are in theory vested exclusively in the senior tonom̄b; the most important of these are any simbuk-ship, or office of simbuk's assistant, which the subclan possesses, the right to inaugurate the construction or repair of the subclan's ceremonial house, and the custodianship of the subclan's sacred flutes and certain other ritual sacra. Once again, the senior tonom̄b exercises any prerogatives which it holds not in its own behalf but as the representative of the subclan as a whole.

iv. Reversionary rights in estates

The tonom̄b possesses, as we have seen, two sets of nggwa'al-asa'ai, corresponding to its relationship with two estates: that of the subclan to which it belongs, and that of the entire exogamous groups of which it is a part. These ancestors are an essential element of the tonom̄b's title to its rights in these two estates, and their public and secret names constitute the tonom̄b's total corpus of personal names.

In principle, the order of agnatic seniority of collateral tonom̄bs determines their relative seniority in myth so that, whatever level of estate is considered, certain formal privileges relating to its control fall to the genealogically most senior segments which it encompasses. There is one further way in which descent and totemism interact, and it is closely connected with the foregoing. When a tonom̄b becomes extinct, the other tonom̄b of the same subclan - ideally the one immediately junior to it if there is one - formally inherits all of the extinct tonom̄b's nggwa'al-asa'ai, assumes its position in mythology, and succeeds to any special prerogatives which were held exclusively by the extinct tonom̄b. This process is referred to as "to take the place of (the extinct tonom̄b)" (tami kawama) or, more commonly, as "to tread (the extinct tonom̄b) underfoot" (vasina). Every tonom̄b holds residual or reversionary rights in the total mythological and totemic patrimony of the other tonom̄b of the same subclan, the junior of the two being regarded as having particularly strong rights of this kind in respect to its senior. This principle is in effect a means firstly of preventing the loss of this patrimony through demographic accident and, at the same time, of preserving the rule of seniority and ensuring that the tonom̄b which holds this patrimony at any one time is the genealogically most senior extant tonom̄b qualified to do so.
Should an entire subclan die out, its total mythological legacy would pass to the subclan immediately junior to it within the same clan; thus subclans of the same clan hold exactly analogous reversionary rights in each other's hereditaments, rights determined again by genealogical seniority. The scheme of ritual and totemic reciprocities and the exchange of secret sakima'andaj, which I described earlier, are thereby in theory insulated from demographic fluctuations. Groups may become extinct, but each has its genealogical successor ready to assume its position in the system should it become vacant. The positions, and the privileges and capacities vested in them, are fixed and immutable; the only change is the overall tendency of segments over time to process slowly 'upwards' through the system, as groups become extinct and are replaced by their juniors.

v. Conflict between agnates

In the foregoing three sections of this chapter I have given an account of the relationship between totemism and descent as it is described, if less systematically, by informants. I will now examine some actual totemic relationships, and some examples of the operation of the principles I have described. The existing pattern of totemic and mythological ties within the community, and the relative status of collateral descent groups in totemic organisation, partly - and sometimes quite radically - depart from the scheme which I have given. I will try to show that these divergences can in general be explained as products of, or responses to, competition for property and prerogatives associated with personal names.

The greatest proportion of disputes of this kind take place within the exogamous group itself. Some seventy percent of all controversies over the ownership of personal names occur within the clan-pair, and about fifty percent within the clan (see Chapter 7).

These disputes are, in short, especially frequent amongst agnates, and their frequency tends to increase with segmentary proximity. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, there is a convention that conflict between agnates is, up to a point, permissible and to be expected:

We are brothers; it is all right if we fight, and then make peace again.
As I shall explain in a later chapter, name-disputes between close agnates involve comparatively few participants and are conducted in a semi-private and relatively informal manner. Name-disputes between marriageables, on the other hand, are discouraged by the fact that they entail large-scale, expensive, public and highly formal debates involving almost the whole of the adult population of the village; and they are discountenanced because they are viewed as potentially more disruptive than those between close agnates and as jeopardising the affinal and uterine links between the parties involved.

Secondly, all mythological ties involve differential seniority, and the closeness and density of these ties within the exogamous group create differences of status in totemic organisation between its internal segments. The relative standing of marriageable groups, on the other hand, do not calibrate with each other in this way, and the totemic legacies which they possess tend in any case to be different in kind and less commensurable with each other. The issue of relative prestige is an intrinsic part of relations between agnates, rather than between marriageables, and it is from this that much of the rivalry between agnates stems.

But perhaps the most immediate cause of disputes within the exogamous group are the reversionary rights which its segments hold in each other's mythological hereditaments. Close agnates stand as the potential heirs of each other's personal names by escheat. Despite the moral values which enjoin their solidarity, and the many kinds of co-operation - in ritual, debating, prestations of wealth and so on - which are incumbent on them, the fact remains that collateral segments stand in certain circumstances to profit from each other's extinction. Land, magic, and all other forms of property and privilege to which personal names are titles, are revertible and are never vested in groups absolutely, but only for so long as they can demonstrate their demographic viability, particularly to their juniors. The majority of the disputes which occur within the clan and clan-pair are, as I shall later describe, the result of attempts by groups to assert their reversionary rights in anticipation of the extinction of small and declining segments to which they stand as successors.

All the factors which I have suggested contribute to conflict within the exogamous group are ultimately reducible to one: the agnatic
ties between the groups concerned. There is accordingly a kind of paradox in the relationship between totemism and descent. For while agnation ideally governs totemic organisation, insofar as it does so it thereby creates that competition which more than any other factor prevents this ideal from being fully realised.

vi. Totemic organisation of Nggala'angkw clan-pair

In theory, the genealogically most senior of a set of collateral tonombs holding an estate should also be the most senior in the mythology in which they are linked and, on this basis, should possess certain prerogatives relating to the control of the estate. However, even when genealogical and mythological seniority do in fact correspond, they still do not necessarily determine the allocation of these privileges. Mythology may contain qualifications which, without actually contravening the order of seniority, nevertheless ratify the possession of such prerogatives by a junior group, or by a senior and junior group jointly. Certain standardised and fairly simple mythological devices are used to account for these departures from the ideal, of which the following are some common examples. The totemic ancestors of a senior tonomb invented a certain ritual, but those of a junior group were the first to actually perform it: on this basis, it is the junior tonomb alone which possesses the right to inaugurate the ritual. The ancestors of the senior tonomb ceded a magical technique to those of the junior tonomb, in gratitude for being cured of scabies: hence the junior tonomb alone is authorised to perform this magic. The totemic ancestors of the senior group marked out the circumference of a particular lagoon, which those of the junior tonomb then excavated and filled with water: because of this, the two groups share the responsibility for the magical control of the lake's fertility.

The important point to note with these devices is that they do not actually contradict the formal order of seniority; the

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Interestingly, a similar device was used in a famous Medieval European 'myth', the Donation of Constantine. This is the document in which the emperor Constantine, supposedly in gratitude for having been cured of leprosy by Pope Sylvester 1, is portrayed as ceding perpetual temporal power over Italy to the papacy. The most famous of all Medieval forgeries, probably written, according to Burke (1969:11), 'in the papal chancery in the mid-eighth century', it illustrates Burke's thesis that Medieval historiography shared much in common with preliterate myth, in that it was in large part a 'charter' for existing institutions.
mythological relationship between the two groups remains in accord with their relative agnatic seniority. Nominal respect continues to be paid to the mythological and genealogical precedence of the senior group, this precedence preserved as formal dogma, while it nevertheless does not determine the distribution of mythologically-derived entitlements. Totemic relationships of this kind are regarded as an entirely acceptable and legitimate variant of the elder brother-younger brother paradigm, and they are referred to in debating as "standing on the shoulders (of the elder brother)" (sa'anggwam tena).

These mythological devices are a common method of accounting for anomalies without offering direct challenge to the formal order of genealogical seniority within the clan and clan-pair. Important entitlements may indeed be in the hands of junior segments but their seniors still remain, if only nominally, senior in the myth describing their transfer. The relative seniority of these segments in terms of descent, and their order of precedence in totemism and myth, are - if only in form - congruent with each other. Totemic seniority does not always entail, nei nor is it viewed by the villagers as having necessarily to entail, the possession of special prerogatives; and a degree of flexibility in the manner in which these rights are allocated can be achieved through the manipulation of myth, without any change of the structure of the totemic relationships between the groups concerned.

One very important characteristic of the mythological devices which I have mentioned is that they invariably describe the permanent transfer of a set of personal names from the senior to the junior group. The myth typically states that this transfer was the initiative of the nggwa'al-asaa'ai who figure in it. This is one of the ways in which a tonomb may, as I mentioned earlier, be in the possession of totemic ancestors which it does not claim to be descended from its own tenembavei. The change of descent group membership by these ancestors, and the corresponding transfer of the rights to employ their names, is always pointed to as the ratification of the junior tonomb's possession of the entitlement concerned.

In the following chapter, I discuss a number of name-disputes which involved attempts to force the revision of myths into the form which I have just described. As I shall show, there are at least two
processes which can result in the employment of the mythological devices I have mentioned and the creation of relationships of "standing on the elder brother's shoulders." The first of these is that of reversion. Descent groups rarely wait until their seniors are extinct before beginning to exercise their rights of escheat, but begin to do so as soon as their seniors show signs of population decline; and in this way they may come into possession of some of their seniors' totemic endowments, and sets of their personal names, while the latter are still in existence.

A similar relationship can be also created as a result of fission. I have recorded cases in which the junior segment of a tonomb or subclan gains exclusive control of a certain prerogative, often a simbuk-ship, in contravention of the rule of genealogical seniority, and fissions from its senior partner in possession both of the office and of a set of personal names associated with it in myth. The results of fission and of reversion are, as far as I can see, in many cases identical: the creation of a relationship which the villagers describe as "standing on the elder brother's shoulders," and of a myth describing the transfer of one or more privileges, and certain groups of personal names, from the senior to the junior segment.

Relationships of this kind, or variants of them, are quite common, and particularly within the clan-pair Nggola'angkw. Ndumwi, according to the mythology of this clan-pair, the female spirit who is the focus of the ritual of the same name, is a totemic ancestor of its most senior subclan, Makem. Mythology states that she was abandoned by the other ngwoal-aswa'ai of her subclan in a subterranean ceremonial house; totemic ancestors of Yimal, the subclan immediately junior to Makem, heard slit-drum signals emanating from underground and, investigating, they discovered Ndumwi and rescued her. They made a tally of the rhythms they had heard her play, and it is these which have ever since been used during performances of the Ndumwi ritual to summon the spirit to the village. Following the rescue of Ndumwi, the first performance of the ritual was held, to which all the Nggola'angkw subclans sent representative

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5 This is a restricted detail of the myth, and may be revealed only to members of the third initiatory grade.
nggwa'al-asa'ai, but which was presided over jointly by those of Makóm and Yimal.

On the basis of this myth, Makóm and Yimal men of the third initiatory grade have the joint right to decide the timing of performances of the ritual, and their collective assent is necessary before the ritual can take place. They occupy the place of honour at the front of the ceremonial house (tanggakara'amb) during the ritual, an especially sacrosanct area, with the seating-places of the other Nggola'angkw subclans ranged behind them along one side of the building in their order of seniority, the most junior subclan, Warangga'amb, at the rear. Each of these seating-areas is furnished with a slit-drum, and these instruments are beaten in chorus over a period of weeks in a manner reminiscent of the musical form known as canon. Each of the signals played involves a main rhythmical theme, which is passed from one slit-drum to another; it is the right of Makóm and Yimal men to inaugurate the theme, which is then beaten by each slit-drum in turn in order of seniority until it reaches the slit-drum of the subclan Warangga'amb, at which point it returns once more to that of Makóm and Yimal. The men of these two subclans have certain other special duties during the ritual; these include the responsibility of constructing the gate through which the impersonators of Ndumwi enter and leave the initiatory enclosure, and a number of prerogatives concerning the construction and operation of the Ndumwi puppet.

The origin-myth of the first-stage ritual of scarification, the other initiatory ritual owned by Nggola'angkw, is in some respects similar to that of Ndumwi. The ritual is stated to have been first conceived by totemic ancestors of Makóm; these figures then explained the manner in which it was to be performed to ancestors of Nggambak, the third most senior subclan within the clan-pair, and the latter summoned together nggwa'al-asa'ai of all the other Nggola'angkw subclans and presided over its first performance. As a consequence, Nggambak possesses the exclusive right to inaugurate this ritual and to dictate its timing. In this case, while Makóm has formal seniority in the myths concerning the ritual, just as it does in those concerning Ndumwi, the most important privileges relating to it are in the sole possession of the subclan third in agnatic seniority within the clan-pair.
Nggola'angkw, as I have mentioned, is considered to own the major lagoons in the Avatip vicinity. Mythology states that the outlines of these bodies of water were originally demarcated by totemic ancestors of Makom, and that their creation was then completed by ancestors of Yimal; and that, finally, certain minor details of their shorelines were then added by those of the other Nggola'angkw groups. The ancestral spirits of these lakes, to whom the magic to control their fertility is addressed, belong to Makom and Yimal; the right to perform this magic is in theory a prerogative of these two subclans, but in their default it may be performed by their juniors, who share the right to learn it. Yimal holds hereditary custodianship of the principal sacra associated with this magic; a water-beater (søngk) - a secret sound-producing instrument - which bears the personal name Mawiyanggon. This nggua'al-asa'at is stated to be, by agnatic criteria, a totemic ancestor of Makom, but to have been permanently transferred in mythical times, together with its personal names, to Yimal.

The mythology concerning the origin of the techniques of magic and sorcery associated with the Tupwinombuk mound at Old Avatip (see Chapter 3) is organised in a similar manner. This mound, which figures in myth in the form of a house, is said to have been created by totemic ancestors of Makom, who then took up residence in it and were later joined by ancestors of all the other Nggola'angkw groups. These are the ancestral spirits invoked in all the Tupwinombuk techniques, of which each Nggola'angkw subclan possesses its own exclusive formulae.

One can see then that, so far as the Nggola'angkw clan-pair estate is concerned, seniority in myth parallels genealogical seniority fairly closely; with Makom, the structurally most senior subclan, invariably having primacy in the clan-pair's myths. But Makom nevertheless holds no exclusive prerogatives; some special entitlements are held by Makom and Yimal jointly, some by Nggambak, while others are generalised rights vested in the clan-pair as a whole.

Despite its formal juniority, Yimal shares with Makom an effectively equal place in the Ndumwi ritual, and in the mythology concerning the creation of the Nggola'angkw lagoons. There is evidence that this has been the result of the escheat of parts of the
patrimony of Makom to Yimal, Makom's genealogical successor, for this process was clearly occurring during my period of fieldwork. Makom is a small subclan of 36 members, while Yimal, with 178, is the second largest subclan in the village and the largest within Nggala'angkw. For at least sixty years, Yimal has been in possession of much of the esoteric mythology of Makom; there is a long history of name-disputes between the two groups, and outsiders say that Yimal has for some generations been attempting to "tread Makom underfoot, steal its ndja'am and stand first within Nggala'angkw." As I shall explain in more detail in the following chapter, the majority of the personal names currently in dispute between the two subclans are connected with the Ndumwi ritual. Yimal men claim that the prerogatives in this ritual which the two groups at present share, in fact belong rightfully to their subclan alone. They base these claims upon the myth of Ndumwi's abandonment by the Makom nggwa'al-asai'ai and her recovery by those of Yimal; by forsaking her, they argue, the Makom ancestors relinquished any title which their subclan might otherwise have had to these privileges. As part of this assertion, they claim that a series of ancestral names contained in the myth of the origin of the ritual were permanently transferred from Makom to Yimal in mythical times, most notably the exoteric and secret names of Ndumwi herself. Their seniors however deny this vigorously, and during my fieldwork an important dispute took place between the two subclans over the right to employ these names. I would suggest that much of the content of the mythological relationship between Makom and Yimal can be explained as the result of similar expropriations having taken place in the past.

I will now turn to the Nggala'angkw subclan estates, and to the relation between totemic and genealogical seniority within the subclan. For reasons of space, it is impossible to describe each of these estates in detail (a synopsis of them may be found in Appendix C) and for the sake of illustration I will deal simply with the office of simbuk. In theory, succession to a simbuk-ship is determined by genealogical seniority, and the office should always be vested in the most senior tonomb of a subclan. There are three Nggala'angkw subclans possessing the office of simbuk, and in all three cases mythology states that the office was indeed created by totemic ancestors of the
subclan's most senior tonamb. However, in each of the three cases the simbuk-ship is at the present time in the possession of a junior tonamb, and according to each of the three mythologies the office was transferred to the junior tonamb in the time of the nggwal-asai. While these myths pay nominal respect to the principal of genealogical seniority, they nevertheless in fact favour a junior segment; and in debating and other contexts, each of these junior tonamb is described as "standing on its elder brother's shoulders."

As I said earlier, there are at least two ways of accounting for the existence of relationships of this kind. The first is that the office was once, just as the myth states, in the possession of the senior tonamb, and that it later passed into the junior group by reversion. The second possibility is that both the senior and the junior group were originally a single tonamb which later fissioned with the simbuk-ship in the possession of its junior segment. For reasons which I will explain more fully in the next chapter, it is normally necessary for there to be a demographic imbalance between two segments in order either for fission or reversion to occur; this is so primarily because both processes necessarily require the passage of often large numbers of personal names from one segment into the other, often in opposition to attempts by the former to retain them. One must therefore normally have clear superiority over the other in the demographic resources with which to monopolise these names. Because, as I have said, both fission and reversion can create a relationship of an apparently identical kind between the two segments concerned, it is impossible, in the absence of historical evidence, to ascertain which of these two processes might have been responsible for the Ngala'angkw simbuk-ships being vested in junior tonamb. But it is probable that one or other of these two processes was involved; for in the case of at least two of the three subclans to which I have referred, the junior tonamb holding the simbuk-ship is clearly demographically favoured in the way I have described, and appears to have been so for several generations. The simbuk-ship held by Waikisuui (57 members), the junior tonamb of Nggambak subclan, is said to have been ceded to it in mythical times by its senior tonamb, Toki (26 members). Similarly with the simbuk-ship held by the subclan Kambuli: the office is in the possession of the junior

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6 Except in the case of the simbuk-ship held by the subclan Valik. This office is said to have been "stolen" in mythical times from the Wululwi-Nyawi subclan Nyakaw; however, it was the totemic ancestors of the most senior Valik tonamb who are stated to have acquired the office in this way.
tonɔmb, Kwaru (51 members), but is stated in myth to have been transferred to it by the senior tonɔmb, Ambawawu (34 members). The third Nggala'angku simbuk-ship is held by the Valik tonɔmb Yiraman (62 members); it is said to have been granted to this group by the tonɔmb senior to it, which is now regarded as extinct and whose two remaining members have been incorporated into Yiraman.

As I shall describe in the next chapter, the Nggambak simbuk-ship was the cause of the tonɔmb which holds it being in the course of fissioning during my period of fieldwork. This office is not only in the possession of the junior of the two Nggambak tonɔombs, but has in addition for two generations been in the hands of the junior segment of this tonɔmb in contravention of the rules of succession. For several years, this segment had been in the process of attempting to gain permanent control of the office through fission from its senior counterpart. Against strong opposition from his senior agnates, the leader of the seceding segment, the present incumbent of the office, was attempting to redefine his segment as an autonomous tonɔmb, and to promulgate a version of the subclan's mythology revised into the typical form which I have described; that is, stating that the simbuk-ship was transferred to his group in mythical times together with a large quantity of the ancestral personal names associated with the office. If his assertions meet with success, a mythological relationship will thereby be created between his newly-independent tonɔmb and its senior quite identical to those which I discussed above.

There are in theory, as I have explained, two levels in the hierarchy of totemic organisation: each of the three maximal descent groups is an estate-owning and totemic unit; and within these each subclan further possesses a separate and subsidiary estate and set of exclusive totems. As one can see from Figure 9 there are in fact a number of additional totemic ties intercalated between these two levels: one linking Makɔm and Yimal subclans, another Nggambak and Valik, another Wopunamb, Kambuli and Warangga'amb and, lastly, one linking Makɔm and Kambuli. (For the totemic species involved in each case, see Appendix A).

If the tie between Makɔm and Kambuli is left aside for the time being (as I shall explain later it is part of a joint totemic relationship which these two subclans have with certain Wuluwi-Nyawi groups)
Fig. 9. Totemic ties within Nggala'angkw clan-pair
three totemic subdivisions remain, each consisting of a set of two or three proximate subclans.

There can be no doubt that these totemic relationships are the products of contingent historical events or processes no longer accessible to investigation. But they can, I think, be at least partly explained in terms of the preceding discussion of the processes of reversion and fission; and while their historical origins are lost, it is nevertheless in this way possible to account for their continuing existence.

As I have explained, there are dense mythological links between Makom and Yimal, and these are connected with the largely successful attempts by Yimal, continuing at the present time, to disposses Makom of its hereditary prerogatives as the most senior subclan within Nggala'angkw. Although Makom is resisting these attempts assiduously, it is at a disadvantage firstly because much of its esoteric sakima'andj has fallen into the hands of Yimal; secondly, because of its small size, it is unable to keep sufficiently large numbers of its personal names in regular use, and it is clear that many of these have for some generations been gradually lapsing into the possession of Yimal. Yimal has been able to create close associations between their respective nggwa'al-asa'ai in myth; and, because it is paradigmatic of such partnerships that the totemic ancestors concerned take the form of the same species, these revisions have resulted in the two subclans having come to share a number of joint totems. The mythological and totemic links between them stem from the attempts by Yimal to consolidate its relationship with Makom in the course of asserting its reversionary rights in certain of the latter's personal names, ritual entitlements and so forth, and preparatory to forcing the escheat of others.

The need for this consolidation is heightened by the fact that, while reversion is in principle governed by genealogy, in actuality third parties may attempt to pre-empt these rights; when a descent group is perceived to be in decline, it may happen that unauthorised outsiders begin to appropriate its personal names, besides the ones genealogically qualified to do so. And so often these legitimate heirs consider it necessary to take all possible measures to reinforce their successorial rights.
Because of its small size, the senior subclan may be unable to defend itself against such attempts by third parties; but on the basis of its totemic and mythological links with its junior, it can expect to receive its support in these disputes. Yimal, for example, has in recent years defended Maköm in a major debate against the latter initiated by the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan Maliyaw. It is of course in the interests of Yimal to ensure that the hereditaments of Maköm remain intact; but in addition, by having established itself as a defender of this legacy in debates, so Yimal has strengthened its claims to eventually inherit it. Thus the creation of the close totemic relationship between Maköm and its reversioner has, if ambivalently, been to the advantage of the former; ill-equipped to protect itself in name-disputes on its own strength, it has in effect mortgaged its mythological patrimony to Yimal in return for securing the unqualified support of the latter in debates.

An alternative explanation of the totemic and mythological ties between Maköm and Yimal is that the two subclans are recently fissioned from each other; for this process, as I have explained, could create a relationship of essentially the same kind between them. However, oral tradition preserves no record of this event, and it is clear that the two groups have been independent subclans for many generations. Given that the links between them are of long standing, the most satisfactory explanation for their continuing existence is, as I have proposed, that parts of the patrimony of Maköm are currently in the process of descending to Yimal by reversion.

A similar explanation can, I think, be advanced for the existence of the two other intercalary totemic divisions within Nggola'angkw: that composed of Nggambak and Valik subclans, and the second comprising the junior of the two Nggola'angkw clans (see Figure 9). Both Nggambak and Wopunamb are smaller than their immediate juniors although, in the case of Nggambak, perhaps not significantly so. Each has close mythological links with its junior, which describe the conveyance of numbers of ngga'ai-asa'ai into the possession of the latter. In both cases, some of these figures are the ancestral spirits of tracts of land; and others are certain of the personified parts of the two ceremonial houses belonging to the two totemic divisions, and of which Nggambak and Wopunamb are the respective senior owners. Over the past forty years or so, there have been three name-disputes between Nggambak and Valik, in all cases involving
attempts by Valik to usurp personal names belonging to its senior. My record of name-disputes within the other totemic division unfortunately covers only a short period; but I have recorded a dispute between Wopunamb and Kambuli which took place in 1977, similarly involving an attempt by Kambuli to expropriate a personal name vested in its senior. Finally, on the basis of the mythological ties between them, the subclans within each of these two divisions normally give each other at least partial support in debates with external groups.

The internal relationships within these divisions indicate, as I think one can see, a number of similarities with the relationship which I have described between Makam and Yimal, although they do not perhaps evidence the same degree of asymmetry as that between the latter two subclans. But I would suggest that each of these two totemic divisions is largely, as with that comprising Makam and Yimal, an association created between proximate subclans in the course of the junior exercising, or preparing to exercise, its reversionary claims in the mythological legacy of its senior. The existence of three totemic divisions with Nggala'angkw, intermediary between the subclan and of the clan-pair as a whole, derives at least partly from the population differentials within the clan-pair. Each of these divisions comprises at least two subclans, the junior of which is the larger and anticipating the extinction of its senior.

vii. Totemic organisation of Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair

With some qualifications, a general correspondence may be said to exist between descent and totemic organisation within Nggala'angkw. As I mentioned above, agnation and totemism are conceptually quite distinct modes of relating social segments to one another and, while the former should in theory cast the latter into its own mould, they are in practice partly disengaged and independent. As I shall now describe, the parallel between them is much looser in the case of Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair.

The position held by Nyakaw, the genealogically most senior subclan within Wuluwi-Nyawi, with respect to the clan-pair estate, is similar to that of Makam within Nggala'angkw. Formally, it is the mythologically most senior subclan within the clan-pair, and holds certain prerogatives on this basis, but none exclusively.
The sky (*tumbw*), an important Wuluwi-Nyawi totem, is personified in myth as *nggua' al-asa' ai* bearing the personal name Nyamborman, and is considered a totemic ancestor of Nyakaw. Myth states that the sky was first separated from the earth by totemic ancestors of Nyakaw, who then shored it up on a post located at the Wuluwi-Nyawi *mawtep*, or original mythical village. Ancestors of each of the other Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans then contributed a further post, apparently to prop it up more securely. These posts are named and are important *nggua' al-asa' ai* of the subclans concerned. On the basis of this myth, the magic of sky-collapse is vested in the clan-pair as a whole, each subclan possessing its own formula.

The totemic ancestors of Nyakaw are also stated to have been responsible for the original creation of the thunderstorm, and of the aerial ceremonial house Nyapal, the home of storms. Nyakaw accordingly possesses magic to call down thunderbolts (*yakara'aw*). The myth also relates, however, that Nyapal was later visited by a *nggua' al-asa' ai* of Sarambusarak, the subclan third in seniority by genealogical reckoning, who acquired the storm-magic there; as a result, Sarambusarak is also endowed with this magic.

The weather-magic techniques known as Nyava'at are also said to have been created by the ancestors of Nyakaw. The magic is owned, however, jointly by Nyakaw and Nanggwundaw, the most senior subclan of Wuluwi clan, but I do not know the charter-myth for this magic.

The most important component of the Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair estate is the yam harvest ritual. This ritual is a more complex event than Ndumwi, as it is performed simultaneously by three separate ceremonial associations each under an independent ritual authority. The leadership of these associations rests with three hereditary offices, one held by the Nyakaw *tonomb Komei*, one by Ambasarak subclan, and the third by the Maliyaw *tonomb Malikembon*. I will refer to these three groups as the core groups of their respective yam ritual associations.

Each association performs the ritual at the ceremonial house

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7 However, the ownership of this name has for many years been disputed by the subclan Ambasarak.
of its core group. The principal permanent ritual focus of each association is a sacred water-filled pit (wa'anggw) located alongside the ceremonial house of its core group, and which is personified in myth as an important totemic ancestor of the latter. Although the three associations are unnamed, men speak of themselves in the context of the ritual as "belonging" to one of these three water-holes, and for convenience I will refer to the associations by the names of the wa'anggw identified with them: the Meipornombor association, with Nyakaw Kamei as its core group; the Yanggølimbaw association linked with Ambasarak; and the Awia'anggw association centred upon Maliyaw Malikemban.

Before turning to the yam harvest ritual itself, I will first briefly describe the manner in which the possession of the three yam ritual offices by their present holders is validated. Two of these offices - those held by Ambasarak and Maliyaw Malikemban - are simultaneously simbuk-ships. As one can see from Figure 10, Ambasarak consists only of a single tonomb. The office which it possesses is said to have been the creation of its own totemic ancestors. However, both Nyakaw Kamei and Maliyaw Malikemban are, as can be seen from Table 2, the junior tonombs of their subclans. According to myth, the office held by Kamei was created by totemic ancestors of the most senior Nyakaw tonomb, a segment which is long extinct. This former tonomb is said to have been "trodden underfoot" by Kamei, or to have had all its names and prerogatives formally assumed by the latter after its extinction; and Nyakaw mythology states, correspondingly, that the office was transferred to Kamei by its senior in mythical times.

The case of the office held by Malikemban is rather different. Mythology relates that this office was created not by totemic ancestors of Maliyaw subclan at all, but by those of Nanggwundaw, the most senior subclan within the clan of which both groups are a part. The office, and various associated sacra, were then conveyed by these ancestors to those of Maliyaw, as a result of which the latter subclan and not Nanggwundaw holds the office.

Maliyaw is by far the largest subclan in the village, with 246 members in 1978, nearly half as big again as the next largest subclan, Yimal. Nanggwundaw on the other hand is a small group of only 30 persons. As I shall describe in Chapter 8, over the past two
generations Maliyaw has debated against Nanggwundaw, with some successes, for the possession of a total of five personal names. These names form part of the mythology concerning the origin and transfer of the ritual office. Maliyaw claim these names as their own on the grounds that the office was created entirely by their own totemic ancestors, and was not transferred to them from Nanggwundaw. Through suppression of the myth of its creation by Nanggwundaw, they are in effect attempting to consolidate their exclusive title to the office.

Of the three subclans of Wuluwi clan, Nanggwundaw is the most senior and Maliyaw the most junior; and it is clear from the manner in which they were conducted that the name-disputes between the two subclans have involved attempts by Maliyaw to exercise rights of reversion. On this evidence, and in view of the nature of the myth which Maliyaw are attempting to suppress, I would suggest that it is more than likely that the office in question was indeed once in the possession of Nanggwundaw, and that it passed to Maliyaw by escheat. If this is the case, Maliyaw has thereby usurped a right which should have been exercised by the subclan Nawik, the group intermediate between Nanggwundaw and Maliyaw in the order of agnatic seniority (see Figure 10). Why Nawik might have forfeited this right can best be explained by its tiny size; it is even smaller than Nanggwundaw itself, and appears to have been for some generations.

Although rights of reversion are in principle determined by genealogical seniority, they are in practice, as I mentioned earlier, open to challenge. Although Nawik holds, by its genealogical position, the immediate rights of reversion in the personal names and other endowments of Nanggwundaw, its diminutive size in fact renders it ill-equipped to exercise them effectively, and it appears to have been dispossessed of these rights by the demographically far more successful subclan junior to itself.

As I mentioned earlier, the office which Maliyaw possesses - the simbuk-ship and hereditary leadership of the Awiwa'anggw association - is held specifically by the junior of its two tɔnɔmbɔs, contrary to the principle of genealogical seniority. This is said by older informants to have resulted from the following circumstances.
Up to some fifty years ago, the two present tonombs of the subclan Maliyaw constituted a single tonomb. The office had some time previously passed from the senior to the junior segment of this tonomb in contravention of the rule of succession. A dispute arose between the two segments over the succession, and resulted in fission. The senior segment became the present tonomb Wapikas, while the junior, now the tonomb Malikemban, retained possession of the office, which it has since continued to hold. Rather anomalously, the two groups continue to share the same tenembavei and set of totemic ancestors, despite the fact that they operate effectively as independent tonombs; and their fission, and the transfer of the office, appear as a consequence to have as yet resulted in no restructuring of their subclan's mythology.

I will turn now to the yam harvest ritual. The three core groups are considered responsible for the creation of yams in mythical times. The water-holes belonging to these groups were initially located, it is said, at their respective mythical villages, and it was from these holes that yams first originated. The holes kept themselves magically filled with yams, and provided the ancestral members of each association with an inexhaustible supply of the tubers on which they would regularly feast in complete secrecy, keeping the existence of the holes and of yams themselves entirely concealed from the ancestors of Nggala'angkw and of Nambul-Sambolap. The Yanggalimbaw hole of Ambasarak eventually "burst open" (wila), releasing its yams, and the tubers became thenceforth available for cultivation and consumption by society at large. The two other water-holes never burst, and it was from the Yanggalimbaw hole alone that all the yams in the world were originally discharged. Men speak of the yam harvest ritual - the lifting of the interdiction on the harvest of the levee yam-gardens, and the presentation of yams by the men of Wuluwi-Nyawi to their sisters' children - as the annual recapitulation of this event.

On the basis of this myth the three core-groups - or, more accurately in the case of Nyakaw Kamei and Maliyaw Malikemban, the whole subclans of which they are each a segment - are the sole possessors of yam-gardening magic and of the magic of yam-diminution.

As can be seen from Figure 10, Kamei is genealogically the most senior of the core groups and Malikemban the most junior. The
relative seniority of the three groups provides the basis of part of the organisation of the ritual. During the ritual's two major versions, each association constructs an effigy inside its ceremonial house; these large, decorated figures bear personal names and are important ngwa'al-asa'ai of the core groups. Once assembled, they are taken by raft to a spot on the river-bank opposite the village, and erected there one after the other in strict accordance with the order of seniority of their owners; the effigies are themselves regarded as standing correspondingly to one another as elder and younger brothers. While deference is paid in this way to the principle of seniority, it is nevertheless of a largely nominal kind. Despite its seniority, Komei is not the most important of the three groups in the mythology concerning the origin of yams; for it is not from its water-hole, but from that of Ambasarak, that yams are considered to have originally emerged. Nor does Komei possess the most important prerogatives deriving from the ritual; it holds no rights to inaugurate the yam ritual and decide its timing, and these responsibilities are held jointly by Ambasarak and Malikomban alone. As a kind of concrete expression of its effectively inferior mythological status, its effigy is required to be considerably shorter than the other two; its authorised height is about one and a half metres, in contrast to a height of ten or so metres for the effigies of the other two core-groups.

As with Nggola'angkw, there is a level of totemic organisation within Wuluwi-Nyawi intercalary between the estate of the clan-pair and those of its constituent subclans. As one can see from the diagram below, these totemic relationships are far more complex than those within Nggola'angkw and have a quite different pattern. Within Nggola'angkw are three totemic subgroupings, which correspond to important segmentary cleavages within the clan-pair. There is within Wuluwi-Nyawi, on the other hand, a network of totemic linkages entirely cross-cutting the agnatic organisation of its internal segments. (For the totemic species involved in each case, see Appendix A).

These ties (see Figure 10) form three nexus, centred respectively on Nyakaw, Ambasarak and Maliyaw, and these nexus constitute the framework for the three yam ritual associations. Each core group recruits the membership of its association from those
Fig. 10. Totemic ties within Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair
subclans and totems with which it has totemic links. The composition of the three associations is as follows:

Meipernambar association: Nyakaw Kamei (core group)
Wanakaw Wainembuk
Nanggwundaw Masiyanggen
Maliyaw Wapikas

Yanggalimbaw *: Ambasarak (core group)
Sarambusarak
Nawik

Awuwa'anggw *: Maliyaw Malikemban (core group)
Nyakaw Mwindimi
Wanakaw Kambanawu
Sarambusarak
Nanggwundaw Mamiandimi

*Note: as will be explained later, one Nggola'angkw and one Nambul-Sambolap tonombr are also affiliated with the Yanggalimbaw association.

Table 14: Composition of the yam harvest ritual associations.

If these alignments are compared with the network of totemic linkages shown in the diagram above, the general fit between them can be clearly seen. It should be noted that while each association is discrete, the three corresponding totemic nexus themselves interpenetrate. Firstly, the two nexus centred respectively on Nyakaw and on Maliyaw themselves overlap, as these two subclans themselves have a totemic relationship with each other. This concerns the fact that, as can be seen from the table above, the two groups in effect exchange certain of their personnel during the ritual; Nyakaw Mwindimi men belong to the association of which Maliyaw Malikemban is the core group, while Maliyaw Wapikas men belong to the association centred on Nyakaw Kamei. Secondly, Sarambusarak has totemic ties both with Maliyaw and with Ambasarak; this refers to the fact that Sarambusarak customarily provides men both for the Awuwa'anggw and for the Yanggalimbaw associations (see Table 14).

Totemic and mythological linkages between tonombs entail relations of graduated seniority between them, which are cast as relations between elder and younger brothers. In accordance with this principle, each core group stands, so far as totemism is concerned, as elder brother to the segments from which the membership of its association is drawn. Nyakaw Kamei and Ambasarak are, as one can see from Figure 10, by agnation senior to all the groups comprising their
respective associations, so that their genealogical and mythological ties with their associates are congruent with each other.

The third core group, however, Maliyaw Malikamban, is genealogically the most junior tonomb within the entire clan-pair, so that all the groups linked with it are its seniors according to descent criteria; and its mythological relationships with them thereby run altogether counter to those based on genealogy.

For much of my period of fieldwork, I was puzzled by the fact that the effective order of seniority of the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans, as it is reflected in kin term usage between agnates within this clan-pair, bears only a partial resemblance to their order of seniority as it is implied in the clan-pair genealogy. In Table 15, the relative genealogical positions of these subclans are compared with their operative positions as they determine kin term usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genealogical ranking</th>
<th>Totemic ranking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nyakaw</td>
<td>Nyakaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ambasarak</td>
<td>Ambasarak</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sarambusarak</td>
<td>Nanggwundaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Wanakaw</td>
<td>Maliyaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Nanggwundaw</td>
<td>Sarambusarak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nawik</td>
<td>Wanakaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Maliyaw</td>
<td>Nawik</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Genealogical and totemic ranking of the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans

Nanggwundaw and Maliyaw, while retaining the same positions relative to each other, are treated as effectively senior to two of the subclans senior to Nanggwundaw by genealogy. This, I suggest, is a result of the mythological ties of Maliyaw Malikamban with its associates having partly overridden its agnatic ties with them. The discrepancy between kin term usage and the genealogical positions of Nanggwundaw and Maliyaw, if pointed out to informants, is admitted as interesting oddity, but is not considered especially significant. No revision of the agnatic charter of the clan-pair has been made and, despite its mythological seniority, the core group Malikamban still remains formally the most junior tonomb in the clan-pair genealogy. This is, I think, a clear indication of the conceptual distinction made between totemic relations and those based upon descent.
Genealogical and totemic seniority within Nggola'angkw clan-pair run in parallel with each other, while in the case of Wuluwi-Nyawi they partly conflict. There is, as we have seen, one further respect in which the relationship between totemism and descent within Wuluwi-Nyawi is looser than in the case of Nggola'angkw. Within both groups there exist a number of special totemic links intermediate between the totems of the clan-pair as a whole and those of its constituent subclans. In the case of Nggola'angkw, I have suggested that they can at least partly be accounted for as precipitates of the process of reversion; while those within Wuluwi-Nyawi have to do, rather differently, with recruitment to the yam ritual associations. In the former case their arrangement bears some resemblance to the internal segmentation of the clan-pair, but in the latter there is no parallel of this kind. These relationships are more numerous and dispersed, and their distribution is largely independent of segmentary organisation.

It is, I think, possible to show that one factor contributing to this pattern of ties within Wuluwi-Nyawi is the rivalry characteristic of relations within the clan and clan-pair. Although the internal totemic organisation of Nggola'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi have partly different functions and a superficially different appearance, they can thus both largely be explained within the same general framework.

Firstly, the three core groups, the segments in which the most important capacities are vested relating to the magic and ritual associated with yams, have sometimes become involved in disputes with each other over their relative status. Maliyaw, for example, as I shall describe in a later chapter, has challenged the seniority of the Ambasarak yam ritual effigy to its own in a total of some seven debates over the last two generations.

The composition of the three ritual associations appears to be comparatively fluid, and I have recorded a number of shifts of affiliation which have taken place over the last sixty years or so. While their relative status in mythology is a source of contention between them, the three core groups are also potentially in competition with each other for the ritual allegiances of other
groups; for the size of an association reflects upon its core group and its hereditary ritual leader. Under certain circumstances one core group may be able to draw away segments affiliated to another. Since the end of the Second World War, the ritual office on which the Meipørnambør association is focussed has been held by two individuals in succession, both of whom have been partly incompetent and unable to perform certain of the responsibilities of their office during the yam ritual. In recent years, all the groups affiliated with Meipørnambør have on ostensibly different grounds in each case begun partially to disengage themselves from this association and to attach themselves to the Awiwa'anggw association led by Maliyaw Malikemban; and it seems clear that one of the factors involved is their dissatisfaction with the Meipørnambør leadership.

The frequency of disputes over names tends to increase with segmentary proximity; and this is so, as I described earlier, because the processes of fission and reversion tend to create disputes of this kind. Relations between co-members of an association should, at least during performances of the ritual, be amicable; and when disputes occur between or within groups affiliated with the same association they may result in one of the principals, especially if the other party is the core group itself, reaffiliating itself with another association. For example, when the original Maliyaw tonomb fissioned in the course of the succession dispute (see above), its senior segment, now the tonamb Wapikas, broke away from the Awiwa'anggw association and affiliated itself with Meipørnambør; and its present attachment to Meipørnambør dates from that event.

In summary, the three core groups are potential rivals for followers, and welcome opportunities to augment their own associations at each other's expense. At the same time, disputes within an association may lead to one of the two parties realigning itself elsewhere. Since such disputes tend to occur the most frequently between close collaterals, the two factors in combination thereby intensify the same general effect: they tend to drive apart tonombs of the same subclan, and subclans of the same clan, and affiliate them to different ritual associations. Because recruitment to these associations is validated by totemism, this has had the result of creating a pattern of dispersed totemic links with this clan-pair.
viii. Cross-clan-pair totemic relationships

There are a number of totemic relationships which cross-cut the three primary totemic divisions and link subclans and tonombs across exogamous boundaries. Minimally, a relationship of this kind involves two tonombs, and has its charter in a mythical partnership between a pair of their totemic ancestors, one of whom is formally senior to the other. Typically, the two figures are said to have travelled the primordial landscape together, creating topographical features and performing various other joint exploits, and to have lived together at the same sakitdp; and each tonomb derives a set of personal names from this mythology. Other tonombs of their own subclans may also be involved in the mythology; but even if they are not, the mutual claims and responsibilities which this totemic relationship entails usually apply to the whole subclans of which both tonombs are parts. In principle, any number of tonombs and subclans may be aggregated together in a mythological association of this kind. Thus these cross-clan-pair totemic relationships are formally identical, in the principles which they employ, to totemic relationships which exist between agnates. The place which a group may occupy in a cross-clan-pair link, and the personal names in which this is enshrined, are just as with all other parts of its patrimony revertible to its agnates; thus co-ordinate segments within the clan and clan-pair stand to inherit each other's positions in these external relationships.

One important feature of totemic relationships, which I have not mentioned up till now, is that they in principle prohibit marriage. This is a function which totemism does not play conspicuously within the clan and clan-pair, since the groups concerned are in any case barred from intermarriage by their common agnatic descent. But it is an aspect of totemism which is clearly revealed in cross-clan-pair relationships. Not all such ties in actuality prohibit marriage; but there is always a special and standardised mythical explanation of those that do not.

In the case of those that do ban intermarriage, mythology invariably describes the consociated totemic ancestors of the groups concerned as having, as a pact of friendship, formally renounced the possibility of marriage with each other's sisters:
They were companions, together all the time, and they became just like brothers. Because of this, they said that they would not marry each other's sisters. That is why the people of (X) subclan are our brothers and sisters and we cannot marry them.

Two groups related in this way stand as 'elder' and 'younger brother' and, although their members do not claim common descent, they employ the same kin terms in respect to each other as are used between agnates. In order to distinguish this relationship from other types of totemic tie, from which, as I shall explain, it differs in a number of important ways, I will refer to it as the totemic-sibling relationship.

The totemic-sibling relationship is unique among other kinds of totemic association in the forms of cooperation and solidarity which it enjoins. Firstly, the groups concerned effectively share joint rights in women and hold their allies in common. They are, for example, terminologically matr kin not only of their own sisters' children but also of each other's, and have towards each other's sisters' children the same obligations and claims as they have towards their own. In effect they perform together many of the economic and alliance functions of a single subclan, and make and receive bridewealth and mortuary payments collectively.

While totemic-sibling groups each possess an exclusive set of totemic ancestors who figure in the mythology in which they are linked, they are expected, rather like to nombs of a single subclan, to allow each other regular use of these ancestors' names. Because they share the rights of use of these names, they are obliged to act jointly in debating. Totemic-sibling groups are automatic allies in debates, and when one of them becomes involved in a name-dispute the other or others support it unequivocally. In debates in which any of them is a principal, the groups concerned form a single bloc together with their collective sisters' sons and other allies. Name-disputes amongst themselves are strongly discountenanced and are in actuality very rare indeed. But when they do occur, they must be settled amicably and in private, and never allowed to reach the stage of a formal public debate, under the sanction of mystical affliction.

I will turn now to those cross-clan-pair relationships which permit marriage. In mythology validating a minimal relationship of this kind between two to nombs, the focal pair of totemic ancestors
are invariably represented as having exchanged sisters in marriage. The sister exchange is said to have occurred under the following standardised circumstances:

Those two ngwa' al-asa' ai did many things together and, it is true, they were just like brothers. But they had no wives, and could not find wives anywhere. After a long time they said to each other: "It is bad that we are wifeless and without children: but where can we find wives?" And so rather than be childless they agreed to marry each other's sisters.

The formula thus implies that the exchange of sisters was forced upon the pair by necessity; and this is important in that it is in effect the admission of an anomaly. The marriageable relationship between the two groups is confessed an irregularity, and the formula takes pains to explain the circumstances under which it arose.

Sister-exchange is disapproved because, as I described in Chapter 2, it destroys the asymmetries which are necessary for the proper operation of relationships set up by marriage. But it is precisely this characteristic which gives this form of marriage its utility as a device in myth. While the two ancestors are affines, this relationship creates no inequalities between them, a situation which could never in theory truly obtain in real life. In the case of a totemic-sibling relationship, the two ancestors are said to have pronounced each other's sisters unmarriageable; in the present case, to have exchanged sisters. But given these differences, marriage is depicted in both cases as having created no inequalities between them, and the two formulae perform an essentially identical function: to legitimate a special cooperative relationship between two subclans or tanombs of different exogamous groups, in one case prohibiting marriage and in the other permitting it.

Groups linked in this way through a postulated ancestral sister-exchange refer to each other as nawi. This is one of the terms denoting a potential spouse, but is used in this special context to describe a relationship between groups. They may also refer to each other as elder and younger brother, in accordance with the relative seniority of their two ancestors in the linking mythology. In their interpersonal kin relationships, however, their members employ normal affinal and uterine kin terms toward each other.
The \textit{nawi} relationship is essentially a weakened version of the totemic-sibling tie. As marriageables, mortuary and bridewealth payments pass between the groups concerned, and their totemic relationship entails no cooperation in these exchanges. As is the case with totemic-sibling groups, name-disputes between \textit{nawi} are strongly discouraged and formal debates prohibited under supernatural sanction. \textit{Nawi} groups do not however support each other in debates, and when one is involved in a name-dispute the other is not obliged to take its side. They do however support each other indirectly or passively; for men cannot, again under mystical sanctions, actively assist another subclan in a debate against their \textit{nawi} groups.

The differing features of the totemic-sibling and \textit{nawi} relationships are summarised in Table 16.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{\textit{Nawi} tie} & \textbf{Totemic-sibling tie} \\
\hline
Ancestral partnership with sister-exchange. & Ancestral partnership with renunciation of marriage. \\
Marriageable. & Unmarriageable; allies held in common; cooperation in affinal and matrilateral exchange. \\
Debates prohibited; but no direct mutual support in debates prescribed. & Debates prohibited; prescribed mutual support in debates. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Table 16: Features of the \textit{nawi} and totemic-sibling ties.

The fact that the totemic-sibling relationship enjoins active mutual support in debating while the \textit{nawi} tie does not, can I think be explained as follows. The central feature of the totemic-sibling tie is that it does not simply prohibit marriage - for subclans of the same clan or clan-pair are also of course unmarriageable yet regularly debate against each other - but that the groups concerned hold collective rights in their allies and are thereby a collective unit in paying and receiving mortuary and other affinal prestations. As I have described, the relationship between a social unit and its allies involves exchanges of many kinds of goods and services. Men have the responsibility to teach esoteric mythology to their allies, and the latter have the reciprocal obligation to offer their support in debates. This support is not only verbal but also has an economic component, and allies are expected to contribute food, valuables and nowadays also cash to help defray the expenses of the debate. Totemic-
sibling groups are partners in name-disputes because they are partners in affinal and matrilateral exchange, holding a collective set of allies obligated to support both of them verbally and materially in debating.

The nawi relationship, because it permits marriage, can go no further than prohibiting name-disputes. The groups concerned possess no single set of allies obligated, by affinal and matrilateral ties to both of them, to support them jointly in debating. The nawi tie cannot prescribe active cooperation in debates because marriageable groups cannot by definition form a single unit in exchange.

The distribution of totemic-sibling and nawi relationships is given in Figure 11 (see Appendices A and B for the mythological content of these relationships and for the totemic species involved in each case).

The distinctive characteristic of cross-clan pair ties is that they prohibit groups from confronting each other in debates and, in the case of totemic-sibling relationships, that they furthermore enjoin active mutual support in debating and cooperation in exchange. In these respects they differ markedly from totemic relationships between agnates. There is only one case - that of the tie between the Nggala'angkw subclans Makom and Kambuli (see above, Section vi) - in which an internal relationship of this kind involves obligations similar to those found in cross-clan-pair ties; and the link between Makom and Kambuli is, as is explained in Appendix B, part of a shared cross-clan-pair linkage which these two subclans have with the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans Nanggwundaw and Nawik.

Collateral subclans are normally quite independent units in exchange, regardless of the totemic ties which they may have with each other. Similarly, they are normally independent units in debating; and while their totemic links may in some circumstances play a part in determining their alignments in debates, they are not in themselves felt to prohibit debates or to entail assistance in debates in any automatic way.

Cross-clan-pair totemic relationships are in effect economic and political coalitions. One may ask why groups create these ties in the first place, and secondly why they make them almost wholly
Fig. II. Cross-clan-pair totemic relationships
across clan-pair boundaries and so rarely with their own agnates.

Before I turn to these questions, there is one other which I will attempt to answer first: that is, why there are two kinds of cross-clan-pair relationship, one permitting marriage while the other not only prohibits it but also prescribes cooperation in exchange.

As I explained in Chapter 2, a person stands in a uterine relationship not only to his or her mother's subclan-agnates, but also to her classificatory matrilateral siblings; most of the latter are those individuals with whom she herself shares the same maternal subclan. Matrilateral siblings assist each other with brideprice and mortuary payments, share bridewealth receipts, and have the right to receive part of the mortuary payments for each other's sisters' children. I also explained that matrilateral siblingship may be transmitted through same-sex links in each generation, so that for example two individuals related as FMZSC may if they wish treat each other as matrilateral siblings. In practice however, these more distant ties are regularly extinguished for, were they not, they would begin to saturate the society with matrilateral siblingships and impede marriage. This would not occur if there were a true moiety system at Avatip, for then matrilateral siblingship could only be created within each exogamous group. But because there are three intermarrying groups in the village, each of these is continually creating, through the outmarriage of its female members, matrilateral siblingships not only within but also between the other two.

It can sometimes happen however that a tie of this kind between individuals of different subclans - either collateral or marriageable subclans - is continued for a number of generations; and when this occurs it may result in a sibling link between two quite large segments of these subclans, the agnatic descendants of the original matrilateral siblings. Whether or not the two subclans themselves are marriageable, the members of the two segments concerned are prohibited from intermarriage; they have rights in the bridewealth of each other's sisters and in the mortuary payments for each other's sisters' children, and assist each other when making affinal and matrilateral payments of their own. Similar processes, though with rather different consequences, have been analysed in depth by Kelly (1977) among the Etoro of the Southern Highlands. It is conceivable, though I have no direct evidence for this, that two marriageable subclans could allow
matrilateral siblingships to accumulate in this way between them, until they were altogether unmarriageable and all their members collaborating closely in exchange. It is also possible that the two groups could bring about this situation deliberately through the engineering of marriages, in a manner analogous to that so carefully documented by Kelly. In any case, it is clear that these kinds of processes could easily provide the marital and economic basis for the formation of a totemic-sibling relationship between two originally marriageable groups.

There is for example a relationship of this kind between Yimal Silikindu and a segment of the Nambul-Sambolap tonomb Kumbuman. Their members are unmarriageable, stand reciprocally as matrikin of each other's sisters' children, and cooperate in all forms of exchange. There is little difference between this relationship and those between totemic-sibling groups: essentially all that is missing is a totemic and mythological link between them and an obligation of mutual support in debating. It is from relationships of this kind, I would suggest, that totemic-sibling ties most probably develop. One can readily suppose that two groups, cooperating in the way I have described, could in time create a mythological and totemic validation of the tie between them. Once linked in myth, they begin to act together in debates and, as a cooperative unit in exchange, are already equipped with a unitary set of allies obligated to support them.

If these then are the circumstances under which the totemic-sibling relationship usually evolves, what of the nawi relationship? I had wondered at one stage whether some nawi ties might not be former totemic-sibling relationships in which the groups concerned had reverted to intermarriage with each other, and which were in the process of becoming attenuated or extinguished. The little evidence available argues, however, against this interpretation. The nawi relationship between Valik Ndjemalwan and Ambasarak was, as I describe in Appendix B, created in the 1940's; and prior to that time, according to older informants, the two groups had had no totemic relationship of any kind, at least none that was known publicly. It appears improbable then that the nawi tie is regularly related to the totemic-sibling relationship in any developmental sense. It is I suggest best viewed as an attempt by marriageable groups to
imitate certain features of the totemic-sibling tie within the
limitations which their marriageable relationship imposes. It is
a totemic relationship modelled after one with a different and deeper
infrastructural basis: a long history of economic partnership and
prohibited marriage.

I will return now to the problems I posed earlier: why cross-
clan-pair relationships are created; and why they prohibit debates,
and in some cases prescribe mutual support in debating and
collaboration in exchange, while totemic ties within the clan and
clan-pair rarely do so. For what reason, for example, is matri-
lateral siblingship rarely allowed, or used, to create ties between
agnates analogous to the totemic-sibling relationship?

Earlier, I tried to explain the pattern of totemic ties within
Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw by reference to competition within the
exogamous group. The same factor, I suggest, also supplies the
answer to the questions I have just raised. Disputes of the kind
which I have described within Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw are an
integral and recurrent aspect of relations between collateral groups;
and this circumstance is not fertile ground for the development of
firm partnerships in debating or in exchange between them. A subclan's,
external relationships are relatively uncomplicated by such factors
and it is for this reason that, paradoxically, it can normally find
secure allies only among unrelated groups; these are its nawi and
totemic-sibling subclans. Cross-clan-pair totemic relationships are
best interpreted as compacts between distant groups to support each
other in disputes with their respective agnates. It is not simply
that discord between collateral subclans discourages the formation
of secure totemic partnerships between them; it is this which actively
induces groups to form such partnerships in the first place,
coalitions which necessarily cross clan-pair boundaries. Cross-clan-
pair relationships are, I would argue, largely responses to conflict
within the clan and clan-pair.

ix. Conclusion

While there are three primary totemic groups in the village,
the major division of ritual and magico-economic functions lies
between the two largest of these, Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw.
The exchange of cosmological services within the community is
viewed as fundamentally dualistic; and, together with the exchange of women, wealth and esoteric knowledge, as representing one facet of an essentially bipolar system of total prestations mediating a dual division of society.

The internal segments of each exogamous group are ranked by genealogical seniority, and by an ideally homologous order of mythological seniority; and the relations between them are predicated upon inequalities in standing in totemic organisation. But the position of each segment, and the personal names in which this is vested, are treated not as its possession in perpetuity but as revertible to its juniors should it decline in numbers or become extinct. Thus while collateral segments hold differential prerogatives, these inequalities are regarded as provisional and not necessarily permanent; and as a result, frequent disputes take place between agnates over the mythological titles to them.

Agnates compete with each other for positions of precedence in relation to that complex of collective ritual and magico-economic duties which they hold towards their marriageables. While disputes do occur between marriageables, relations between exogamous groups are rarely in any jeopardy; for the major locus of competition within the community is not between these groups but within them, as their internal segments dispute their relative status in the system of reciprocities which link these groups together.

Superimposed upon the basic framework of totemic organisation, is a complex network of intermeshing totemic relationships between subclans and tonembs; relationships almost entirely independent of descent, and existing both within and across the primary totemic divisions (see Figure 17).

I argued that this network could best be accounted for as the result of competition within each of the primary totemic groups. These secondary relationships complicate totemic and exogamic organisation considerably, particularly those which cross clan-pair boundaries. Firstly, a number of these - the totemic-sibling ties - prohibit marriage, and as a result the three intermarrying groups are in fact without entirely closed boundaries, and subclans within the same exogamous group do not necessarily all share the same field of marriage possibilities and prohibitions. Of the Wuluwi-Nyawi
subclans for example, only Ambasarak, Wanakaw and Nawik intermarry with all the Nggola'angkw and Nambul-Sambolap groups. Of the others, Nyakaw is forbidden intermarriage with Nambul Wanaki, Sarambusarak with Sambolap Makapangkw, Nanggwundaw with Makom and Kambuli, and Maliyaw with Sambolap Makapangkw and Wopunamb Wopanggal-i (see Figure 11).

Similarly, the distinctive totemic and ritual attributes of the three primary groups in fact interpenetrate and are not entirely mutually exclusive. The sun, for example, a Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair totem, is also a totem of Nambul Wanaki, because of this tonemb's mythological tie with the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan Nyakaw. The Sepik River is a Nambul-Sambolap totem, and yet it is shared also by the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan Sarambusarak, because of the tie between this group and Sambolap Makapangkw. Because of their ties respectively with Sarambusarak and Ambasarak, Sambolap Makapangkw and the tonemb Nadjemalwan of the Nggola'angkw subclan Valik are part-owners of the Wuluwi-Nyawi yam harvest ritual and include yams among their totems. Again, while the Ndumwi ritual belongs to Nggola'angkw, Nambul Ndjuwi is also included among the owners of the ritual because of its totemic links with Makom and Yimal. (For a more detailed description of the content of these and other cross-clan-pair relationships, see Appendix B).

Only at the highest and most inclusive level of totemic organisation is there something of a coherent 'system': the oppositions between black, red and white, between immigrants and autochthones, upriver and downriver, sky and earth, yams and fish. Adopting Lévi-Strauss' metaphor (1966:159-60), one might describe these oppositions as the "trunk" and "lower branches" upon which the rest of the system is supported, the point at which it manifests the highest degree of motivation and least arbitrariness. Here, totemism is at its most immune to history: demographic fluctuations, and realignments of subclans and tonembs in ritual, marriage, debating and exchange. These contingencies tend only to affect the more distal branches of the system, and can no longer compromise the tree's stability nor alter its characteristic shape (Lévi-Strauss 1966:159).

At these terminal points of the system, one finds an entangled network of totemic relationships in which no motivated arrangement,
either of totems or of social segments, can be found, and which is
the arbitrary product of historical and contingent factors (see
Figure 17).

But if there is no logical pattern in the overlapping nexus
of totemic ties within Wuluwi-Nyawi, or in the network of cross-clan-
pair relationships, it is not simply as a result of the system
expiring, as Lévi-Strauss puts it, in "inertia or logical indifference"
(ibid:160). I have suggested that sociological rather than logical
determinants operate at this level, and that these relationships can
be explained in a positive way, as the products of contention within
the clan and clan-pair. Conversely, if totemic organisation at its
primary level exhibits a logical patterning, one factor involved is
that groups of this order have almost no political functions, so that
here the system is free to crystallise, undisturbed, into formal
symmetries.

Totemic organisation at Avatip is not so much the outcome
simply of a struggle between the laws of the mind and the accidents
of history, of

history and demographic development always upset(ting)
the plans conceived by the wise (ibid:155).

Almost all adults at Avatip have a clear understanding of the
general outlines of their totemic organisation; however, while some
men possess an extensive knowledge of it, very few are able to
visualise it in its entirety. Most men are unaware of many of the
details in which it departs in actuality from the general form which
they view it as taking; and it is largely individuals such as these
who have themselves created these differences, in competition for
the forms of power and privilege with which totemism is so closely
connected. Rather than adopt Lévi-Strauss' approach entirely, I
would suggest that most 'thinking' about totemism is done by men as
representatives of particular social groups viewing it from 'within',
and each from a more or less limited perspective. Avatip totemism
is the creation of thinkers occupying specific standpoints within it,
and for whom it was or is a means of solving political as well as
logical problems, of advancing claims and interests as well as of
thinking about society in its totality.
Chapter Six

PERSONAL NAMES AND THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF DESCENT GROUPS

i. Personal names and totemic classifications

A characteristic of Avatip totemism, as I described in the previous chapter and as can be seen clearly in Figure 17, is that the social groupings which it defines are not all mutually exclusive or bounded in relation to each other. They tend instead to inter-penetrate, so that the totemic organisation viewed as a whole takes the form of a network of overlapping sets. To take the subclan, for example: most of these groups are distinguished from each other not by exclusive totems but by unique complements of totems - many or all of which may be shared by a number of subclans, but without any possessing an exactly identical set. Usually, the subclan has a unique field of totemism, at least part of which overlaps with that of one or more others.

The subclan is as I have described the effective name-holding group and, as a general rule, it derives at least one exoteric and esoteric personal name from each of its totemic species. This applies whether these are totems of its entire clan or clan-pair, totems which it shares with a totemic-sibling, naví or other group with which it is associated in myth, or totems specific to itself alone. Its unique field of totemism is in this way inscribed in these personal names, and these names diagram its totemic and mythological links with other groups.

I explained in the last chapter that totemic organisation and patrilineal group structure are conceptually independent of each other and, while some totemic species are identified exclusively with specific descent groups, most link groups together in formations unconnected with descent. And as I have said, these groupings are rarely discrete but usually cross-cut each other. Personal names, on the other hand, rigorously individuate groups and do so on the basis of agnation; for names are the corporate property of units defined by descent. Every subclan holds a unique set of personal names; each higher-order descent group - the clan and clan-pair - is thus similarly identified with a totally exclusive body of personal names, comprising a set of corpuses held in severalty by its
constituent subclans. Personal names form a connecting link between totemism and descent; while they derive from, and diagram, a complex network of interdigitating totemic relationships, their own distribution coincides exactly with descent group structure.

Lévi-Strauss has described the essential principle of totemism as an homology posited between two series, one social and the other natural: the segments of society and a set of natural species (Lévi-Strauss 1966:115):

species 1 ≠ species 2 ≠ species 3 ≠ .... species n

group 1 ≠ group 2 ≠ group 3 ≠ .... group n

Avatip totemism, I would suggest, can be more accurately thought of as a 'two-tiered' system, in which, following Lévi-Strauss' terminology, a metaphoric relation exists between three series: one of social groups, one of personal names and one of species. The relation between descent groups and personal names is a constant one, in that the name-sets of these groups are completely discrete and non-overlapping, and the 'intervals' within these two series correspond exactly. But the relation between these two series and the series of species is a flexible and elastic one, for a species can in principle be diffracted into as many personal names as there are subclans wishing to establish a totemic relationship with each other.

In some cases a totem is exclusive to a specific subclan. That is, an exclusive relationship exists between a single subclan, a species and a personal name; classification by species and by names replicate each other and are, so to speak, mutually redundant:

species 1 ≠ species 2 ≠ species 3 ≠ .... species n

name 1 ≠ name 2 ≠ name 3 ≠ .... name n

group 1 ≠ group 2 ≠ group 3 ≠ .... group n

The following totems and totemic names are examples of this kind (cf. Appendix A):

species: rainbow tree sp. tree sp. moon tree sp. (walimawndi) (sunggwar) (yambwi) (mbapa) (angki)

pers. Walimawndi- Sunggwar- Yambwi- Mbapa- Angki-
name: ndu waken nggawi ta'akw ndimi

subclan: Makem Yimal Nggambak Nyakaw Maliyaw

Table 17: Examples of totems owned by single subclans.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kendjen</th>
<th>areca palm</th>
<th>vulva</th>
<th>wild sugarcane</th>
<th>breadfruit tree</th>
<th>rising sun</th>
<th>mapar</th>
<th>ndjanggwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nyakaw:</strong></td>
<td>Kondjen-apan</td>
<td>Mawndeyapan</td>
<td>Sepiyak-endoaw/Nyasepi*</td>
<td>Soakwalomi</td>
<td>Mawndikam</td>
<td>Tundimi/Nyakawndu*</td>
<td>Mapar-nggawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wanaki:</strong></td>
<td>Kondjen-domanggawi</td>
<td>Miyembayapan</td>
<td>Sepiyamanembor</td>
<td>Suwendi</td>
<td>Malomiyawkam</td>
<td>Samnap</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mawiyanggan:</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Aruwan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wainembuk:</strong></td>
<td>Kendjen-ambangk</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Mapar-wakon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* alternative totemic names.

Table 18: Totemic names involved in the mythological ties between four groups
In the majority of cases, however, a more complex metaphoric relationship exists, in which a species is to a set of personal names as an association of totemically-linked groups is to the subclans which comprise it. Here, species and names play more differentiated classificatory roles. Species serve as it were to establish the gross and initial distinctions between groups, and these contours are then further refined by means of subdivisions of these species into personal names:

As an illustration of this, let us take part of the network of totemic ties centred on the subclan Nyakaw (see Figure 17). As one can see, this subclan has totemic relationships with the tonombs Nambul Ndjawi, Wanakaw Wainombuk and Nanggwundaw Mawiyanggen, among others. With both Wanaki and Wainombuk it shares the plant kondjén (Acalypha wilkesiana); with Wainombuk and Mawiyanggen it shares the tree ndjanggwon (Maniltoa schefferi). It also shares with Wainombuk alone the plant mapar (Crinum asiaticum), while it possesses in common with Wanaki the vulva, the rising sun, the breadfruit tree and the areca palm. Finally, it shares wild sugarcane with Wanaki and Mawiyanggen. The distribution of totems and totemic names among these four groups is represented in Table 18.

Another example is the totemic association formed by the subclans Ambasarak and Sarambusarak together with the tonombs Valik Ndjomalwan and Sambalap Makapangkw; these groups are linked by a network of ties which concern their joint membership in the Yanggalimbaw yam harvest ritual association (see Chapter 5, Section vii; and Figure 17). Some of the totems involved, and the corresponding totemic names, are given in Table 19.
As a final example, let us take the distribution of totemic names of the sun, which is an important totem of Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair, and is shared in addition by the Nambul tonomb \textit{wakiki} as was noted earlier. \textit{Wakiki}, and all of the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans, are each identified with a specific position of the sun (see Chapter 3, Section vi) and possess one or more ancestral names for these sun-positions; these are as follows, in their order from east to west.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Totemic name</th>
<th>Position of sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyakaw:</td>
<td>Tundimi/Nyakawndu*</td>
<td>sunrise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Wakiki}:</td>
<td>Samnap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanggwundaw:</td>
<td>Tuwai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawik:</td>
<td>Mbaliamb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanakaw:</td>
<td>Wimbus</td>
<td>midday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliyaw:</td>
<td>Yuanap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambasarak:</td>
<td>Tupukuman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarambusarak:</td>
<td>Kwarumbaliamb</td>
<td>sunset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* alternative totemic names

Table 20: Totemic names of the sun

Up till now I have only mentioned totems which are limited in their distribution; that is to say, totems which belong to a specific segment or set of segments and not to others. There are, however, a large number of classes of totemic phenomena which every subclan possesses as totems, and from which they all derive personal names. Here, no generic differences exist between totems of one group and another, and the 'totemic' function of differentiating social segments is performed entirely at the level of personal names:

```
species
name 1 \# name 2 \# name 3 \# ... name n

\|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
\| group 1                | group 2                | group 3                |
```

Unlike totems specific to particular groups, the sharing of such totems does not indicate any effective ritual, mythological or other ties between the groups concerned; being as it were the common property of all social segments, they signify simply that these segments are members of the same society. The major 'universal' totems are given in the following table.
Dog - as
pig - mbal
eagle - nggaw
ginger - laki
wind - mar
heathaze - mali or mba'aw
local land-spirit - apa'wul
" " " - miyengk
" " water-spirit - wendjemawur
shamanic spirit - waken
ndja'am-spirit - ndja'am
major ceremonial house - kara'amb
junior " " - sa'ai
ceremonial mound - tupwi
finial of mjr. ceremonial house - ka'anggwusapi
sitting-platform of mjr. ceremonial house - ndja'amb
hearth of mjr. ceremonial house - yendjem
spirit personifying initiatory flute - ndakwul wapi
" " bamboo trumpet - wala as
initiatory water-beater - sengk
stool - teker
slit-drum - ramb
pottery vessel used ritually by simbuk - sokapi
mythological domestic house - tangger
domestic house ladder - potaka'aw
" " door - wiengkw
" " post - kwa'at
ward - yerengk
mythical village - sakitep
ear - wan
navel - wendi
canoe - val
shield - ka'and
axe - kwul
fighting-stick - mbangk
bow - am
arrow - nembi
spear - vei
spear-thrower - na'aw
suspension hook - sambun
male pubic apron - kumbisambwi
conus shell disc (body ornament) - sa'an
homicide's lime-stick tassel - sa'amb
canoe-paddle - nggaw
hand-drum - ka'anggo
man's string-bag - kwasembi
Ndjopas-grade chest ornament - kapki
canoe-prow ornament - sep
 cassowary bone dagger - aka'aw
fish-trap - amwi
woman's skirt - kwa'ar

Table 21: The main 'universal' totems

While the majority of 'exclusive' totems are animal, plant and bird species (see Appendix A), 'universal' totems tend in contrast to be items of secular or ritual material culture. They generally figure in myth as the equipment and possessions of other totemic ancestors.
Most of a subclan's 'universal' totems exist solely in myth, and only some - such as its ceremonial house and ritual sacra - are considered to have any specific material embodiment in the present. The majority of a subclan's totemic ancestors are probably 'universal' totems, for some of these - for example the various categories of spirits associated with its territory - comprise large numbers of individual ancestors. However, the majority of types of totemic phenomena are of the 'exclusive' kind.

The clearest way to visualise the place of personal names in Avatip totemic organisation - and which I have been using in this chapter - is in the form of a matrix or table. The name-holding groups - the subclans - are represented along one axis and species along the other; personal names occupy the cells within the matrix, each denoting the association of a particular species with a given subclan. Read along one axis, the table gives a series of names representing the total number of totemic species identified with a certain subclan; read along the other it gives the number of subclans sharing a particular species as a common totem.

In principle it would be possible to represent the whole of Avatip totemic organisation in a single table of this kind: sixteen subclans, and an estimated four or five hundred totemic species and perhaps twenty thousand exoteric and esoteric personal names. Let us imagine arranging the totemic species according to their frequency of occurrence, with the 'universal' totems at one pole and the most 'exclusive' - totems specific to single subclans - at the other; Table 22 gives a tiny extract from this hypothetical matrix in order to illustrate its form. At the 'universal' extremity of the spectrum of species all the available positions in the matrix are filled by personal names; that is to say, no distinctions in terms of species are made between groups, and the classification of groups takes place on the plane of personal names alone. In the middle of the spectrum one would find the clan and clan-pair totems, and the totems shared by totemic-sibling or other mythologically-linked groups. Here, gaps begin to appear within each subclan's name-series; and species themselves, quite apart from the personal names deriving from them, start to play a significant role in the system - drawing, as I described above, gross-level but important distinctions between sets of subclans. Finally, at the 'exclusive' pole of the system we would find the region most sparsely populated by names; these names are
### Table 22: Structure of the system of names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heat-haze</th>
<th>Slit-drum</th>
<th>Yam</th>
<th>Bird sp.</th>
<th>Cicada</th>
<th>Eel</th>
<th>Sp. of shrub</th>
<th>Fog</th>
<th>Sp. of liana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(malì)</td>
<td>(rambil)</td>
<td>(nya'an-kamngga'aw)</td>
<td>(kwarawi)</td>
<td>(Landai)</td>
<td>(wa'andf)</td>
<td>(apai)</td>
<td>(ngga'and)</td>
<td>(kakai)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nyakaw</th>
<th>Kwunamali</th>
<th>Watungwundu</th>
<th>Wali-kandi</th>
<th>Meiper-kwarawindu</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>Nggandawei</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maliaw:</td>
<td>Yuambwi</td>
<td>Yuamone-manggawi</td>
<td>Sawsuwali</td>
<td>Yuakwarawindu</td>
<td>Landai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasarak:</td>
<td>Paiyanmali*</td>
<td>Mbandi-manggawi</td>
<td>Mbaññ</td>
<td>Paiyan-kwarawindus*</td>
<td>Manam-bulandai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Kakaimbangk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nggambak:</td>
<td>Suwin-malimangk</td>
<td>Suwind-manggawi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wandjëndimi</td>
<td>Apaimeli</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valik:</td>
<td>Mbaraku-malimangk</td>
<td>Yina-nggamb</td>
<td>Selikeñ</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wandjömel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These two names are shared with Ambasarak subclan.
those referring to totems restricted to single subclans. The
classificatory role of these species, and of the names based on
them, coincide; species perform the same function of discriminating
individual subclans that, at the other pole of the system, is
performed at the level of personal names alone (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1966:
213-14).

If one takes a particular totem and compares the personal
names which different subclans derive from it, one often finds that
the names all possess the same termination. Here for example are
a selection of *sepi* (canoe prow ornament) names belonging to various
subclans: Mbwundisepi (Yimal subclan), Manggunisepi (Nggambak
subclan), Kambakasepi (Wopunamb subclan), Sawunsepi (Sambalap subclan),
Maiyimsepi (Nanggwundaw subclan). Not only do they refer to the same
object, but the names are themselves highly imitative and repetitive,
differing only in their initial segment. The terminal segment of a
personal name very often contains, or is, the Manambu or sometimes
Western Iatmul term for the entity to which the name refers.

If one next compares a number of personal names belonging to
the same subclan but referring to different totems, one often finds the
complementary pattern: that the names differ only in their
terminations while the initial segments were all the same. As an
example of this, let us take the mythological names belonging to the
subclan Nanggwundaw for ear (*wan*), eagle (*nggawi*), house (*tanggor*),
woman's skirt (*kwa'ar*) and flying-fox (*kumbwi*): Maiyimwanmeli, Maiyim-
nggawi, Maiyimsuwali, Maiyimsambanmangk and Maiyimkumbwi, respectively.

The initial segment, Maiyim-, is as it were the signature of
the subclan Nanggwundaw and to any fully socialised adult would
immediately identify these names as the property of this group. It
is common for subclans to have several signatures of this kind. They
often derive etymologically from one of the totemic species of the
subclan concerned. The subclan Nyakaw, for instance, has Kwuna-
as the initial segment of many of its personal names, *kuna* being
the inflorescence of the elephant grass, a totemic species of Nyakaw;
many personal names of the subclan Maliyaw begin with the segment
Yu- or Yua-, the term for the greensnail shell, a totem of this
subclan.

In order to illustrate these two principles in combination,
I will compare the personal names belonging to five Wuluwi-Nyawi
The subclans denoting the following totemic phenomena: navel (wa'udi), heat-haze (maid or mb a 'aw), dragonfly (mbimber), stool (tdkev) and fish-trap (amui). These names can be arranged in the following matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>navel</th>
<th>heat-haze</th>
<th>dragonfly</th>
<th>stool</th>
<th>fish-trap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyakaw</td>
<td>Meipörwundi</td>
<td>Kwunamali</td>
<td>Meipörmibörm man</td>
<td>Meipöreyelis</td>
<td>Meipöremakömbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/S-sarak:</td>
<td>Kwaruwundi</td>
<td>Paiyanmali</td>
<td>Paiyanmibörm man</td>
<td>Paiyanyelis</td>
<td>Paiyannamakömbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanokaw:</td>
<td>Kwulawundi</td>
<td>Kwulamali</td>
<td>Kwulambörm man</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>Kwulanamakömbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanggwundaw:</td>
<td>Maiyimwundi</td>
<td>Maiyimmali</td>
<td>Maiyimbörm man</td>
<td>Maiyimyelis</td>
<td>Amwino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliyaw:</td>
<td>Yuawundi</td>
<td>Yuambwi</td>
<td>Yuambörm man</td>
<td>Ambianggaiyelis</td>
<td>Yuanamakömbi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - these names are the joint property of Ambasarak and Sarambusarak

Table 23: Examples of homologous name-sets
Systematisation of this kind is however only a tendency, and even in these examples, which have been selected specifically for their regularity, one notices a number of 'irregular' names. But the tendency toward systematisation is sufficiently strong that one can easily recognise the principles that underlie it: the terminal segment of a name identifies a specific element of the world, while the initial segment defines the name as the property of a particular subclan. It is clear then that the two axes of the system of totemic names, one signifying phenomena and one signifying social groups, are often represented in the structure of the names themselves.

When any phenomenon is shared as a totem by two or more subclans, the question arises: do the different personal names which these groups derive from the totem correspond to 'real' distinctions in the villagers' perceptual world? In the majority of cases, the answer is that the distinctions posited exist solely in the realm of myth. The main difference between a personified canoe, or Eclectus parrot, appearing in one subclan's myth, and one appearing in a myth of another, is that they are named differently; the discrimination made is of an essentially 'metaphysical' kind. In some cases, however, distinctions between names do refer rather more definitely to observable distinctions; tangible differences can indeed be perceived between the various positions of the sun, between one wind and another, one area of land and another, or one ceremonial house and another, although the nature and extent of these discontinuities vary. In these cases the discontinuities perceived are more or less of the same order as those perceived to exist between, for example, bird species; and the "system of differences" (Lévi-Strauss 1966:115) significant for discriminating social segments is simply transposed partly or wholly from species or classes to individual entities.

For there is a degree of variation in the classificatory level at which personal names are assigned to phenomena. Some personal names are applied to species: the cassowary, the species of tree *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, and so on. A personal name may refer to an individual entity, for example, to a particular mountain; or again to a part of an individual, such as to a specific part of a
particular ceremonial house. Thus one person may bear the name of his subclan's ceremonial house while some of his agnates carry the names of its spires, posts, sitting-platform and so forth. One man's name may be the class of which other men's names are members, or the individual of which other men's names are component parts.

To summarise: personal names are part of a system of classifications which works in two directions at once - dividing the world into elements, and simultaneously apportioning them out among social groups, classifying these entities according to which groups own the personal names derived from them and rightfully apply these to their personnel. A particular totem may be allocated in this way to every subclan, to a specific set of subclans, or to one subclan alone, so that the relative roles played by totems and by personal names vary from one 'sector' of the system to another. And when two or more subclans derive personal names from the same class of totem, these names may or may not signify 'really' distinct entities; or they may reflect discontinuities of an intermediate kind, quasi-natural but at the same time artificial, such as the division of heat-haze into named sectors.

In earlier chapters, I have given examples of the incorporation of elements of European culture into the totemic system\(^1\). I might note that some of these incorporations clearly illustrate the importance of personal names in Avatip totemic classifications. The subclan Kambuli, for instance, nowadays claim as a totem the tilapia, a fish recently introduced into the Sepik by Europeans and now a major item in the diet. The basis of this claim is that the name of the fish in Melanesian Pidgin, \textit{makau}, resembles the Kambuli-owned personal name Makawei. Some subclans at the village of Yuanamb lay claim to the ownership of certain European months, again on the grounds of sound-resemblances with personal names they own: July, for example, which resembles the personal name Ndjulai; August, because it recalls the personal name Awkasmeri; and March (\textit{Mas} in Melanesian Pidgin) - rather differently - because it is similar to the Manambu word \textit{ma'as} (areca palm), a totem of the group which lays claim to this month.

\(^1\) For examples of the incorporation of elements of European and other alien cultures into an Australian Aboriginal totemic system, see Worsley 1955 and 1967.
ii. The naming system

A person's names are viewed as defining his subclan membership and ratifying it; they signify that he is considered at least potentially an effective participating member of the subclan, holding all the rights and responsibilities which this entails. A subclan's corpus of personal names constitutes in a sense the idea of all its past, present and future members. The names, at least so the villagers would assert, are the subclan's possession in perpetuity; a 'grid' through which its members - more ephemeral than the names they bear - pass in succession as they are born, die and are replaced. Personal names, as I have described, are part of a supposedly timeless scheme of totemic classifications; in theory, the population of the society simply flows, from generation to generation, through the pre-ordained positions in this fixed system.

Each subclan possesses far more names than it could ever have members to bear at any one time. I estimate, at a rough but cautious guess, that the subclan has on the average something in the region of fifteen hundred esoteric and exoteric names. This would give a total, for Avatip as a whole, of some twenty-four thousand names altogether, a figure which is comparable with Bateson's estimate that an erudite Iatmul man "carries in his head between ten and twenty thousand names" (Bateson 1958:222). This is a type of naming

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2 The reaction of the Manambu to the first experience of having their names recorded by officers of the Australian administration gives an interesting insight into their attitudes towards names. In 1925 the District Officer, Townsend, added a month to the sentences of five Yuanamb men (he calls the village Jambon, i.e. Yambon: see Chapter 1, section iii) who had escaped from the gaol at Ambunti. His account of the court proceedings is worth quoting in full (I thank Rob Crittenden for bringing this passage to my attention):

"When questioned through our interpreter, the five men each admitted breaking from custody. Police evidence was then taken, the Gaol Register being produced and the names read from it. This was, in fact, the only part of the proceedings that really registered with the Jambons. The other evidence was merely going over well-known ground and was, as far as they were concerned, not worth repeating. But the evidence that showed that the Government had "imprisoned" the men in a book was disturbing indeed.

"When the Court gave judgement of the extra sentence, this and the names of the men were again written in the book so that they were thus more firmly "held" than ever. This feeling amongst these people that the writing of a name had some magic quality was so strong that no special care was needed to see that the prisoners did not escape again. Indeed, I think that throughout the remainder
system which holds, in Lévi-Strauss' words

a reserve of unoccupied positions sufficient to accommodate all the children born. The available positions being always more numerous than the population, synchrony is protected against the vagaries of diachrony, at least in theory (Lévi-Strauss 1966:197).

It is true that not even the largest and most rapidly expanding subclans in the community, such as Maliyaw, are in any danger of exhausting their stock of names; in fact the men of these groups were highly amused by my suggestion that this might be so. The system has, for all practical purposes, no attainable upper limits; but this tolerance of demographic fluctuation does have a very real lower threshold. For if a subclan is to be at all able to maintain undisputed possession of its names, it must be capable of using a representative number of them over a period of two or three generations. A sudden decline in size - even though it did not lead to extinction - would invite appropriation of its names by other groups, and could thus lead to the partial 'collapse' of its sector of the classificatory schema.

A child is named some months after its birth, once its parents judge it likely to survive infancy. This is an entirely informal affair, and no ceremony accompanies it. The father may name the child himself, if he is sufficiently well versed in his subclan's mythology; if he is not, he may ask one of the senior men of his subclan to do so. Sisters' sons, again if they are knowledgeable, are expected to name children of their mothers' subclans from time to time. Most personal names have a suffix indicating gender and can be made masculine or feminine as needs be; common male suffixes are -ndu (man), -mbandi (youth), -meli (?) and -ndimi (?), while -ta'akw (woman), -mangk (?), -nombor (?) and -wali are typical female ones. A child's sex, then, is of no particular relevance when choosing a name for it, for the name can be given the appropriate gender as necessary.

The number of names given to the child is kept within definite limits. A single principal name, or taise, is given, and usually from two to four secondary names, or senggeliyak: for reasons I shall explain shortly, it is normally considered improper to give

F.n. 2 cont'd.

of their terms they would not have gone even if we had helped them on their way." (Townsend 1968:130).
more names than this. Furthermore a person should receive names from his or her subclan's name-corpus once only, in infancy, and never again receive further patrilineal names.

Agnatically-transmitted names are called *apase*, or 'bone (ap) names.' Bone, as I explained in an earlier chapter, is said to be inherited by patrifiliation, and the morpheme *ap* often appears as a prefix - as it does here - signifying the concept of patrilineal descent.

Under certain circumstances the subclan's personal names are also given to its sisters' children. An individual in mourning, child or adult, is renamed by his matrikin using a name belonging to his maternal subclan; and thereafter he is addressed and referred to by that name in preference to his patrilineal names. He still retains his patrilineal names, which are considered his possession for life, but others should avoid speaking these names as a courtesy toward him. For a bereaved person is said to be renamed in this way in order to assuage his grief; for a mourner to hear his *apase* spoken is a painful reminder of the dead person, because they are the names by which the deceased knew him. The renaming is accompanied by a small ceremonial gift of food from the matrikin, and is known idiomatically as 'carrying up the food basket (into the mourner's house)' (*kombi kawarma*). The recipient of a bereavement name, as it might be called, bears it until death, or until bereaved again and once again renamed. At this point the name returns to the maternal subclan; it remains the property of this subclan and cannot be transmitted by the recipient to his own descendants. Bereavement names are known as *kopakwara* se, or 'mud-taking names', a reference to the practice of smearing the body with mud as a sign of mourning.

Men often give names to their domestic pigs and dogs, drawing these from their own subclans' name-corpuses. Names are also occasionally given to domestic fowl and, nowadays, the European-introduced house-cat; but this is a practice normally confined to declining subclans, and is considered something of an extremity to which they are driven in the absence of human bearers for these names.

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3 Bateson reports that among the Iatmul every individual is given a secret name (1932:410). This is not the case among the Manambu: the only beings that bear secret names are the totemic ancestors.
A number of considerations are taken into account when choosing a name - whether as an *apase* or *kapakur se*, and whether or not it is for a human recipient. Firstly, it is felt important to keep as many of the subclan's names in regular use as possible, especially the mythologically most important; none should be allowed to remain idle for too many generations in case this tempted other groups to lay claim to them. Secondly, it is necessary to ascertain that the name chosen is not already in use; every recipient must be completely individuated by his or her names, and no coevals may be namesakes. The very old and very young are however an exception to this rule; it is permitted to give a child a name being borne currently by an elderly person, on the grounds that the latter is likely to die and so 'vacate' the name while the child is still immature. Finally, a *tonomb* - or, if it is very large, a major segment of a *tonomb* - should avoid names it has already used several times in succession, and instead allow other branches of the subclan to employ them.

I explained in Chapter 4 that although the *tonomb* is the name-owning group and holds the primary right of use of the names of its own *nggwa'al-asa'ai*, *tonombs* of the same subclan normally share their personal names; they pool them to form a common reservoir from which they all draw, so that the subclan is the effective name-holding group. The fact that the subclan holds names in common is regarded as one of the most important expressions of its identity and solidarity as a group, and the basis of its unity in debates with outsiders. Although each of its personal names is owned ultimately by one of its *tonombs*, none of these names should be monopolised by any one of its segments, and all should be allowed to circulate freely within the subclan over the generations. Most of the naming-rules I have mentioned are essentially means of preventing such monopolisation by imposing limits on the use of names: these are the prohibition of creating namesakes, of acquiring names after infancy, and of giving more than three to five names to any one recipient.

If any one segment of a subclan was to duplicate names already in use elsewhere within the subclan, or insist on using certain names repeatedly, or give its members excessive numbers of names, this would normally be interpreted as part of an attempt to detach itself from the segment within which it is enclosed: in the case of a major branch of a *tonomb*, to become a separate *tonomb*, and in the case of a *tonomb*,...
to announce itself an independent subclan. Competition within the subclan for the control of personal names is, as I shall show, usually a part of the process of fission or of other change in its internal structure. The circulation of names within the subclan over time is a sensitive register of the relations between its segments; and any breach, by one segment, of the rules ensuring the unimpeded movement of names would arouse the antagonism and suspicion of the others:

For a number of years in the 1960's, no children were born to the men of Valik subclan; and during this time some of the elderly members of the subclan died and their names became available for re-use. A number of these were mythologically highly important, and it was considered essential to re-bestow them as soon as possible. Eventually, a girl was born and she was given these names - a total of eleven - by R., a senior man of her tanamb-segment. Shortly afterwards a number of children were born to various segments of the subclan; and in order to dispel any doubts as to his intentions, R. took all but three of the first child's names from her and distributed them among the other children.

iii. Tanamb fission: the succession dispute over the Waikisuwí simbuk-ship

A number of prerogatives and responsibilities fall in theory to the senior branches of a tanamb: the tanamb's orators and magicians are expected to be men of these patrilines, so that the effective leadership of the tanamb ideally comes from its senior segments; the tanamb's shamanic spirits in principle pass by primogeniture down its most senior patriline; and any other hereditary entitlements which the tanamb may possess, such as a simbuk-ship, an office of simbuk's assistant, or the custodianship of the subclan's sacred flutes, should similarly be held by men of its most senior lines of descent (see Chapter 5, section iii).

Sometimes one or more of these functions pass into a junior segment of the tanamb in default of the genealogically senior. If there are no seniors willing or able to exercise them, it is legitimate and in fact essential for their juniors to assume them in their stead. But this is expected to be a temporary measure only, and the capacities concerned should eventually be resumed by those with genealogical precedence. But it can happen, however, that the juniors attempt to retain these prerogatives for themselves
permanently; and this is the circumstance under which tonomb fission typically occurs.

The junior segment of the tonomb attempts to legitimate its possession of, let us say, a simbuk-ship which has passed into its control; and it does so by fission from its senior counterpart. Its members announce themselves to have their own tenembavei and their own set of nggua'al-asa'ai; a process which involves the creation by them of a large number of new personal names. In addition they attempt to revise the subclan's mythology, arguing that not only are the two segments distinct tonombs with separate sets of nggua'al-asa'ai, but that the simbuk-ship was transferred to their own nggua'al-asa'ai by those of the senior segment in mythical times; and, as part of this, that the personal names associated with the office in myth were at the same time transferred in the same manner.

The response of their seniors is to deny that the two segments are separate tonombs and, therefore, that any such transfers took place; and they make every effort to counter the claims of the junior segment and keep their title to the simbuk-ship. At this point a struggle ensues between the two segments for control of the relevant names. Each attempts to pre-empt their use by bestowing them upon the children born subsequently to it, and so prevent the other from employing them. In such a dispute, however, prior bestowal of a name by one segment is unlikely to discourage the other from also laying claim to it, and some or all of the disputed names are duplicated by both groups. But, as I explained earlier, the two segments cannot legitimately use the same names simultaneously, and each name must be relinquished by one or other of them. Only exoteric names, I should note, are involved; for were the two groups to bring esoteric names into open dispute in this way, this would almost certainly expose the mythological significance of these names to other subclans.

At this stage in the conflict, the two parties are likely to attempt to resolve the issue in a small-scale debate or, more probably, a protracted series of such debates. Debating, and the settlement procedures which it employs, will be described in the next chapter. But to anticipate this a little, each of the two groups attempts to prove that it alone possesses knowledge of the esoteric equivalents of the disputed names; and if one of them is able to do so successfully it is considered to have publicly vindicated its
claims to these names. The significance of this procedure is that most, if not all, of the esoteric names are those employed in the magical techniques of the *simbuk*-ship; if one segment can demonstrate exclusive knowledge of these names, it in effect demonstrates that it alone has the capacity to discharge this ritual office.

When a prerogative such as a *simbuk*-ship falls into a junior segment of a *tonom* segment, it does so usually as a result of the senior segment having declined in size; when fission begins to take place there is typically a demographic imbalance within the *tonom* in favour of the junior segment. The smaller the senior segment, the less likely it is to have men versed in the secret lore pertaining to the *simbuk*-ship; and in this situation they may be defeated outright in debate with their juniors. For the latter - since one of their number is already performing the office - can always call upon this man to demonstrate knowledge of the relevant esoterica.

If on the other hand a long series of debates occur without result, both sides showing themselves acquainted with this lore, the issue may be ultimately settled simply by demography. If the imbalance in size between the two groups continues to grow, the claim of the junior segment to be an independent *tonom* will in time meet with increasing acceptance; while the likelihood of the senior segment ever resuming the *simbuk*-ship will, because of its diminishing numbers, become increasingly remote. These are processes which may take several generations to complete, punctuated by debates of ever-diminishing frequency.

There is a further respect in which numerical superiority gives an advantage to a segment attempting to establish itself as an autonomous *tonom*. When a *tonom* fissions, the rate at which each segment can lay legitimate claim to the personal names which come into dispute is constrained by the rapidity with which it is producing children. In order to apply a name, each segment must normally wait until it produces a child; it cannot rename any of its members already named, nor can it give an excessive number of names to any one child. It could of course break these conventions; and this does sometimes happen. But each party avoids gross violations of the rules of the naming system, because this would cast public doubt on the validity of its claims. The dispute between them is essentially concerned with *legitimacy*; and if each wishes to have its
mythological assertions regarded as authentic, the number of 'moves' it can make is limited by the rate at which it is reproducing itself. An expanding segment has, in the form of its growing population, the means to engross large numbers of personal names should these fall into dispute. A declining segment on the other hand is handicapped when fission occurs, for it has difficulties in the long run in maintaining or gaining control of personal names.

Once the senior segment accedes to the new status quo, and its juniors are accepted as an independent tonomb with the mythological right to the simbuk-ship, personal names cease to be at issue between the two groups. Their respective name-corpuses now clearly defined and uncontested, they begin to grant each other use of these names as is the normal practice of tonombs of the same subclan.

While perhaps not the only form which tonomb fission takes, this does appear to be a common pattern: the fission is an asymmetrical process, in which the junior branch of a tonomb secedes from the rest. It draws off certain entitlements, contrary to the rule of genealogical seniority and against opposition from the senior segment, on the basis of which it establishes itself as a separate tonomb. It claims that these, and the personal names linked to them in myth, were transferred to it in the time of the totemic ancestors. The final result is two separate tonombs the junior of which, in accordance with the paradigm I described in the previous chapter, is regarded as 'standing on its elder brother's shoulders'; i.e. as having been granted in mythical times important prerogatives and personal names by its senior.

The opposite process - an expanding senior branch hiving off from its declining junior in possession of one or more of the tonomb's hereditary prerogatives - seems to be a rather rarer pattern. For the senior needs no legitimation of its control of these entitlements other than that they are its genealogical right by virtue of its seniority. In this situation neither segment has any motive for fission; it is usually, then, only when such entitlements lapse into the junior that a new tonomb is likely to come into being.
In order to illustrate the preceding discussion, I will describe a case of tonamb fission which was in the process of occurring during my period of fieldwork.

The tonamb Waikiswari is the junior of the two tonombs of the subclan Nggambak. It had in 1978 a population of 57, 22 in its senior segment and 35 in the junior. For three generations the size of the senior segment has remained static, while that of the junior has greatly increased. This trend seems likely to continue in the future. While the married men of both branches are all of comparable age, the senior segment has only six unmarried males under eighteen years while its junior partner has eleven. It is likely then that a generation from now the junior branch will be about twice the size of the senior.

The two segments have been residentially separate since the break-up of Old Avatip, the men of the senior segment being domiciled at Yentshanggai and most of those of the junior segment residing at Yawmbak.

The tonamb is endowed with a simbuk-ship, and until two generations ago this office was in the possession of the senior descent-line of the senior segment. It then lapsed into the equivalent line of descent within the junior segment, where it is held at the present time by Mb. (see Figure 12). Mb. is considered leader not only of his tonamb and subclan, but also one of the four or five most outstanding experts in totemic mythology at Avatip. The oldest men of the senior segment, on the other hand, are only in their thirties and none have more than an average competence in sakima'andj.

About ten years ago a noticeable build-up began, within the junior segment, of personal names associated with the simbuk-ship. The seniors grew uneasy about this and questioned their younger brothers about it. Mb. tried to allay their suspicions: it was, he said, simply that his segment was producing many children and therefore had the greater need of names.

But shortly afterwards Mb. began to refer to his segment by the name of his senior sister's son, Yambundämeli, as though his branch were a separate tonomb (see Chapter 2 for the system of naming tonombs). It was incorrect, he claimed, to refer to his segment as if it were a part of Waikiswari. Waikiswari was the name of the senior segment alone; and it and Yambundämeli were two independent tonombs. He denied the genealogical tie between the two segments and fabricated three ancestors in the upper reaches of his segment's agnatic pedigree. It was true, he said, that the simbuk-ship had been created by the totemic ancestors of Waikiswari; but they had ceded it permanently, together with the personal names linked with it, to his own tonamb. The office had ever since remained in this tonamb, within which it had been passed down the most senior patriline for seven generations until himself. It was the rightful property of Yambundämeli and would be legitimately inherited on his death either by his younger brother or by his eldest son.
Fig. 12. Fission of the tənumb Waikisuwi
At this point the two groups began competing for the personal names connected with the *simbuk*-ship - at least those that had not already been pre-empted by Mb.'s segment. Any children born were immediately given these names, and many of them were duplicated by both segments so that name-sakes were created. In this contest Mb.'s party, as he had presumably foreseen, was at an advantage because it was reproducing itself at a faster rate.

At a number of meetings convened over the next few years each group repeatedly demanded that the other relinquish the duplicated names. At one of these meetings, which I attended, one of the seniors asked Mb. "Why are you trying to take all the strong names and leave us with just a few worthless ones?" The names given to every child in the tonomb were publicly counted, and it was found that many of the children of Mb.'s segment had six or seven names each, while those of the senior segment had an average of two or three. Mb. agreed under pressure to hand over certain names; but a number of crucial names still remained duplicated, neither side being willing to give them up.

The two parties have never, as yet, resorted to the formal debating procedure of challenging each other to demonstrate acquaintance with the esoteric versions of the contested names. For it is common knowledge that men of both segments are in possession of these esoterica.

The meeting I witnessed left the issue of the fission still unresolved. The seniors insisted that they were all a single tonomb under the name Waikisuwi, and their younger brothers should cease their attempt to secede. Mb. responded by challenging his seniors to tell him the names (which he had kept secret) of his three fictitious ancestors: how could his elder brothers be certain that the two segments are a single tonomb, if they are ignorant of the ancestry of the junior segment?

At the end of my fieldwork the issue still remained unsettled. Outsiders referred to the two groups sometimes jointly as Waikisuwi and sometimes separately as Waikisuwi and Yambundomeli.

There is a permanently asymmetrical relationship between the two primary segments of a tonomb, deriving from the principle of genealogical seniority. So long as the effective leadership of the tonomb, and the control of its hereditary prerogatives, remain with the senior segment, the tonomb is likely to remain a single unit. But should these pass to the junior segment, this is likely to lead to the latter splitting away. Typically, tonomb fission - as in the example above - consists in the demographically and politically successful junior branch of a tonomb sloughing off its unsuccessful

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4 A similar pattern of fission has been described by Hau'ofa for the Mekeo of Papua (1981), a society which also attaches great importance to the principle of genealogical seniority.
senior partner. As an independent tōnōmb, in possession of its senior's hereditaments, the junior segment may itself eventually experience internal competition over their control. In time it may fission in turn, and these entitlements pass in exactly the same way into the possession of another new tōnōmb junior to itself; this tōnōmb itself then containing the seeds of its own fission. Important entitlements, and prestigious nggw'a'al-asa'ai, tend in the long run to move in a 'downward' direction within the subclan, from senior to junior, creating new tōnōmbs as they descend. This does not in fact however lead to an endless proliferation of such segments within the subclan; the number of extant tōnōmbs per subclan at any one time remains about two. In the following section I shall try to show why this is so.

iv. Reversion within the subclan

I explained in the previous chapter that should a tōnōmb become extinct it is 'trodden underfoot' by another tōnōmb of the same subclan, ideally the tōnōmb immediately junior to itself. The junior tōnōmb formally assumes control of all its ancestral names and mythological rights and privileges. If it was itself the junior tōnōmb within the subclan, it is 'trodden underfoot' by its immediate senior; but informants always describe these reversionary rights, paradigmatically, as held by juniors in relation to their seniors.

'Treading underfoot' usually takes place before a tōnōmb is in fact entirely extinct, typically once it has been reduced to two or three members. The procedure is signalled by the two tōnōmbs adopting the same name; the name, that is to say, of the genealogically most senior sister's son common to both of them in each successive generation. The two groups are thereafter regarded as to all intents and purposes a single tōnōmb. The senior may continue its decline and die out altogether; but whether it does so or not, its tōnōmbavei and its set of totemic ancestors are still preserved in oral tradition, and kept intact and separate from those of the other. They are not, at least for a very long period, amalgamated with them by genealogical revision. Most subclans claim between two and four extinct tōnōmbs, or sepakwutēnōmb as they are called; and their senior men can specify their apical ancestors and the sets of personal names owned by each group at the time of its
extinction. Genealogical revision is unnecessary; for the inheritance by a tonomb of the hereditaments of its extinct, or virtually extinct, partner is fully legitimated by its rights of reversion and needs no additional validation. Thus, for example, if a declining segment continues to survive after it is 'trodden underfoot', the two groups may still remain operating quite effectively as a single tonomb - even though it is one which is in genealogical terms a composite of two patrilineally distinct segments with no common tonambavei.

The process of reversion may in fact begin long before the final amalgamation of the two tonombs - the act of 'treading underfoot' - is formally announced by their assumption of a single name. For once a tonomb begins to decline, it typically becomes increasingly unable to effectively exercise all of the entitlements which it holds; and any simbuk-ship, shamanic spirits and so forth which it possesses will then begin to escheat to the tonomb with the right to acquire these in its default. Ideally, this process should be only temporary; and the inheritors may attempt to represent it as such, arguing that they will return these entitlements to their owners when their numbers have increased and they have sufficient senior men to exercise them. In time, however, they may attempt to gain permanent possession of their new acquisitions through revision of the subclan's mythology - particularly if they judge the original owners no longer demographically viable. Typically, they will claim - just as can happen during fission - that these prerogatives have always been in the possession of their tonomb and were ceded to it in mythological times, together with the sets of personal names associated with them.

Again, a long series of disputes is likely to ensue between the two tonombs, as each attempts to gain control of these names. If the declining tonomb no longer possesses knowledge of the esoteric equivalents of these names, it will be defeated in any debates to which the other group challenges it; and it will thereby be publicly shown incapable of exercising the contested prerogatives. In general, the smaller a tonomb becomes, the greater its difficulty in maintaining unbroken transmission of such esoterica within itself - and therefore the more likely it is to be worsted in debate and have its mythological claims rebutted.
By the time a tanamb is nearly extinct, it is probable that its privileges and associated personal names will long since have been validated in myth as the legitimate possessions of its reversioner. If, as is ideally the case, the latter is the junior of the two tanambs, it will long have been described as 'standing on its elder brother's shoulders'; and when the final act of 'treading underfoot' takes place, it may simply put the seal on a process which is already effectively complete.

A relationship of 'standing on the elder brother's shoulders' is as I have described often created as a result of fission; and fission typically consists in the expanding junior segment of a tanamb disencumbering itself of its declining senior. If these demographic trends continue after they have become separate tanambs, the junior may then begin to exercise reversionary rights in the hereditaments still held by its senior.

The process of reversion, and the final act of 'treading underfoot', are then often simply the completion of a sequence of events which began when the two tanambs concerned were still segments of a single tanamb. For despite their very different effects on group structure, both fission and reversion consist in essentially the same phenomenon: the passage of prerogatives and personal names from a declining segment to a flourishing one, usually the co-ordinate segment immediately junior to it.

There is in the long term a kind of double cycling movement within the subclan, of segments on one hand and of names and privileges on the other. Firstly, segmentary growth within the subclan tends to have as I have tried to show a directional cast; it consists in general in the creation of successively more junior tanambs, these groups carrying with them important prerogatives and personal names formerly held by their seniors. A senior tanamb, on the other hand, is in origin typically a demographically unsuccessful senior tanamb-segment discarded by its junior counterpart, and it is likely therefore to be outlived by its junior. Thus as new junior tanambs come into being within the subclan, their seniors are in the process of withering away; and it is for this reason that the number of extant tanambs per subclan at any one time remains fairly constant. Once a senior tanamb dies out, its junior then 'moves up the system' to become the senior extant tanamb within the subclan in its place;
and this involves taking possession of those names and prerogatives that remained to the former, and annexing them to its own. Thus the system returns to essentially the same point at which it began.

v. Subclan fission

Once a subclan reaches a certain size - so far as I can tell, the threshold is around 100-120 people - the two tonombs which it normally comprises cooperate only tenuously in exchanges of wealth. Each reaches the point at which it becomes self-supporting from the bridewealth and other payments which it receives, and no longer finds it necessary to share its receipts with the other; nor perhaps really feasible to do so, given the large number of people among whom an incoming bridewealth or mortuary payment would have to be distributed. At the same time, the cooperation between the two tonombs in paying bridewealth and kekotep also draws to a close, and each begins to make these transactions independently. A very important symptom of these processes is that neither any longer receives a share of the mortuary payments made on the deaths of the other's sisters' children. The relationship between a subclan and its sisters' children has as its basis the understanding that the subclan as a whole is entitled to receive kekotep on their deaths, and all aspects of the relationship revolve around this expectation. Thus the uterine ties which link each tonomb with the sisters' children of the other are gradually annulled, having lost as it were their economic substance, and at this point the respective sisters' children of each tonomb become potential spouses (mamanda/mamata'akw) of the other. Once one tonomb avails itself of the opportunity to marry these erstwhile sisters' children, it becomes on their deaths a contributor to their mortuary payments, which are received by the other tonomb. In this way the last links of economic cooperation between the two groups are severed, and each becomes an autonomous unit in affinal and matrilateral exchange.

The sisters' children of one group are no longer considered uterine kin of the other; and once each begins to intermarry with the other's sisters' children, the spouses of one group are therefore similarly no longer deemed to have affinal ties with the other. As soon as the two tonombs cease to be united economically, they become independent units in the exchange of women. Because marriage and the exchange of wealth are so closely intertwined, the group which cooperates in these payments, and the group which
arranges marriage, are by definition one and the same.

Subclan fission produces two groups which exchange women and wealth independently. Not only does the subclan split apart but also, and just as importantly, so do its alliance relationships. The subclan's previously unitary set of allies divide into two sets, the members of each claiming relationships as sisters' husbands, sisters' children and sisters' daughters' husbands with only one of these two groups.

The processes I have described appear to be a necessary condition for a number of other changes in the constitution of the subclan which fission involves. The two tonombs cease sharing their personal names with each other, and each begins to apply the names of its totemic ancestors exclusively to its own personnel. This process is usually also accompanied by the creation of many new totemic ancestors by each tonomb, the names of whom are similarly given only to its own members. At the same time the two groups begin to develop separate esoteric mythologies and bodies of magical lore. As I explained in Chapter 4, the magical techniques which a subclan holds each usually invoke totemic ancestors of one specific tonomb, ideally the senior. The junior tonomb may therefore find it necessary to duplicate these forms of magic during the course of fission by creating equivalent totemic ancestors of its own, differing only in their public and secret names from those of its senior.

In this way, each tonomb comes in time to acquire a discrete corpus of esoteric sakima'andj, which is taught only to its own members and their allies and is concealed from those of the other. Each becomes a separate name-holding group, and an independent unit in the exchange of esoteric knowledge. At this point the two groups are to all intents and purposes distinct subclans; and subclans which - apart from their different name-sets - are cosmologically and totemically identical to each other and to the original subclan from which they emerged.

It is in fact rare, however, for the two new subclans to be completely identical in this way. Normally, the two groups compete for exclusive control of at least some of the more important hereditaments of the parent subclan; and this process takes the form of one or both tonombs attempting to take possession of nggwa'al-asa'ai belonging to the other. One tonomb may, for example, try to acquire
for itself an area of select gardening-land, or a fishing-lagoon, some or all of the ancestral spirits of which are nggwa'al-asa'ai of the other tonomb; it does so by claiming that these figures were transferred to it in the time of the cosmogony, and that it alone has the right to employ their names and perform the fertility-magic invoking them. Or it may try to appropriate a ritual prerogative some or all of the totemic ancestors connected with which belong to the other tonomb; again, claiming that these nggwa'al-asa'ai, and the rights to control them by magic and to employ their names, were ceded to it in mythical times. These claims tend in general to be made during the course of fission by the junior tonomb against the senior; for a subclan's most important nggwa'al-asa'ai are, as I have explained earlier, ideally those of the senior tonomb.

A tonomb is most likely to make these assertions if it has already been for some time in de facto control of the magical and ritual capacities concerned, and the other has lost the esoteric knowledge necessary to perform them. If this is in fact the case, it will be in a strong position in the long series of debates which will at this point almost certainly break out between the two groups. In principle the whole of the original subclan's estate could come into dispute between the two tonombs in this way; and the process of fission involve them in competing for the control of very large numbers of personal names. Once again, for reasons I have explained earlier, the eventual outcome is likely to be in favour of the demographically more successful of the two groups.

The most common outcome of subclan fission is that some of the magical, ritual and other competences originally held by the parent subclan are held by both of the two new groups, each having duplicated them, while some are held exclusively by one or the other. As each acquires a separate set of such competences, and an independent body of esoteric sakima'andj, two new ndja'am-spirits appear, personifying these corpuses. At the same time the sisters' children of each segment are, as I explained above, in the process of losing their uterine ties with the other and becoming its potential spouses. The supernatural sanction which formerly prevented this is taken away; for since the two segments no longer share a common ndja'am-spirit, there are no longer any mystical penalties for marriage between the members of one segment and the sisters' children
of the other. In short, as each group becomes an independent unit in the exchange of women and of affinal and matrilateral prestations of wealth, it becomes an independent unit in the exchange of cosmological services and of esoteric knowledge - all of these processes signified by its acquisition of its own ndja'am-spirit.

The status of a subclan as a cosmological and name-holding unit is contingent, ultimately, upon it preserving its unity in bride-wealth and mortuary exchanges. Fission typically occurs once its two major segments become large enough to separately assume the economic functions of subclans. They begin to contrast alliances separately and, simultaneously, readjustments take place on the plane of totemic classifications. It is change in the economic constitution of the subclan that leads, in the end, to the restructuring of the group's cosmological and mythological appurtenances.

It is however possible, even though the two segments of a subclan have begun to assume separate exchange and alliance functions, for a strong and unified leadership to hold the subclan together as a totemic unit. If the leaders of its two tonombres can ensure that the changes occurring in the economic organisation of the subclan do not lead to competition for names and prerogatives between them, the rewards are substantial - both for these leaders and for the subclan as a whole. For instead of splitting apart into two separate units in debating, each with its own mythology, the subclan remains a single unit in debates and becomes a powerful force in these disputes for two reasons. Firstly, because of its large size; secondly, because it becomes possible to encourage marriages between the members of each tonombre and the sisters' children of the other. In this way the subclan acquires supporters doubly obligated to it as simultaneously agnatic members of one tonombre and sisters' daughters' husbands of the other, or as sisters' sons of one tonombre and sisters' husbands of the other. In this way it makes doubly certain of the allegiance of these men in debating, and of the security of the secret mythology entrusted to them. There are two subclans of this kind at Avatip, the Nggala'angkw subclan Yimal, and the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan Maliyaw. They both consistently arrange marriages of the kind I have described, and they are the two largest subclans in the community and the two dominant groups in debating. Only the largest subclans can afford such an advantage;
for as I have explained, in order to do so a subclan must be of sufficient size that each of its tonombs is already financing its own bridewealth and mortuary payments.

vi. Reversion within the clan: the case of the disputed prerogatives in the Ndumwi ritual

Should a subclan become extinct, its entire patrimony would be expected to revert to the subclan immediately junior to itself within the same clan, or to the subclan immediately senior if it is itself the most junior. Normally, a subclan in fact begins attempting to exercise reversionary rights in the subclan against which it holds such claims as soon as the latter shows signs of demographic decline.

When a subclan decreases in size, it has increasing difficulties in exercising all the ritual, magical and other responsibilities it is invested with. It may for example come to have more sago-land than it can fully use; it is then expected to allow the subclan with reversionary claims in its estate, if this group wishes, to plant or husband palms on its land or to have usufruct of stands already in existence. In this way the latter may with time come to have increasingly strong customary rights in these resources. A declining subclan may not be able to recruit enough manpower to keep its major ceremonial house in good condition, and its potential reversioners - particularly if the ceremonial house is an important one ritually - will be expected to begin assisting it with the maintenance of the building. In time, if they come to regularly provide the bulk of the labour, their claims to the effective management of the house may become very strong. A small subclan is often unable to promote enough men into each ritual grade; the functions which these men should by hereditary right perform during each initiatory ritual will then gradually be taken over by men of the subclan with the residual right to perform these in its stead. And perhaps most importantly, it is often difficult for a small subclan to preserve continuous transmission of its sakima'andj from one generation to the next; when this occurs the subclan, in addition to teaching its hereditary magic to its allies, or instead of doing so, may transmit them and any associated sacra to the subclan with the right to perform these techniques in its default.
At this stage, it should be noted, the subclan still holds the titles to the land, to the ceremonial house, the ritual responsibilities and to the magical formulae; it is still, that is to say, represented in myth as their true owner. Although its reversioner may in fact effectively hold partial or total control of them, this subclan is viewed as their temporary custodian only; and the original owners expect to reacquire these hereditaments once their numbers begin to grow.

The reversioners may, however, now attempt to gain permanent possession of them, particularly if they judge the other subclan to be destined for extinction. Typically, they argue that the personal names associated with the property are too important for the declining group to try to keep them itself; for it neither has the population to keep them in continuous use, nor sufficient debating-simbuka to defend them should the ownership of them be challenged by some other subclan. They propose that they themselves be allowed to employ the names temporarily, to keep them safe, and that the names will be returned to their owners when their numbers grow again.

But they may later refuse to give back the names, claiming that the names and the totemic ancestors who first bore them were in fact permanently transferred to their own subclan during the cosmogony; and that therefore their subclan has the exclusive title to the land, the ceremonial house and so forth into which these ancestors metamorphosed, and to the magic to invoke them. The original owners will then attempt to regain possession of the names, creating an extended series of name-disputes between the two subclans. If the reversioners are able to demonstrate in debate that they alone possess knowledge of the esoteric versions of these names, they will as I have explained defeat their opponents' mythological claims and vindicate their own. Small groups, it will be remembered, are in the long term at a disadvantage in these disputes; and by the time a subclan eventually dies out, it is likely that almost all of its corporate property and entitlements will already have long since escheated to its legatees, and been ratified in myth as their legitimate possessions.

I explained in Chapter 2 that no matter how small a subclan is, it can potentially remain entirely viable in the system of
bridewealth and mortuary payments; for its members can as necessary
draw on their ties with their classificatory matrilateral siblings.
Thus while the totemic accoutrements of a declining subclan are
eventually in effect merged with those of its reversioner, the
two groups remain almost until the last moment separate units in the
exchange of wealth. Although I have no cases of subclans at Avatip
reaching this advanced state of decline, there is evidence that the
reversioners contribute to the mortuary payments of the extinct
subclan's last surviving members, as though the two groups were a
single exchange unit; and that this is treated as the final
ratification of their complete assumption of all the extinct subclan's
legacy.

The process I have described typically takes many generations to
complete, and in time the members of the two subclans concerned may
find themselves heirs to a large number of name-disputes inaugurated
by their fathers or by even earlier generations; if they in turn
cannot resolve these disputes, they pass them on again to their own
children. I will now describe a name-dispute which occurred in late
1977 and early 1978, and which was in this way a small episode in
an ongoing reversionary struggle between two subclans already spanning
several generations.

Makôm is the most senior of the subclans of Nggola'angkw
clan-pair, but it is a small group with only 36 members in
1978; the subclan junior to it, Yimal, is the largest subclan
within Nggola'angkw and the second largest at Avatip, with a
population of 178. Informants say that Yimal has for some
generations been attempting to usurp many of the ritual and
other prerogatives which Makôm holds as the most senior of the
Nggola'angkw groups - to "tread Makôm underfoot, steal its
ndja'am, and stand as the first with Nggola'angkw."

I have recorded a large number of name-disputes which have
taken place between Makôm and Yimal over the past two
generations, all involving attempts by Yimal to gain possession
of personal names belonging to its senior. Some of these
disputes have concerned the ownership of lagoons, taking the
form of disputes over the rights to use the names of their
wondjemsaur, or resident water-spirits. Others have
concerned the relative precedence of the two groups in the
myths of the creation of sacred flutes; and others again have
involved their respective responsibilities in the Ndumwi ritual.

Makôm has been at a disadvantage in these disputes because
over this period few of its men have been knowledgeable in
its own sakima'andj. Much of its esoterica is known by Yimal,
and even by other more junior Nggola'angkw subclans. A number
bridewealth and mortuary payments; for its members can as necessary draw on their ties with their classificatory matrilateral siblings. Thus while the totemic accoutrements of a declining subclan are eventually in effect merged with those of its reversioner, the two groups remain almost until the last moment separate units in the exchange of wealth. Although I have no cases of subclans at Avatip reaching this advanced state of decline, there is evidence that the reversioners contribute to the mortuary payments of the extinct subclan's last surviving members, as though the two groups were a single exchange unit; and that this is treated as the final ratification of their complete assumption of all the extinct subclan's legacy.

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Makom has been at a disadvantage in these disputes because over this period few of its men have been knowledgeable in its own sakima'andj. Much of its esoterica is known by Yimal, and even by other more junior Nggola'angkw subclans. A number
of times these latter groups have had to re-teach Makom its own myths, so as to enable it to defend itself against the challenges of Yimal. The last Makom men to receive their mythology in this way were unable to teach any of it to their younger subclan-agnates before they died, because the latter were all too young, and they taught it instead to their allies. They had contracted a very large number of alliances with the large Wuluw-Nyawi subclan Maliyaw, particularly with its junior tonom, Malikemban, and as a result a number of men of this group acquired a very thorough knowledge of Makom mythology. The four current debating-simbuka of Malikemban are all sisters' sons of Makom, and they are virtually the only Makom allies who know its secret sakima'andj. Makom has for some time been almost completely dependent on these sisters' sons for defending it in debates with Yimal, and particularly on the oldest and most knowledgeable of them, L., who is one of the most outstanding authorities in sakima'andj at Avatip.

At the present time only one Makom man, K., a young man in his late twenties, shows any promise as a potential orator. He is determined to stop the attempts by Yimal to appropriate his subclan's hereditary prerogatives, but he is handicapped by his youth and his lack of expertise in his subclan's sakima'andj. L. is at present teaching him, as is his responsibility; but he is in fact imparting most of his knowledge to his junior co-leaders in preference to K., arguing that K. is as yet too young to receive this knowledge. The youngest of L.'s co-leaders is in his mid-forties; if he, rather than K., comes in time to acquire the bulk of L.'s expertise in Makom mythology, K. and his subclan may continue to remain dependent on the tonom Malikemban for another twenty years or so.

Because of its small size, Makom has for some generations been unable to promote many men into the Ndjopas grade, and as a result a number of its hereditary functions in the Ndumwi ritual have gradually been taken over by Yimal. Makom and Yimal share the right to play the most senior of the slit-drums used in the ritual, and it is in principle the joint privilege of their Ndjopas men to inaugurate all the massed drum-beating which takes place during the ritual (see Chapter 5, Section vi). It has however become accepted practice for this function to be performed by Yimal alone; Makom men are discouraged from playing the slit-drum, but to leave this entirely to Yimal. Similarly, it is in theory the shared responsibility of Makom and Yimal Ndjopas men to use the secret percussion instrument which imitates the sound of the Ndumwi spirit stamping her feet - two boards fastened together and slapped on the ground to produce a loud explosive sound. However, it has become customary for Yimal men almost exclusively to employ this instrument; it is acceptable for their Makom counterparts to produce the first one or two percussions during the ritual, as a token acknowledgement of their seniority, but then they are expected to hand it over to the Yimal Ndjopas and allow them to use it for the remainder of the affair.
Between one and two generations ago Yimal asked Makom to allow it to use a total of about ten Makom names deriving from the mythology concerning the creation of the Ndumwi ritual. Yimal argued that Makom no longer had the population to keep these very important names in constant use, and thus risked having them stolen by other groups. They had better, it was suggested, allow Yimal to act as the custodian of these names for a period, for Yimal would be much better equipped to defend them in debates were the ownership of them ever challenged. Makom permitted Yimal to use them, but on the condition that this was a temporary measure and that after their bearers' deaths the names would be returned to Makom. By the time of my fieldwork a number of the Yimal individuals to whom the names had been given were in their old age, and the question of the re-bestowal of the names had begun to arise. The oldest of these was Yangganmawai, a woman in her mid-sixties. Late in 1977 M., the debating-simbuk of the Yimal tonomb Silikindu, gave the name to his younger brother's newborn daughter, thereby breaking the promise made by his subclan two generations earlier. K. was insistent that his subclan should use the name and wrote to a subclan-mate working in a coastal town, telling him to give the name Yangganmawai to his own infant daughter immediately. At this point an open dispute broke out between the two subclans over the right to employ not only this name, but all the other names which Makom had entrusted to Yimal, both groups claiming the exclusive rights to use them.

Before turning to this dispute, it is first necessary to understand the point which the ritual cycle had reached when the dispute took place. I explained in Chapter 3 that the Maiyir ritual, which promotes the whole of the Mondja So grade into the Ndjopas grade, had not been performed since the 1920's. Since then small sets of men had been inducted into the Ndjopas grade in performances of Ndumwi every four or five years; but this had not been enough to cope with the growing backlog of Mondja So men awaiting promotion to the Ndjopas level. It was known that Maiyir, or some version of it, would be performed within the next few years, during which all the Mondja So would be promoted en masse. At the time, Makom had no Ndjopas men of its own; K. himself was of the Mondja So grade. A ritually senior subclan-mate of his from the Sawos village of Senggo had some years earlier been asked to represent Makom during performances of Ndumwi until Makom men were inducted into the Ndjopas stage, and this individual had since regularly done so. A number of Yimal men belonged to the Ndjopas grade, but of these only two were orators, and even they were not the most prominent debating-simbuk of their subclan. The two principal leaders of Yimal, the men who played the most important role in the name-dispute with Makom, were both Mondja So: M. of the tonomb Silikindu and W. of the tonomb Kwindjambang. Thus the three major Nggala'angkw protagonists in the dispute - M. and W. representing Yimal, and K. representing Makom - were all of the second initiatory grade and expected shortly to be promoted into the third and final stage. The relative positions of their respective subclans in the Ndumwi ritual was an issue with intense personal significance for these men; for once they were promoted, they would henceforth play highly senior roles in the ritual.
During February and March of 1978 large weekly gatherings were being held to perform mourning-chants for a young woman who had recently died. These were held each Saturday night in the house of the girl's father at Yawmbak. It is normal on these occasions for name-disputes to be aired during the breaks in the recitation, and it was during the first of these gatherings at Yawmbak that the dispute between Makom and Yimal was opened.

The Yimal leaders claimed that all the disputed names had been ceded by Makom to their own subclan in mythical times, and that they alone therefore had the right to use them. One of these names was Ndumwikosak, the principal exoteric name of the Ndumwi spirit herself (see Chapter 5). Yimal agreed that this spirit was in genealogical terms a nggwa'al-asa'ai of Makom. But she had been abandoned in a subterranean ceremonial house by the other totemic ancestors of Makom, and her subclan had thereby effectively renounced all legitimate claim to her. She had then been found by the totemic ancestors of Yimal and rescued by them; she had become in this way incorporated into Yimal, and Yimal had henceforth had the sole right to employ her personal names.

Many of the other disputed names were those of sacra employed jointly in the Ndumwi ritual by Makom and Yimal; for example, Ndumwiwalop, the totemic personal name of the secret percussion instrument used to imitate the spirit's stamping feet. Because of the women and uninitiated present, no direct reference could be made to this and other sacra to which the disputed names referred; each side's mythological claims were put forward in a highly oblique manner. Referring to these sacra simply as nggwa'al-asa'ai, Yimal claimed once again that they had been relinquished by Makom in mythical times, and that their own totemic ancestors had taken possession of them.

For two successive Saturdays the dispute continued in this way. M. and W. were almost the only speakers on the Yimal side; and L., the Makom sister's son, spoke almost single-handedly on behalf of his mother's subclan. K. was silent most of the time; he was too young and too little versed in sakima'andj to be able to play an active part. Apart from L., none of the allies of the two subclans took part, for fear of escalating the conflict.

Relations between L. and the Yimal leadership had for a number of years been strained. There was a long-standing dispute between their two subclans over the ownership of the name Tapasawun (see Chapter 8); a variety of private disputes had occurred between L. and M. and the two men disliked each other intensely. L. was evidently using the dispute at least partly as a means of furthering his quarrel with Yimal; he spoke acrimoniously and attempted to escalate the controversy by demanding that a full-scale debate be held. K. wished at all costs to avoid a major confrontation of this kind with his close clan-mates, but was unwilling to openly oppose L., and remained in uncomfortable silence. For their part, the Yimal leaders tried to drive a wedge between him and L. Adopting a conciliatory manner toward K., they claimed they had no argument with him. Their quarrel was with L. alone; L., they said, was a notorious thief of other people's names, and had for his own ends deceived K. into believing that Makom had a
right to the disputed names. The mythology which L. had taught him was "all lies."

On the third Saturday, just before the gathering dispersed, one of the Yimal men made a veiled sorcery threat against K. He demanded that K. give up all claim to the names immediately, and when K. replied that he would not, added in a stage-whisper: "therefore you will finish" (ata karusikomena). The following morning K. and a junior subclan-mate of his called a small meeting with the Yimal leaders in the Makam ceremonial house, presided over by the village Councillor. They demanded an explanation of the ultimatum made during the night; the Yimal men replied that they had all been intoxicated from chewing betel-nut; they had not known what they were saying and the matter should not be taken seriously. K. warned that if any of his subclan fell ill they would hold Yimal responsible and would take their antagonists to court at Ambunti to be prosecuted for sorcery; and the matter was then dropped. (As is universal at Avatip K. and his subclansmen were under the misapprehension that only the performance of sorcery, but not its threat, is a legal offence under Papua New Guinea law).

The dispute was resumed at Yawmbak the following Saturday. A noisy argument broke out between L. and M., and the two men had to be physically restrained from coming to blows. L. shouted: "I'm not your wife that you can shout at me like this. If I was still a young man I would knock you down. No-one will ever steal my mother's brothers' names!" K. was unnerved by the violent turn the dispute was beginning to take, and by the recent sorcery threat against him, and offered to make a compromise with Yimal; each name would be shared by the two groups, one subclan using its male form and the other its female form. L. objected, but K. was adamant that an immediate end somehow be put to the dispute. Yimal agreed to the proposal, and the male and female gender-forms of the names were divided up between them. This procedure is regarded, however, as a way of creating a temporary truce in a name-dispute, rather than a method of settling it completely; and outsiders expect the dispute to break out again in future years.

The following Saturday L. went to Yawmbak and attempted to re-open the dispute. None of the Yimal, however, were present; almost all had gone upriver for a week to buy nassa shells for the mortuary payment for a deceased subclansman.

The use of sorcery threats in name-disputes is by no means unusual. This is particularly so, as in the above case, in disputes between close agnates. Since formal debates between them are disapproved, they must often resort to more informal and underhand methods of settling their quarrels over names. This case also illustrates the kinds of predicaments in which a declining subclan can find itself. Not only may its juniors try to 'tread it underfoot' but, if it has no men of its own knowledgeable in mythology, it may
have to rely almost wholly on its allies for defending its mythological rights. If this happens, its fate is in effect being decided in a contest between two other parties - who may, as was L., the Makom sister's son, be at least partly using the dispute as a way of furthering their own political ends. It should also be noted that L., who wished to prolong and escalate the dispute, was in the end overridden by K.: a man of far lesser political standing but the one who, as an agnatic member of Makom, was still regarded as having the ultimate right to decide that his subclan would capitulate.

vii. Conclusion: alliance narratives and segmentary change

When change takes place in the constitution of the subclan or tônömbs, this always involves the restructuring of corpuses of personal names. The fusion of two tônömbs or subclans - the culmination of the processes of reversion and 'treading underfoot' - is signified by the amalgamation of two formerly distinct name-corpuses. The fission of a subclan or tônomb, on the other hand, is signalled by the creation of two new and separate corpuses. The political conflicts which these changes in descent group structure involve take the form essentially of disputes over the organisation of corporate name-sets: attempts by one party to keep together a set which the other is trying to divide, or to keep separate two sets which the other is trying to amalgamate.

I explained in Chapter 4 that marriageable tônömbs are linked together in highly secret myths known as ndja'amama'andj, or alliance narratives. Each tônomb's alliance narrative contains the secret names not only of its own nggwa'al-asa'ai but also of those nggwa'al-asa'ai considered to stand in immediate affinal and uterine relationships with them, and specifies the tônömbs to which the latter belong. Because change in the structure of any descent group involves the reorganisation of corporate rights in personal names, it necessarily has repercussions on the alliance narratives of those groups with which it intermarries; for it becomes necessary for each of these groups to redefine the uterine and affinal ties of some of its own totemic ancestors. I do not know how these redefinitions take place, or over how long a period of time; but there can be no doubt that they must eventually occur and that, when they do, they imply the assent of these marriageables to the structural change that has taken place. The fission, or the merger of two formerly distinct groups,
once registered in their alliance narratives, is thereby acknowledged and ratified by them. Their fields of marriage, diagrammed in their narratives, open to accommodate two tonambs or subclans where there was previously one, or close to represent one such group where there were formerly two. When the constitution of a segment changes, it is the groups with which it marries that act as chorus to the process, by making corresponding modifications of their own mythologies.

It is important for these marriageables to readjust in this way the affinal and uterine ties portrayed in their alliance narratives; for they themselves must henceforth redefine their real-life affinal and uterine relationships with the group concerned. When a subclan, for example, fissions, each of the two new groups acquires a separate set of allies and marriage becomes permissible between the members of one group and the sisters' children of the other; when two subclans merge, two distinct sets of allies are fused into one and the members of each group are henceforth forbidden marriage with the sisters' children of the other. If it is not to invite punishment by the ndja'am-spirits, present-day marriage practice must always be in accord with the pattern thought to have been laid down by the totemic ancestors and preserved in the ndja'amama'andj narratives; if the first changes, so eventually must the second.
Chapter Seven

DEBATING

The answer to an enigmatic question is not found by reflection or logical reasoning. It comes quite literally as a sudden *solution* — a loosening of the tie by which the questioner holds you bound. The corollary of this is that by giving the correct answer you strike him powerless. In principle there is only one answer to every question. It can be found if you know the rules of the game... Often the solution depends wholly on the knowledge of the secret or sacred names of things... (Huizinga 1949:110).

i. A judicial contest for resolving the duplication of names

A debate, or *saki*, is the formal procedure for resolving the duplication of a personal name by two groups, and determining which of them has the right to use it. Occasionally other types of disputes, unconnected with personal names, do break out between groups; and debating, or a technique similar to it, may be used in an attempt to settle them. But by far the great majority of debates concern the disputed ownership of personal names; these are the central political forum of Avatip society, and the debate as an institution is specifically adapted to the resolution of conflicts over names. Debating is known as *saki mbulana/viyana*, 'debate speaking/hitting'; or sometimes as *ka'aw mbulana/viyana*, 'cordyline speaking/hitting', a reference to the cordyline leaves held by speakers in debate (see below).

A dispute between two groups over the ownership of a personal name, or of a set of names linked in myth, I will call a name-dispute. Normally a debate is staged to settle the ownership of a single specific name. When a name-dispute involving several names arises, it usually does so over a long period of time, perhaps a number of decades passing between the first and the last name in the set to be brought into dispute. Each name is debated as it comes into dispute, so that a series of debates is normally required to fully settle a conflict of this kind. But even when a name-dispute concerns only a single name, a number of debates may still take place before it is resolved; for the ownership of a disputed name is rarely resolved in a single debate.
Although a debate is always part of an attempt by one of the parties to challenge certain mythological claims of the other, it ostensibly concerns only the right to a personal name. The two opposing groups do not claim this right in a merely hypothetical way; they do so by actually bestowing the name concerned on one of their own children, and it is the existence of name-sakes in the two groups that precipitates the debate. Very often, each group will emphasise its claims to the name by giving it, with the necessary gender modifications, to both a male and a female child (a procedure not used under normal circumstances). As I shall explain below, the debating system tends to be dominated by the largest subclans; and one reason for this is that a large population enables a group to attempt frequent appropriations of the personal names of others, while also keeping its own names in regular use.

While a debate is a public ceremonial event, only a few of the men present possess a complete knowledge of the disputed mythology, though most are acquainted at least with its general exoteric outlines. But as a result - particularly if the conflict concerns an hereditary responsibility in male initiatory ritual - some of the audience may in fact be quite unaware of the precise prerogative being contested, especially women and junior males. It is by a kind of public fiction that a debate is spoken of as concerned only with the ownership of a personal name; but almost everyone knows at least that another and still more vital issue of some kind is at stake. In debates all reference to mythology is made in a highly condensed and oblique manner, full of allusion and innuendo; the listeners' understanding of these references, and their comprehension of the actual issue at stake between the two groups, vary with their ritual status and expertise in sakima'andj.

ii. Small-scale and full-scale debates

I explained in the previous chapter that some name-disputes are a part of changes occurring in descent group structure. About half of all name-disputes are of this kind, taking place between proximate, or at least very close, collateral segments (see Table 24). The other half are disputes between marriageable subclans, or between groups distantly related by agnation such as subclans of different clans of the same clan-pair. These disputes are rarely connected with processes of segmentary change.
A dispute of the first kind involves a relatively small number of groups and individuals, while a dispute of the latter type may involve in one way or another the entire adult population of the community. For this reason I will call the two types minor and major name-disputes respectively.

In a debate, the potential gains and losses to each group in mythological status are normally far higher, and the political stakes greater, if the name-dispute is a major one. For while every debate involves an attempt by one party to usurp a mythological right held by the other, the strategies employed by the challengers in a major dispute are usually different from those used in a minor dispute, and are more radical. Name-disputes between close agnates, as I have shown, usually take the form of an attempt by one group to prove that a prerogative, and the names linked with it, were ceded to itself by the other. This normally involves conflicts over a set of names, and each debate which takes place is simply one episode in a long-term attempt to gain possession of the whole set and of the prerogative concerned. The process is typically a prolonged one, requiring a lengthy series of debates over several names before the possession of the disputed prerogative is finally settled. It will be recalled that the challengers usually hold reversionary rights against the other side; and, particularly if they consider their opponents destined for extinction, they calculate that they can afford to bide their time and allow natural decline to continue to work in their favour.

In a major name-dispute, on the other hand, neither party usually has reversionary claims in the estate of the other, and the challengers therefore employ a quite different procedure. The kinds of mythological strategies they use will be examined in the following chapter; but they consist essentially in the assertion that the contested entitlement was the independent creation entirely of their own totemic ancestors. It was not, they will assert, ceded to them or in any other way acquired from their opponents, and the latter have no legitimate claim to it whatever. Most importantly, they will present a charter-myth cast in such a way that the whole issue depends upon the rights to a single strategic name. Usually, a prerogative in dispute between two marriageable subclans, or distant collateral subclans, can in principle be won or lost in a single debate.
In a minor name-dispute, the attempts to reach a settlement are made in public but informal disputation such as those I have mentioned in the previous chapter; or, if these fail, in what I shall call a minor or small-scale debate. Close agnates normally try to preserve at least a show of amity, and there are loosely-defined supernatural sanctions against them holding fully formal debates. The main diacritical feature of a small-scale debate is that it is held indoors, either in a domestic house, or, if feelings are running high, in a major ceremonial house. Major name-disputes, on the other hand, are usually waged in what I shall call major or full-scale debates. A major debate is held in the open air in front of a major ceremonial house, involves a substantial outlay of food and wealth, and is conducted with much ceremony and formality.

Whether a full-scale or small-scale debate is held is also, however, influenced by the history of relations between the two opposing groups. A name-dispute between close agnates, if it lasts for many decades, may escalate to a stage at which the two sides hold major debates against each other; while if no name-disputes have occurred between a pair of marriageable subclans within living memory, a name-dispute which then breaks out between them may be conducted initially in small-scale debates.

Table 24 gives the incidence of conflicts over personal names at Avatip over a period of about forty years ending in 1979. The first point I should make is that the figures given are almost certainly incomplete, especially for disputes involving only small-scale debates or informal disputation, and the more so the longer ago they occurred. I should also mention that a number of the name-disputes referred to are known to go back before 1940, some into pre-contact times.

I have recorded a total of 67 major and minor debates over the period dealt with; an average frequency of about one every seven months. Of these debates, 51 have been between agnates, as have 26 of the total of 36 name-disputes I have recorded during this period. Debates and name-disputes are, in short, more than twice as frequent between agnates as they are between marriageables. They are furthermore more common between close agnates than between distant agnates.
I have recorded no name-disputes between totemic-sibling groups, and only one, involving two minor debates, between nawi groups (the subclans Valik and Ambasarak). Totemic ties between agnates, on the other hand, seem to be no bar to name-disputes between them; in fact the highest incidences of disputes seem to be between agnates with close totemic links.

Of the 36 name-disputes I recorded, I was able to ascertain at least in outline the mythological issues in 25 (involving a total of 61 personal names). Fifteen of these 25 disputes were connected in one way or another with the ritual system: 11 of these concerned functions in specific rituals, four of the eleven being concerned with the rights to cimbuk-ships. The remaining four of the fifteen were over rights in major ceremonial houses. Of the other ten name-disputes whose issues I recorded, five concerned territorial rights and five the ownership of magic.

Table 25 gives the ranking of Avatip subclans according to their involvement as principals in name-disputes (disputes purely internal to the subclan are omitted in the table). This can be taken as a reasonably accurate indication of their relative dominance of Avatip politics. As one can see, there is no subclan which has not been involved as a principal in at least one name-dispute and two debates during the past forty years. A further point is that the frequency with which a subclan challenges others in name-disputes is roughly proportional to its size, as can be seen by comparing Table 25 with the population figures for Avatip subclans given in Table 2. Large groups are in general better equipped to initiate name-disputes and engage in debating than are small ones: they and their allies are likely to possess more experts in sakina'andj (see Chapter 4), can more easily defray the expenses involved in holding a debate (see below) and, as I mentioned above, have the demographic resources with which to lay frequent claims to the personal names of other groups.

iii. Winning a debate: names with a 'single face' and names with 'two faces'

An important characteristic of an Avatip debate is that there is no third party with overriding authority to adjudicate the dispute
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within the clan</th>
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<th>No. of names involved</th>
<th>No. of debates held</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valik vs. Sarambusarak 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nambul &quot; Sarambusarak 1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTALS:</td>
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<td>c.75</td>
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Table 24: Conflicts over personal names at Avatip, c.1940-1979.
Fig. 13. Name-disputes at Avatip, c.1940-1979
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<tr>
<th>Subclan</th>
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<th>No. of names involved</th>
<th>No. of debates held</th>
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<td>Warangga'amb</td>
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Table 25: Ranking of Avatip subclans by involvement in conflicts over personal names, c.1940-1979.
and impose a decision on the protagonists. There are neutrals, but they have no authority over the proceedings. They usually have an interest in seeing the conflict resolved peacefully, but all they can do to achieve this is to try to guide the debate from time to time and defuse tensions.

But although there is no party empowered to preside over a debate, a debate can nevertheless be decisively lost or won and the losers forced to concede defeat. It usually happens in a debate that all the preliminary arguments are exhausted without result; at this point the critical and decisive episode of the debate then takes place. This takes the form of a formal contest between the two sides in esoteric knowledge. The basic rules of this contest are quite simple and are understood by all adults; moreover - and perhaps more importantly - each side explicitly undertakes to abide by these rules and continually reiterates them during the preliminary stage of the debate. They are, simply, that each side must attempt to demonstrate that it possesses exclusive knowledge of the esoteric name of the disputed ancestor and of this figure's father, mother and mother's brother. If one side can do so, it in theory wins the debate, vindicates its mythological claims and takes possession of the disputed name.

This contest may take one of two forms, depending usually upon whether a minor or a major name-dispute is involved, and I will now outline each of these in turn.

It will be remembered that in the case of name-dispute between close collaterals one group is normally in substantial control of an entitlement mythologically vested in the other; and the dispute between them is part of an attempt by the former to legitimate its possession of this prerogative by revision of mythology. The esoteric name of the disputed ancestor, and the identities of this ancestor's father, mother and mother's brother are normally known to the challenging group, for they form an essential part of the magical formulae it uses in exercising the prerogative in question. One important long-term aim of the challengers is to show that their opponents are

1 In debating, the 'father' is referred to as the *wus kərinənde aγa'ay* ('the father who gave the urine' - a euphemism for semen); the 'mother' as the *sokərīna amei* ('the mother who gave birth'); and the 'mother's brother' as the *səskərīnənda awat* ('the maternal uncle who bestowed [the mother]').
ignorant of the secret names of all the ancestors, and of their mothers, fathers and mothers' brothers, invoked in this magic; for in this way they will be able to prove that they themselves alone are fully capable of performing it. This process normally involves a long series of debates between the two groups, as one name after another is contested.

The means used in each debate to ascertain how much of this esoterica is known to the challenged group is relatively simple. The challengers demand that their opponents tell them the secret version of the name they are debating, and the secret names of this ancestor's father, mother and mother's brother; and the challengers then publicly announce the results. Because of its highly esoteric nature this interrogation is conducted entirely in whispers and involves only the most senior and knowledgeable men of the two sides. As their opponents impart each name, the challengers announce to the audience whether it was correct or was a miscall. Whenever one of their debating-simbuls announces a miscall he is expected to immediately make a powerful oath as pledge of his veracity; otherwise it would of course be possible for him to lie, claiming a miscall when the name whispered to him was in fact correct. This is sworn upon a kapi, a shell necklace worn exclusively by men of the Ndjopas ritual grade. A Maitira sa'al, as this oath is known, is considered the most potent of all Avatip oaths, killing a perjurer in a matter of days. The interrogation is known simply as waser wasawlana, 'whispering in the ear', or, more commonly, as nduand wandanand, 'they speak (the name of) the man.'

A variety of outcomes is of course possible; the challenged group may prove itself acquainted with all, some or none of these esoteric names. If it shows that it possesses knowledge of all of them, the challengers usually drop their claim to the specific name being debated; but they rarely renounce their mythological assertions in their entirety. They will turn their attention instead to the other names involved in the disputed magic, and challenge their opponents to debates over the ownership of these.

On the other hand, it is a great humiliation for a group to be publicly proved incompetent in secret lore which it claims to be its own. It would be considered, by all but its closest supporters,
unqualified to make any claims relating to the disputed name, and would be expected to give the name up immediately (kuutanggerena: to avoid or by-pass). When two groups hold a debate, they agree explicitly to abide by the established rules and procedures whatever the outcome. Great stigma attaches to any group which, legitimately beaten in a debate, then refuses to relinquish the disputed name. Already humiliated by the public exposure of its ignorance, the losing side usually does cede the name to the winners - and often with a show of magnanimity - so as to avoid this additional stigma and salvage what it can of its corporate face.

It would be a very serious matter for a group to be proved, in a succession of debates, ignorant of the esoterica surrounding a series of names; if this continued, the group would in time come to be regarded as so incompetent in esoteric mythology as to be incapable of making any credible mythological claims whatever. When a group which is uncertain of its competence in its own secret lore becomes involved in a name-dispute, it usually makes every effort to have the dispute settled in private negotiations, so as not to have to stand public test of its competence in a formal debate. These in camera negotiations, which usually involve only the leaders of the two sides, may result in it making many concession to its challengers; it is likely in time to lose partial or complete title to the prerogative in dispute between them, but it will at least do so in a way less damaging in the long run to its own prestige.

I have explained that in a dispute between close collaterals the challengers usually admit that the disputed ancestor is indeed, in genealogical terms, a totemic ancestor of their opponents; but claim that this figure, and his public and esoteric names, were ceded to themselves during the cosmogony. The issue then revolves around which of the two groups possesses sole knowledge of this figure's secret identity. There is no disagreement over this identity; the disputed name, as the villagers put it, "has a single face" (mutam nak tenand).

In a name-dispute between marriageables or distant agnates, on the other hand, each side usually harbours a different version of the secret name of the disputed ancestor, and its own version of this ancestor's filiation; the disputed name is described idiomatically as
one which "has two faces" (mutam veti tenand). The reason for this is that the challengers, usually having no reversionary claims in their opponents' estate, do not argue that the disputed ancestor was ceded to them but adopt a different strategy: that of duplicating this ancestor with one of their own, differing from that of their opponents in its secret identity. In a dispute of this kind, the issue revolves around which of the two versions of the ancestor's identity is the authentic one.

Once again, a contest in esoteric knowledge is used in debate in order to settle the issue. The exact manner in which the contest is conducted will be described in a later section; but the basic rule is that in order to win one side must demonstrate that it possesses knowledge of its opponents' version of the secret identity of the disputed ancestor - that is, of what its opponents claim are the esoteric names of this figure and of its father, mother and mother's brother. This contest is conducted, as in a minor name-dispute, entirely in whispers and by the accredited experts in mythology of the two sides. But while in a minor dispute the interrogation is usually unilateral, in a major dispute it is typically reciprocal, both sides attempting to ascertain how much of their esoterica is known by the other. Again, the results are made public, and whenever a miscall is announced it must be immediately corroborated with an oath. To demonstrate knowledge of an esoteric name is known as 'seeing' (vena) one's opponents.

As in a minor dispute, a number of outcomes to the debate are possible. One side, or both, or neither may demonstrate a partial or complete acquaintance with the relevant esoterica of the other. Often there is scope for both sides to claim at least partial victory - if, for instance, one side correctly utters its opponents' version of the ancestor's mother's brother, while the latter show themselves to have discovered its own version of this figure's father. But it is an agreed and established rule that if one side should be able to prove itself acquainted with its opponents' version of the complete set of names, and show its opponents to be entirely ignorant of its own, it would win the debate decisively. The losers would be expected to abandon the disputed name forthwith, their mythological
claims considered invalidated. There are as I explained earlier strong pressures on the losing side to accept defeat with good grace. But the winners of a debate over a name with 'two faces' hold in addition a potent sanction over the losers; if the latter refused to capitulate, the winners could threaten to expose publicly the secret names they have discovered. This is a calamity the losers would wish to avoid at almost any cost, for it would render these esoterica permanently valueless. The possibility still exists that the winners' debating-ambiluks might not pass these esoterica on to their successors before they die. The best course of action open to the losers is therefore to accede, at least publicly, to the winners' mythological claims - and hope for an opportunity (usually however, remote) for their own or a later generation to re-open the dispute after the current orators of the winning side have died.

The sanction of public exposure seems to be an effective one, and I have recorded no cases of a winning side being provoked by the losers' intransigence into actually carrying it out. It cannot, it hardly needs saying, be used in a debate over a name with a 'single face'; since both sides share the same version of the disputed ancestor's secret identity and filiation, neither could convincingly threaten the other with exposing it.

Of the 67 small-scale and full-scale debates I have recorded, 17 - or roughly a quarter - were more or less decisively won in the kinds of contests I have described. These debates settled 14 of the 36 name-disputes I have recorded, and resolved the ownership of a total of 18 personal names.

2 Referring to the secret names of his subclan's totemic ancestors, one informant once told me: "Those things are our shame" - an apt way of expressing the humiliation his subclan would suffer if another group was to show itself acquainted with these names in debate.

Conversely, those orators who have had the experience of demonstrating knowledge of their opponents' secret names in debate speak of this achievement as an intensely thrilling one. One such orator gleefully recalled to me his opponents' mortification at the moment he defeated them: "They were speechless, for there was absolutely nothing they could do. They were great talkers, but now they sat there as quiet as a bunch of ripe bananas!"
iv. Group and individual alignments in debating

The principals in a debate - the male agnatic members of the two opposing subclans - are referred to as sakindu, or 'debate men'. This term also covers the men of any totemic-sibling groups with which they are linked, and who are their automatic supporters in debates. The sisters' sons of the sakindu are their most important allies. Men pride themselves on defending their maternal subclans with great vigour in debates, and if a fight occurs it is most likely to break out between the sisters' sons of the two sides. The sakindu, for their part, treat their nggamboro with ostentatious solicitude, setting up sago-leaf shades next to each of them as the debate progresses into the hottest part of the day. A number of nggamboro, including the eponymous sisters' sons of the subclan's constituent tanombs, are heavily decorated and made to sit in a conspicuous position on an upturned canoe. This canoe (sometimes a plank split from an old canoe is used) is known in the context of debating as a mba'ar; the mba'ar of each side is its symbolic focus, and in the Manambu language a debating-side is called synecdochally a mba'ar.

A secondary category of supporters are the sisters' husbands of the sakindu, who are known as kwa'ar. This is not a kinship term but the word for a woman's skirt; it may be connected etymologically with the term for sister used by male speakers, ndjekwa'ar, which appears to mean 'skirt-fastened', or in other words a forbidden sexual partner. The term kwa'ar is used only in the context of debating. It carries slightly mocking and derogatory overtones, and kwa'ar are generally regarded as a somewhat second-class category of ally. Kwa'ar, it is often said "never know the myths of the sakindu" and support their affines only because their wives threaten to refuse them sexual intercourse if they did not. Men frequently make these accusations - in particular the especially humiliating charge of uxoriousness - against their opponents' kwa'ar during debates; and the position of the latter is often an uncomfortable one, bound as they are to support their affines and yet a favourite target for the raillery of their opponents.

The third and least significant category of ally are sisters' daughters' husbands (nanggwund; pl. nanggwundangkaw). These allies have the weakest ties of all with the sakindu; in a debate they are usually few in number and in some cases not represented at all, their
Fig. 14. Layout of a full-scale debate
other and stronger loyalties - to their own subclans, or to those of their mothers or wives - having affiliated them to the opposing side.

Nggambero, kwa'ar and nanggwundangkw are entitled, as I explained in an earlier chapter, to learn the esoteric mythology of their sakindu; and for this reason, those of them considered sufficiently expert may take part, together with the sakindu themselves, in the tests of esoteric knowledge described in the previous section. They are also expected to contribute food and wealth to help the sakindu defray the expenses of the debate (see below).

The wives and unmarried daughters of the sakindu, nggambero kwa'ar and nanggwundangkw have the task of cooking food for their side, this usually being done in the morning and the food served around mid-day. Although women do not speak in debate, or in any but the most exceptional circumstances learn esoteric mythology, they nevertheless in general show a strong sense of involvement in debates and uncompromising loyalties to their own sides. They express this support by decorating themselves and dancing during the later stages of the debate; and up until the 1950's it was not unknown for the mothers of the two children to whom the disputed name had been given to duel during the debate with fighting-sticks, and this would sometimes turn into a full-scale brawl between the women of the opposing sides.

Allies often have ties with both sides in a debate; a man may stand as sister's son to one set of sakindu and sister's husband to the other, or, if he is a polygynist, as sister's husband or as

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3 Because the senior men of each side are aware that the dispute is in fact over some mythological right and only ostensibly over a name, the relation between the name and the child on whom they have bestowed it is, for them, entirely contingent. But since the mother of the child to whom the disputed name has been given is usually unaware of the mythological issues involved, the main significance of the debate for her, so far as one can tell, is precisely that it is her child whom the opposing side is trying to dispossess of its name. Part of the reason, I think, for the violence of a mother's defence of her child's name in a debate is that the opposing side would seem to her to be in some sense attacking the personal identity of her child. To women, unversed in the mythological significance of names, names tend to be far more closely bound up with notions of selfhood or personhood than they are for men - for whom names tend more to represent an entirely abstract system.
sister's daughter's husband to both simultaneously. Men in this position usually contribute food and wealth to both sides and, while they may formally align themselves with one side against the other, they are expected if they are orators to adopt a mediatory role.

The collaterals of the sakindu are expected to support them in debating, and people employ a simple segmentary model to describe the manner in which this occurs. In a debate between two subclans of different clans of the same clan-pair, for example, the two clans would oppose each other as blocs; in a debate between a Wuluwi-Nyawi and a Nggola'angkw subclan, the two clan-pairs would confront each other in their entireties. The support which the collaterals of the sakindu give them is, however, formal rather than substantial and is limited to simple speech-making. They do not normally know the esoteric mythology of the sakindu, and for this reason they do not assist them in testing the esoteric knowledge of the opposing side.

In actuality, the alignment of groups in debating is quite complex. Firstly, the importance of ties of marriage prevents a simple segmentary escalation. In a debate between clans of the same clan-pair, for instance, many of the clansmen of each set of sakindu might stand as sisters' daughters' husbands to the other set, and for this reason align themselves with their wives' mothers' subclan against their own clan-mates. Similarly, the great majority of Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw men are sisters' sons, sisters' husbands, or both, of the other clan-pair; in a debate between Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggola'angkw many of these men - except for the sakindu themselves - would side with their mothers' or wives' clan-pair against their own. Thus while the collaterals of the sakindu are expected to support them, they may have alliance ties which align them with the other side; but whichever side they take, men with these divided loyalties tend to adopt a conciliatory stance and not to argue too forcefully in favour of one party or the other.

The alignment of groups is further complicated by the fact that it is determined not only by clanship but also by totemic and other links; and the actual configuration of groups in a debate is usually a compromise between a number of inter-group ties of different kinds operating simultaneously. Figure 15 gives the alignments of groups in the two full-scale debates over the ownership of the name Manggalaman, which took place between the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans Maliyaw
Fig. 15. Alignment of groups in the debates between Maliyaw and Sarambusarak over the ownership of the name Manggalaman
Plate 13. An orator supports his maternal subclan in a full-scale debate.

Plate 14. Women dance during a full-scale debate.
and Sarambusarak in 1976 and 1977. Sarambusarak belongs to Nyawi clan and Maliyaw to the clan Wuluwi; if a purely segmentary logic had been followed, all the Wuluwi groups and their allies would have sided with Maliyaw, and all those of Nyawi with Sarambusarak, but as one can see this was not in fact the case.

Firstly, some of the men of Nawik subclan and their allies supported Sarambusarak against their own clansmen. The reason for this was that a simbuk-ship vested in the Nyawi subclan Ambasarak had at the time been held for some twenty-five years by K., a man of Nawik. In the early 1950's a struggle took place within Ambasarak over the succession to this office, and this dispute enabled K. to step in and assume the position. He held it until his retirement from active ritual life in 1978, a year after the second Manggalaman debate, at which point it was resumed by Ambasarak. But K. had in the meantime learned much of the secret lore of Ambasarak, and during his tenure of the simbuk-ship he championed this subclan in debate; for this reason he and a few of his agnates and allies sided with Nyawi clan in the Manggalaman debates.

A second departure from a simple segmentary paradigm is that Ambasarak itself, together with its allies, divided during the two debates, some men arranging to side with Maliyaw and others with Sarambusarak. The reasons for this are again historical rather than structural. It is said that a number of generations ago Ambasarak very nearly became extinct, and all of its secret mythology fell into the possession of senior men of Maliyaw subclan. Ambasarak later grew again, and Maliyaw restored this lore to it; Maliyaw no longer possesses this sakima'andj, but Ambasarak has ever since been regarded as in its debt and expected to provide it with support in debating.

As one can see from Figure 15 the Nyawi tonomb Mbwindimi and its allies sided with Maliyaw against its own clan in the Manggalaman debates. The justification for this was its ritual and totemic tie with Maliyaw. Mbwindimi, as I described in Chapter 5, belongs to the yam ritual association headed by Maliyaw Malikemban, and as part of this the two groups are linked in totemism.

Turning now to groups outside Wuluwi-Nyawi, it can be seen that Maliyaw was supported by the Nggala'angkw tonomb Wopanggali, with
which it has a totemic-sibling relationship (see Figure 11). The Nambul-Sambolap tonɔmb Makapangkow has totemic-sibling links with both Maliyaw and Sarambusarak; and as a result it divided itself, some men and their allies supporting one side and others being assigned to the other. I should note that when a tonɔmb and its allies divide between the two sides in a debate, this does not necessarily follow the internal segmentation of the tonɔmb; rather, men are allocated to one side or the other in such a way that their varying expertise in debating is distributed more or less equally between the two sides.

v. Preparations for a full-scale debate

Once the two sides have agreed to a debate they may be able to hold it within a week or two if they have no other commitments at the time. A full-scale debate is held in front of the major ceremonial house of one of the two groups; they must therefore come to an agreement as to a venue for the event.

A debate may run for twenty-four hours or even more without a break, and during the week or so preceding the debate the two sets of sakindu and their allies prepare the provisions required to feed their sides for as long as the affair lasts. K20-K30 might be pooled by each side to buy European foods: rice, tinned fish and meat, and even coffee, tea and sugar to keep somnolent orators awake. Some men contribute yams, while others go into the bush for a day or two to make sago. One or two wild pigs are caught by each side, and the flesh smoked, and large quantities of areca-nut and betel pepper made ready. Each side also requires two domestic pigs as sacrificial offerings, one to be killed before the debate and one afterwards, as I shall explain below; a total of some 40-60 valuables, or K120-180, is pooled to purchase these. Finally, a number of valuables - perhaps between 20 and 30 - are made ready for the vangga ma'as payments (see below). The expenses involved in holding a debate are not excessive; but they are enough to discourage a subclan from committing itself to a debate before other avenues of settling the dispute have been tried.

On the day before the debate each side assembles in a domestic house for a ceremonial known as vei korulapina, or 'delivering the apical ancestor'. This primarily involves the recitation by the men

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4 As the villagers often say of the solidarity of the subclan in
of song-cycles based upon the subclan's origin-mythology, and which contain long lists of its totemic names. The first songs deal with the birth of the apical ancestor of the subclan (hence 'delivering the vei') and the births of his sons, the vei of the constituent tanombs of the subclan; and the later songs concern the exploits of their descendants, the totemic ancestors figuring in the mythology to be disputed in the debate. The debating-simbucks are seated in the place of honour, in front of the central post at the fore of the house, with the other men arranged in a circle around them. Youths and young men ignorant of the song-cycles accompany the chanting by beating hand-drums; and the women decorate themselves and dance in the rear of the house. Everyone is fed during the night and supplied with areca-nut to keep them awake; the singing continues until morning, a few hours before the debate.

Every so often the men take breaks from chanting in order to reiterate their mythological claims and rehearse their arguments. While vei koulapuna fosters esprit de corps in readiness for the debate, it also has a quite pragmatic purpose: to ensure that all the men present agree in exact detail as to their version of the disputed mythology and are thoroughly acquainted with the arguments that will be used to support it. If this were not done, the group could find itself embarrassed during the debate by one speaker making assertions which his fellows were unwilling to endorse, or by open argument breaking out within its ranks.

The song-cycles recited during vei koulapuna contain many references to esoteric mythology, and this is felt to make necessary a propitiatory offering to the ancestors dealt with in the songs. At dawn a domestic pig is slaughtered and singed in front of the house, taken indoors and butchered, and the blood sprinkled on the house-posts and the men's stools. The sakindu present one shell valuable to each tanomb which was represented at the gathering, in the payment known as vanggama'as (see Chapter 4). The assembly then breaks up as the men leave to refresh themselves with a wash in the river, each as he goes receiving a portion of the sacrificial meat.

F.n. 4 cont'd.

debating: "All men (of the subclan) work for the ndja'am." In other words, all members, and allies, of the subclan are expected to make some contribution - verbal and/or economic according to their abilities - to the defence of their cosmological estate.
vi. **Conduct of a full-scale debate**

Men begin to gather at the debating-ground as early in the morning as possible. The opposing sides seat themselves, on stools or on the ground, in two rough semicircles facing each other and about fifty metres apart at their furthest points (see Figure 14). All adult men at Avatip usually attend a major debate, a total of several hundred. Many of them are unwilling to align themselves exclusively with one side, either because they are not directly involved or, more commonly, because they have simultaneous ties with both sides. These neutrals generally seat themselves on the arms of the semicircles, so as not to appear to be favouring one side excessively. The middle section of each semicircle is usually occupied by the main protagonists: the sakindu and their sisters' sons.

Each side sets an elaborate array of arrows and spears upright in the ground, heavily decorated with its totemic bird plumes and leaves; large numbers of smaller sticks, each capped with a round, orange fruit called mbandi (*Rejoua aurantiaca*), are arranged in rows alongside them. This array is in part a form of genealogical diagram; each spear, arrow and stick signifies a specific ancestor, and the whole represents the part of the subclan's ndja'amama'andj involved in the disputed mythology. Four of the decorated arrows are of particular significance: for these represent the disputed ancestor, his father, mother and mother's brother. Much of the decorative paraphernalia used refers to episodes in the mythology concerning them; the men too may decorate themselves with plumes, leaves and face-designs of a similar significance.

The debating-ground presents a colourful and rather carnival-like appearance, but the nimbi, or 'arrows', as the arrays are known, play little real role in the debate. When an orator wishes to test an opponent's esoteric knowledge he might point to one of the arrows, announce that it is the 'mother' of the disputed ancestor, and challenge his opponent to whisper her secret name to him. But their main purpose is simply to impress the opposing side with a dramatic visual suggestion of the forcefulness of one's own claims. Usually, the esoteric significance of each side's nimbi is unknown to the other; the arrays are fully intelligible only to the most knowledge-able men of the side to whose mythology they refer, partly because
this mythology is secret, but also because the principles used in constructing nimbi are somewhat ad hoo. Some of these conventions are described in Appendix E.

Nowadays, a debate is opened by the Councillors of Avatip, the elected officials who represent the community on the Ambunti Local Government Council. They make speeches warning the two sides to follow the established rules and etiquette of debating and not to fight. In the past it was common for brawls to break out during debates, and as a modern innovation a length of cane is stretched across the debating-ground between the two opposing groups at about breast height, and men are forbidden to cross this. Once the debate has begun, the Councillors are expected to hold their official roles in abeyance, so long as no major breaches of the peace occur, and to take their places in the debate in the same way as the other villagers.

The debate proper is formally opened by an act called mba'ar sena, or 'sounding the mba'ar', in which each side ceremonially announces its identity to the other. An orator from one side recites lists of the totemic names and mythological epithets of his mba'ar, while someone beats slowly on the upturned canoe with a slit-drum beater; the same procedure is then repeated by the opposing side. An example of a mba'ar sena speech is given in Appendix D.

Because there is no third party with the authority to preside over the debate, there is an ever-present danger that it may simply

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5 A European missionary told me that he once tried to use nimbi as a way of illustrating the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38) to a group of men in one of the Manambu villages. He did not, however, fully understand the significance of nimbi and this led to a serious misunderstanding. The men became increasingly agitated as the demonstration proceeded and one of them, in a highly excited state, eventually demanded: "Yes, yes, this is all very well, but are you going to tell us these ancestors' secret names?" Thinking that he had raised 'cargo'-type expectations among his audience, he brought the demonstration to an abrupt close, and never again tried this technique.

6 Most of the Councillors of the Manambu villages are men in their early middle age with a keen interest in learning sakima'andj, and to all appearances on their way to becoming established as orators in the traditional debating system. Of these, however, the majority are at the present time still under the authority in this context of more senior orators of their subclans.
disintegrate in violence; and this is a possibility of which the villagers are acutely conscious. One important means by which a debate is kept under control is the highly stereotyped and ritualised manner in which it is conducted.

Speaking in debate, for example, involves repeating a stylised, almost dance-like sequence of actions. A few metres in front of each side five or six small bundles of cordyline leaves, or *ka'aw*, are placed. When a man wishes to speak he goes forward and picks these bundles up with a big flourish. As he speaks, he stamps the ground, holding the *ka'aw* in one hand. With his free hand he takes the bundles one by one and tosses them lightly to the ground in front of him as he makes each point. When they are gone he crouches down, gathers them up and springs to his feet, still speaking all the while, and then repeats the same procedure. The performance is done in a deliberately dramatic way, and is meant to impress the spectators with the speaker's energy and élan (see Plate 13).

Men sometimes accompany their speeches with theatrical displays of anger, raising an arm behind them, for example, as if preparing to throw an imaginary spear at the opposing side. But a speaker who becomes actually infuriated is despised for his loss of self-control. Such men, it is said, are like women; it is the way of women to lose their tempers in an argument, while men - so they themselves are fond of asserting - settle their differences by patient discussion. Men who become violently angry in debate also lay themselves open to the charge of ignorance of mythology. Only the ignorant, people claim, resort to empty vituperation and threats of violence, because they have no other way of taking part in the debate; the men who understand mythology may appear irate, but this is deliberate and they are always in fact entirely in control of themselves (cf. Read 1959).

When a man is speaking - that is, while he holds the *ka'aw* -

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7 The Manambu do not use the elaborately carved debating-stools that Bateson (1958:125-6) and others have described for the Iatmul. They do, however, use ordinary sitting-stools - usually, particularly fine specimens - in small-scale debates; a stool of this kind is placed between the two sides, and on it is put a single bunch of cordyline leaves, which is used by both groups.
Plate 15. The kapi, on which maiyira sa'al oaths are sworn in debates.

Plate 16. Nimbi set up for a full-scale debate.
it is his right to be given an uninterrupted hearing. Heckling occurs only as the immediate prelude to a fight. If a speaker makes a telling point, his side may express their approval with a concerted cheer, or *senggur twrena*; while his opponents may show their disapprobation with an equally unanimous jeer, a nasal, neigh-like shout known as *wandjembeina*. Speeches tend to be short, rarely lasting more than five minutes, and when a speaker finishes he places the *ka'aw* where he found them and returns to his seat. It is then the turn of one of his opponents to speak; one of the most basic conventions of debating that each side gives the other the opportunity to reply after each speech.

Many of the forms of speech used in debate are designed to temper hostility and create an atmosphere of high formality. It is rare, for example, for orators to address each other directly by name; usually, they direct their speeches to specific *tonamb*, or address their opponents by *waiyepi* - flowery epithets referring to the renown of their totemic ancestors. In this way the dispute is removed from a merely *ad hominem* level and set in the more abstract and impersonal context of relations between corporate groups. If leaders do address each other directly, they do so by each other's *kepakaur se*, or bereavement names, a usage expressive of compassion and respect. Nor are kin terms used except in relation to whole *tonamb* or subclans. A speaker might address a *tonamb* junior to his own as "my younger brother" (*wunande nyamus*), treating it, to use Radcliffe-Brown's term, as a single jural person; he might address his wife's *tonamb* or subclan as "my child" (*wunande nyan*), rhetorically identifying his children with their matrikin.

During the course of the debate, these courtesies act as a kind of barometer of the degree of control being kept over the affair; if they are dispensed with, this may indicate impending violence, and act as a cue for neutrals to step in and restore decorum. Having no jurisdiction over the proceedings, the latter may use a variety of informal diplomatic techniques, not the least important of which is humour. Both sides are usually thankful for someone who comes forward "smiling as he speaks" (*wandjen mbulanand*) and defuses the tension with a well-timed joke:

When the two sides are beginning to get angry, he comes forward and makes a joke; everybody laughs and their minds are good again (*maul viyakat *tena*). He knows that men cannot fight when they are laughing.
Speeches made in debate are broadly of two kinds, differing both in style and content. The first are those dealing directly with mythology. These have a highly formal and formulaic style, specific to debating. Men describe the exploits of their totemic ancestors always in the first person and the present tense, as though attempting by simple force of assertion to re-create the mythological past on the debating-ground. These speeches are filled with totemic names, elaborate mythological epithets, and condensed references to recondite details of myth, all expressed in a relatively limited set of syntactical forms and intonational patterns. By these kinds of rhetorical devices, orators as it were partly take on the identities of their totemic ancestors, and set the debate in the timeless and impersonal framework of cosmology.

To be able to use this style successfully requires long experience in debating and extensive knowledge of myth. It is an oratorical form appropriate only to men of considerable status, and for any without sufficient authority to attempt it could invite ridicule. In this respect, and in all its linguistic characteristics, it closely resembles what Bloch has called the language of traditional authority: formalised language used by holders of authority as a medium of social control (Bloch 1975:13).

Although the tone of these speeches tends largely to be declamatory, they do also use a variety of forms of persuasion and argument, and these will be illustrated in the following chapter. Here, I might note that very commonly these are at least in part etymological, and revolve around the meaning of the lexical elements of the disputed name. One side may argue that the name contains the term for one of its own totemic species, or that the meaning of the name refers in some other way to an episode in its own mythology; and the other side will then try to counter this with an alternative etymology of their own.

The second form of speech concerns not mythology but the contemporary history of relations between the two opposing groups and the credentials of their respective leaders. Much of it deals with information presented by each side in an attempt to impugn the other's veracity or corroborate their own. Orations of this kind are made in everyday speech, and may be given even by men of very junior standing.
if they possess important evidence. These testimonies tend to be rather longer than speeches of the first type, and to take up more of the debate, as the material they cover often requires lengthy and detailed exposition.

One of the subjects they usually concern is the history of the use of the disputed name. When a group lays claim to a name which it has never before employed it is in an initially weak position; for its opponents will of course demand that it explain why, if it owns the name, it has never before used it. They will detail those of their own forebears who bore the disputed name, and ask the challengers: did your fathers and grandfathers not have ears, that they did not know that the name was being used by us? They will demand that their opponents give similar evidence of having used the name in earlier generations, and ask them to explain why the two subclans had never debated the ownership of the name before.

These are all questions which the challengers may counter with any of a number of fairly standardised ploys. They might reply that it is quite true that their forefathers never employed the name; but this was because their subclan had always been too small to have an available bearer for it, and the name was being kept in reserve. Or it was because their forefathers were unaware they had the right to the name, being ignorant of their own myths; it was only recently that their subclan reacquired the mythology showing the name to be theirs. Alternatively, they might argue that their forebears had been unaware that the other subclan was using the name, because it had always been given as a sanggaliyak, or secondary name, and was rarely therefore actually spoken; and anyway, all the people who bore it lived in distant parts of the village. And so on. Their opponents may be able to marshall evidence controverting these claims, resulting in mutual accusations of lying, and challenges to swear mayira sa'al, flying back and forth between the two sides.

This often leads to each side more or less directly accusing the other's leaders of incompetence in mythology or deliberate deceit. Orators whose credentials are challenged in this way will respond with detailed accounts of the circumstances under which they acquired their knowledge of the relevant sakima'tandj, the teachers they learned from and the payments given to each. Since these
teachers are likely to be long dead, these orators' asseverations are often difficult to confirm and the opposing side may demand that they swear maiyira sa'al to prove their integrity. If an orator has knowingly made a false statement, a long period may be spent in attempts by his opponents to force him to make the oath, while he tries to outmanoeuvre them without losing credibility. If the two sides wish to adopt a more diplomatic approach, they might allow that each other's orators are not themselves liars and claim instead that they were deceived by their teachers. But in either case the aim is to attempt to discredit these men in the eyes of their followers as well as others, and persuade the opposing side that their leaders are men who make them waste their time and resources defending specious mythological claims.

The two speech-forms I have described tend to alternate with each other throughout the debate. A junior speaker, for example, may present detailed circumstantial evidence that one of his opponents' orators fabricated his side's claim to the disputed name; and the latter might respond by side-stepping this with a string of formulae in the formal debating style, attempting to dismiss his accuser with the sheer weight of authority which this style conveys. The attempts by the two groups to verbally outmanoeuvre each other result in the debate continually shifting back and forth between its two frames of reference, one of totemic cosmology and the other of contemporary political relations.

Around mid-day the principals serve their respective sides food and areca-nut, the debate continuing uninterrupted. Orators, particularly if they are principals, are expected to disdain the food, their attention being fixed wholly upon the debate. If they were to show an appetite their opponents might accuse them mockingly of having come to the debate merely to eat. They do, however, chew areca-nut incessantly, in a slow, ostentatious manner suggestive of implacability and controlled aggression. By the time the debate ends, these men - many of them in their sixties - may have had no sleep and little food for perhaps forty hours or even more, having spent this period first in chanting the vei kulaapuna song-cycles and then in continuous argumentation in the debate itself; and while areca-nut does suppress fatigue and hunger, their stamina is still impressive.
As the debate continues, it almost invariably becomes apparent that neither side is prepared to give ground, and they begin to exhaust their arguments. Speakers will proclaim that the time for argumentation is over, and call on the principals to start the test of each other's esoteric knowledge so that the debate can be settled without further ado. One side may taunt the other, challenging it to try to 'see' the secret name of their totemic ancestor; and their opponents will reply in a similar vein, boasting that they know the name and are impatient to tell it to them.

One orator from each side comes forward, and the pair meet in the middle of the debating-ground. One of them then whispers in the other's ear what he suspects is his opponent's version of the secret name; if he is wrong, the other simply shakes his head and says "no" (ma'a), signifying to the audience that it was a miscall, and swears the mairira sa'al by laying his hand on the kapi hung on a stake nearby.

It is then the turn of the other side to try to guess their opponents' version of the secret name; this may be done by the same pair of men or by a new pair. And so it continues, the two sides in alternation trying to show themselves acquainted with each other's version of the secret name. One pair of men after another meet in the middle of the debating-ground; one whispers a word to the other who then shakes his head and lays his hand upon the kapi, and each walks back to his seat.

These interrogations may continue for an hour or more. The secret name of the disputed ancestor is usually the first to be dealt with, and the two sides then turn their attention to the secret names of the figure's father, mother and mother's brother; each side allows the other a large number of attempts at each name. But the interrogation is not permitted to continue indefinitely, and it is stopped once it has become fairly clearly established how much each side knows of the other's esoterica. Because it involves the communication of secret names, the test is considered fraught with supernatural danger; if continued longer than necessary, the participants risk falling sick or creating disturbances in the natural order.

While it is taking place feelings run high, and it is potentially the most explosive stage of the debate. The outcome of
the debate hangs literally on nothing more than a few words, and each side is at pains to ensure that the other follows the correct procedure scrupulously. If their opponents try to whisper out of turn, or if one of them announces a miscall but then seems reluctant to make an oath, this may result in heated argument or a fight.

By far the most usual outcome of a debate is that neither side is able to show a clear superiority over the other. Many names have remained in dispute for generations, repeatedly debated once or twice every decade without a conclusive result. If a stalemate occurs, the debate effectively ends and turns into a purely ceremonial display. The men of each side begin to *nanggerrana* - to chant their mythological song-cycles in unison - to the accompaniment of hand-drums, while their female supporters decorate themselves and dance. Each side ostentatiously ignores the other, and tries to drown its rivals' chanting with the spiritedness and volume of its own. Any orators able to make themselves heard make arrangements for the name to be debated again at some future date; or they turn their attention to other matters - other unrelated name-disputes or pending debates.

But it does occasionally happen that one side demonstrates knowledge of one or more of the relevant secret names of the other, and so wins the debate more or less outright. An orator who has a name whispered to him correctly has little choice except to publicly acknowledge it correct, however reluctant he may be to do so; his only perceived alternative would be to swear a false oath and face death as a result. He simply turns to his side and announces that the name has been discovered; and the latter instantly besiege their opponents with demands that they explain how they acquired this knowledge.

In the period before a debate, the two groups make every effort to discover each other's secret names. A common procedure is for each side to attempt to bribe those of the other's supporters they suspect of having weak loyalties. Few men would be prepared to betray their own or their mothers' subclans; and it is usually each other's affines that each side canvasses. The offer of a large shell valuable is often enough to induce a man to betray his affines' esoterica; for while men have the right to learn the secret details of the myths of their wives' and wives' mothers' subclans, as I explained earlier, their allegiances are relatively weak. Bribery is known idiomatically
as *kasuwina kumbutekər*, literally 'pulling aside the headrest'; the scene this evokes is that of an orator being secretly awoken at night by having his wooden headrest slipped aside, and then being offered a bribe.

The immediate aim of each side is to simply demonstrate acquaintance with their opponents' secret names, and to do so in as few attempts as possible. But a further aim is, by doing so, to lend credibility to their own mythological claims and undermine the plausibility of those made by their opponents. For to win the contest suggests, by implication, that the winners possess a sufficiently extensive knowledge of the losers' mythology to be able to authoritatively controvert any of the losers' assertions they hold to be specious.

This is, incidentally, one reason why it is important for each side to be able to show itself acquainted not only with its opponents' version of the secret name of the disputed ancestor but also with their version of this figure's filiation. For it is in principle possible to hit upon this ancestor's esoteric name by simple guesswork, without having any knowledge of the secret mythology of the opposing side; for each side is normally aware of which names in each other's total name-corpuses have esoteric significance, since both exoteric and esoteric names may be given to children and used quite openly.

For the same reason, it weakens the winners' credibility if the losers can show that the contest was won by *kasuwina kumbutekər*. To learn one's opponents' secret names by bribery implies no genuine or extensive familiarity with their secret mythology, and therefore no authority to make categorical statements concerning this lore; all it need involve is learning the four secret names necessary for winning the debate.

A side worsted in a debate immediately claim - and probably actually suspect - that they have been betrayed in this way; that their opponents enticed some individual, probably one of their own supporters, to reveal the esoterica to them for payment. They will insist that their antagonists specify the individual they learned the names from, and when and under what circumstances this took place. If the latter did in fact acquire these names by bribery,
they will of course conceal this fact; they might claim that they were
told the names, and the mythology surrounding them, years ago by one
of the leaders of the opposing side, and name some individual long
since dead. Their opponents are unlikely to be deceived by this
ruse; and heated argument may then break out between the two sides
as the losers try to force the winners' orators to swear *matyira sa'al*
as proof of their veracity.

If their opponents have shown themselves to have discovered
enough of their esoterica to make the sanction of publicly exposing this
lore a potent one, the losers have little choice except to concede
defeat and relinquish the disputed name. Many men regard *kasuwina
kumbutøker* as, if not altogether legitimate, at least an acceptable
means of winning a debate. Neutrals will bring pressure to bear on the
losers to cease prolonging the debate with pointless recriminations and
allow everyone to leave; perhaps, they will tell the losers, the
winners did bribe someone, but you should have had the sense to do the
same yourselves. As the gathering disperses, the losers must console
themselves with the prospect of discovering the individual who
betrayed them and finishing him off with sorcery.

A full-scale debate is unlikely to end before nightfall,
whatever the outcome. Before leaving the debating-ground - or, if it
is already very late, the following morning - a final ritual act is
performed. Each side sacrifices a domestic pig as a propitiatory
offering to the totemic ancestors referred to during the debate; this
is meant to avert any sickness or other misfortune that might other­
wise result from the whispering of their secret names. As with the
pig sacrificed after *vei kuwałapuna*, each side distributes the meat
among its own supporters.

A small-scale debate, I should note, follows essentially the
same procedures as those used in a full-scale debate, but with the
omission of some of the more purely ceremonial details. It is held,
as I have said, indoors and involves relatively few participants;
*vei kuwałapuna* and *mba'ar sëna* are omitted, and the men do not
decorate themselves or the *nimbi*; and the affair is conducted in a
generally less formal atmosphere.

vii. **Conclusion: the viability of the debating system**

An important point about debating is that very few of the
men who take part actually speak, and the great majority act simply as an audience. Almost the only speakers are the established or aspiring leaders of their subclans; men qualified by age, oratorical ability and expertise in mythology to take an active role in debating. While a debate is a confrontation between two subclans as groups, it is more immediately a personal contest between their leaders, with their followers as spectators to this contest. The role of leader is viewed as quintessentially that of defender of his subclan's mythological rights and privileges; and it is in the debating-arena that his capacity to perform this role effectively is judged by his own followers and by others. Knowledge of mythology is a necessary but not sufficient condition of leadership; if a knowledgeable man shows himself ineffectual in debating, easily outmanoeuvred in argument or too ready to concede defeat, he may be ousted by another of his own subclan.

But there is, however, usually more to the relationship between the leaders of the two sides than simple headlong antagonism. The men qualified to speak in debate, whatever side they are aligned with, form a distinct and exclusive category, and they implicitly share a common interest in maintaining their high social status. Moreover leaders habitually make alliances with men of similar status, as I have explained, and tend to be linked to one another by close affinal and matrilateral ties. While the major and most visible cleavage in a debate lies between the two opposing subclans, there is a second and more submerged one cross-cutting this and in an important sense mediating it: between the men who actively conduct the debate, and those who act as their followers and audience. In a debate the orators of the opposing sides often tacitly support and reinforce each other's social status; for example, by directing their speeches specifically to each other, by refusing to acknowledge other members of each other's subclans as qualified to speak, and so forth. There is then at least latently an element of cooperation in their relationship as well as competition (see Forge 1972a:534-5 for a similar argument concerning ceremonial exchange partnership in Melanesia).

The situation is perhaps analogous to that of prize-fighters in our own society: each aims to win the match, but they are also aware that they can help themselves and each other by exaggerating the
violence and drama of their encounter - and this requires a degree of mutual co-ordination.

Much of debating has this quality about it, and this is one of the factors serving to keep debates under control and preventing them from regularly breaking down into brawls. Leaders have strong stakes in ensuring that debates are conducted properly and are not disrupted by violence. For debating is the basis of their own social status, and it is essential for them that debating remain a credible institution. All the ideals of proper conduct in debating tend to reinforce the status of leaders; for it is these men who have the most opportunities to exemplify them, as well as the greatest interests in doing so.

While an orator's responsibility in a debate is in principle to vindicate his side's mythological claims, his main concern is in fact usually with preserving or increasing his own standing. Normally, it is necessary for him to champion his side successfully if he is to do so; but if circumstances and his opponents' diplomatic skills make it possible for him to concede defeat without his own personal prestige suffering, he may be quite prepared to do so. A name-dispute between two subclans represents a major political breach between them; but it is important to recognise the element of co-operation, or at least of common interest, in the relations between their leaders in order to fully understand the dynamics of a debate.

I explained in an earlier chapter that the numbers of debating-simbule have increased in the post-contact era as a result of an increased availability of shell valuables. Older men deplore this, and say that it has resulted in a hypertrophy of the debating system, increasing the frequency of name-disputes and making them more difficult to resolve. They speak of there normally having been in the past only one orator per subclan or tonomb, and their descriptions of the traditional status of the orator suggest that it resembled an office far more closely than it does at the present time. Formerly, they say, the authorisation and competence to name the children of the group was held only by one man at a given time; and as a result there were fewer disputes over names. But now that many groups possess several orators, these men involve their agnates in frequent disputes. This was the point of a remark which one speaker made
against his opponents during the second debate over the ownership of
the name Manggalaman in November 1977:

These days, all men know sakima'andj, and are able
to name their children themselves. But in the past,
they had to work for their simbuk, and in return he
would name them. Nowadays, everyone thinks he is a
simbuk, and keeps giving the wrong names to his children
and causing arguments.

Informants tend to suggest that the greater accessibility of
sakima'andj has produced a lowered standard of expertise; men with
a smattering of esoteric mythology often misappropriate the personal
names of other subclans from incompetence. My own evidence is,
however, that with the increase in the number of orators name-
disputes are often deliberately provoked by aspiring leaders who
wish to increase their standing; and that if name-disputes have
become more frequent than they were in the past, it is primarily
for this reason. Not surprisingly, attempts by younger orators to
engage their subclans in debates often meet with opposition from the
more established leaders of these groups, who interpret these as
attempts to pre-empt their control over their subclans' involvement
in debates.

Men say that in the past, when two groups disputed the ownership
of a name, their respective leaders would often settle the issue
privately and entirely among themselves, and so obviate the need to
involve their whole subclans in a debate. And when debates did
take place, the small numbers of speakers made it relatively easy for
a resolution to be achieved. Nowadays, it is said, it is more
difficult to create these kinds of consensus, because of the larger
numbers of debating-simbuks. Disagreements occur within each party
to the dispute, some men counselling compromise while others remain
intransigent. Debates have not only become more frequent, but they
have grown longer, and more often than in the past they end without
producing any settlement.

I would suggest that the lack of internal unanimity which,
informants claim, groups nowadays evince during name-disputes, may
often be a symptom of competition between rival leaders. With the
position of debating-simbuk no longer as exclusive as it was in the
past, co-leaders of the tanamb or subclan tend to bid for authority
against each other by proposing alternative courses of action in
name-disputes, and by undermining each other's attempts to carry them out. I am not suggesting that competition for leadership has intensified, as I see no reason for this to be so in itself, but rather that the focus of this rivalry has shifted. In the past, when access to sakima'andj was more restricted than it is now, competition within the subclan or tonɔmb would have centred principally upon the inheritance of this knowledge; it would in other words have tended to take the form of succession disputes, from which one individual was likely to emerge as more or less the undisputed leader of his group. This, I would argue, was almost certainly the reason behind the former practice of younger men supplying their debating-simbuks with regular food-gifts and labour; for these men would often have stood as the potential heirs of a relative monopoly of their agnatic sakima'andj. At the present time however, it is not access to their sakima'andj that tends to be at issue between agnates, so much as the policies which they are to follow in name-disputes; and the results of this are more frequent, longer, and less often conclusive debates.

It is also likely that the marriage alliances which, as I explained earlier, orators contract with each other had in the past a greater importance for the political relations between the groups which they represented. So long as each was sole leader of his subclan or tonɔmb, an alliance between two debating-simbuks would almost certainly preclude name-disputes between the two groups for the duration of the alliance. Moreover, any disputes between groups are likely to be settled relatively easily if their leaders comprise a small circle of close affines and uterine kin. Perhaps it is not only that the smaller number of orators in the past in itself made name-disputes less frequent and more easily resolved; but in addition, that because of their smaller numbers the alliances between them played a more effective part in mediating relations between groups: in preventing name-disputes and facilitating their resolution when they did occur.

I compared debating to a prize-fight, and in many respects the villagers themselves regard debating as a type of game or sport; a game, that is to say, in the sense of agon, to use Huizinga's (1949) term - the formal contest of skill 'played' by set rules and for specified stakes. The villagers place high value on skill in oratory, disputation and esoteric lore; adults are discerning judges of these skills, and enjoy witnessing two subclans pit them against each other
in debate. For the protagonists the debate is an opportunity to display these abilities and show themselves superior in them. Men, women and the nimbi arrays may as I have described be decorated lavishly for a major debate, each side trying to present the other with as impressive a visual spectacle as possible. I mentioned earlier that orators always describe the exploits of their totemic ancestors in the first person and the present tense, as though they were at that moment their own ancestors in the act of performing their cosmogonic tasks; I should mention that they might also physically act out an episode from a myth in order to emphasise their claims, using 'props' and a few assistants from the audience. A debate, then, also involves something very much like theatre, each side attempting to render its version of the mythological past as vivid and immediate as it can.

It has sometimes been noted of Melanesian societies that litigation and dispute appear to be relished, and that conflict is in no way an abnormal phenomenon but intrinsic to the texture of social life (Chowning 1974:153; Young 1974:41). This observation is very true of Avatip; debating is an essential feature of the relations between subclans, and to the villagers it is almost part of the definition of subclans that they are groups which debate against each other and continually test each other's capabilities in the debating-arena. Far from debates being in any way out of the ordinary, the villagers would think it very odd indeed if a year or two went by without any taking place.

Debating is an institution within which groups compete for status according to a set of established formal rules and a fixed ceremonial procedure; and it is one which involves appeal to a wide range of shared social values. Name-disputes can result in brawls and sorcery-feuds, and a large amount of energy in a debate is directed simply toward preventing the affair from turning into a fight. But to the villagers the esoteric, stylised and game-like character of debating sets it apart from, or above, practical affairs; and the antagonisms manifested in name-disputes should ideally be confined to the debating-arena and not allowed to overflow into the world of day-to-day social relations. This was the point of part of a pre-debate speech delivered in Melanesian pidgin by the Yentshanggai Councillor, in which he compared debating to the game of football:
Debating is only a kind of game; it isn't something to get angry or fight about. These two sides are going to kick-off now, and they are going to fight only with words. You people on the sidelines, you mustn't try to kick the ball, because that's the way fights get started. When this debate is over, the quarrel between these two groups will be completely finished with. Then tomorrow we can all return to being brothers, sisters and uterine kin again, chewing areca-nut in peace together.

This was of course an over-optimistic statement, as all who heard it knew it to be. But it does highlight the contribution which the debating system makes to maintaining the political integration of the community. Without the complex of name-disputes and debating, or some analogous institution, it is possible that this large but politically uncentralised community would long since have split apart as a result of the chronic conflict within it. The debating system gives this conflict a form in which the problems it creates for social integration are something like those involved in controlling the behaviour of spectators and players at football matches; an entirely different order of phenomenon, since there is always a basic consensus about the value of the game itself, the rules by which it at least should be played, and the importance of winning it (cf. Bailey 1970:1,21).

Some New Guinea societies have found solutions to similar problems in the form of systems of competitive ceremonial exchange, which many observers interpret as means of expressing personal or group rivalries in non-violent ways (see for example Kaberry 1941; Strathern 1971; Tuzin 1976; Young 1971). I argued earlier that the mode of subsistence at Avatip does not facilitate production of the surpluses necessary for the development of systems of this kind. The Abelam, to the north of Avatip, say that they "fight with yams" (Kaberry 1941:344); while Avatip debating-sides, as the Councillor put it, "fight only with words". Both societies are egalitarian and competitive; and whether involving the competitive exchange of yams, or merely of words, the two systems have an essentially similar significance. They provide a forum for individuals and groups to vie with one another for prestige and status in such a way that their rivalries tie them, ultimately, all the more closely together.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MYTHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN MAJOR NAME-DISPUTES

On the other hand, it also seems incorrect to say, with John Stuart Mill, that proper names have no meaning, that they are 'simply marks'. For they help to determine the meaning of the sentences into which they enter. If in the sentence 'Napoleon died at St. Helena' I substitute the name 'Wellington' for 'Napoleon', or 'Elba' for 'St. Helena', I obtain a sentence with a different meaning. But if we admit that a change of name can produce a change of meaning, it seems odd to insist on saying that the names themselves have none (Ayer 1963:129).

i. Introduction

It is unanimously claimed at Avatip that totemic mythology is immutable, and that any attempts to alter it would bring supernatural affliction. It is nevertheless certain that this mythology is continually manipulated. On average, a fresh name-dispute breaks out about once a year at Avatip; and each of these involves some group challenging a myth of another with a newly fabricated version of its own. Although, as I shall shortly explain, these innovations do not differ radically from established myths, new mythology is nevertheless produced regularly; whether or not it gains currency depends of course on its proponents' success in the debating-arena.

This situation is facilitated by the very small numbers of men with authority to teach sakima'andj. Many subclans possess - among their agnatic members or their allies - only one individual qualified to pronounce upon their mythology; and it is therefore a relatively simple matter for such an individual to alter this lore.¹

¹ Nowadays, some of the younger orators are semi-literate and have begun recording esoteric names in private notebooks, which they intend to pass on to their heirs. Some young absentees, on leave in the village, have even recorded esoteric mythology on cassette tape-recorders as a way of ensuring that their subclans' mythological patrimonies are never lost. These innovations are, I think, unlikely in themselves to affect the debating-system in any substantial way. If, a generation from now, orators brandish exercise books or tape-recorders at each other on the debating-ground, these are unlikely to be taken as convincing forms of proof. The Manambu are perfectly aware that it is as easy to
Even the supernatural sanctions against modifying myth are double-edged and, paradoxically, can work as much in favour of innovation as against it. When, for example, a large and expanding group contests a mythological claim of a small and declining one, it may try to persuade the latter that the reason it is dying out is precisely that it holds to false mythology. I have explained that it is normally the case in such a situation that the challengers have already taken effective possession of one or more of their opponents' hereditary prerogatives, and are attempting to have this legitimised in myth. Thus, they might argue that were these prerogatives not rightfully their own, they would be afflicted with sickness and infertility; the fact that their numbers are, on the contrary, growing indicates the approval of the totemic ancestors. Everything in this situation may conspire to convince even those individuals who themselves created the new mythology that it is in fact authentic; and in many cases these men may well be, as Guiart puts it, forgers with excellent consciences (Guiart 1972:115).

In general, men unquestioningly accept the lore set forth by the leaders of their own subclans and of subclans of which they themselves are allies. But they often view the sakima'andj of other groups with scepticism and readily suspect it of fraudulence. In their attitudes toward myth Avaćip men are capable at times both of credulity and cynicism; and the myths a man espouses, or may be prepared to disparage, tend to be relative to his kinship position.

People identify strongly with their totemic ancestors, and this is no doubt reinforced by the fact that they carry their names. As Bateson observed among the Iatmul, men take great pride in their nggwa'el-as'at and like to boast of their exploits - while passing ironic and disparaging asides on those of other groups (Bateson 1958: 127-8). It is commonly stated in myth, for example, that the creation of major features of the landscape, such as rivers and lakes, took place in a number of stages; that the channel, say, of a particular river was established by an ancestor of one subclan, and then widened to its present size by others belonging to one or more

F.n. 1 cont'd.

record lies on paper or on tape as it is to memorise them in one's head.

A literate tradition, as Freedman has shown for the written genealogies of Chinese lineages (1958:69-72) and as all readers of 1884 know, does not in itself prevent the past from being manipulated.
other groups. When men of the first subclan tell the myth, the point they will stress is their subclan's priority; it was their ancestor who began the creation of the river and so, it is implied, it is their subclan to which the real credit for its existence is due. The ancestors who came later were mere parvenus and added only a few unimportant finishing-touches. But the men of this second subclan, when they are asked, will focus on a detail omitted or depreciated by the first group; namely, that their own ancestors found the river only as wide as a man's finger, a "mere trickle of urine" (wusanggwwumbinda), and it cost them enormous effort to widen it to its proper size (I should mention that a myth such as this always indicates that the magical power to control the level of the river is held either by the second subclan or by both groups jointly). Thus even when mythology is fixed and agreed upon by all, it still provides scope for the play of nuance; a stress laid on some details, a de-emphasis of others, allows each subclan to present itself in the most impressive light and impugn other groups without actually contradicting them.

It is in fact a very small step from this to an actual dispute over mythology; what defines a formal dispute is that it always involves argument over the ownership of one or more of the names appearing in the myth, and that a direct conflict exists over some special prerogative for which the myth is the mandate.\(^2\)

When a group challenges a mythological claim of another, it

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2 I might observe that the nearest the Manambu ever came to a name-dispute with Europeans occurred at the village of Yuanamb in the early days of the Australian administration. One of the first missionaries to visit the village assembled the population and told them, via an interpreter, the Biblical story of Genesis. During the course of this, one of the village leaders became highly agitated and, at the end, rose and made an outraged speech. The name Atam, he expostulated, was that of a figure in his own subclan's mythology; the missionary had no right to make up spurious fables involving Atam and treat this ancestor as his. "Why", he demanded, "are you trying to steal my ancestor?"

I do not know what the reaction of the missionary was. Perhaps he replied that Adam was the progenitor of all human beings; if so, this answer would have mollified his accuser, I expect, and gratified his pride in his subclan's mythological status - though in a manner the missionary could not have intended.
never presents a radically different myth; in some cases its version is in fact identical in its essentials to that of its opponents, the only difference being that the figures appearing in it are claimed by the challenging group to be its own totemic ancestors. Usually, the strategy of the challengers is to present a myth following their opponents' version very closely; but distorted in such a way that its implications are subtly, but fundamentally, changed. The challenged group are, in other words, confronted with a myth which is recognisably their own; but one modified so that its purport is in effect to disinherit them of the disputed prerogative and enfranchise their challengers.

The challengers adopt this strategy primarily because the exoteric outline of their opponents' myth is usually widely known; if they were to put forward a myth widely at variance with this, it would be received by many with suspicion. Their problem is to radically alter the significance of their opponents' version but to do so with the greatest possible economy; some of the solutions that have been found to this problem show considerable ingenuity, as in the case of the Maliyaw version of the Tōpasawun myth to be discussed below. In short, although there is a high rate of production of new mythology at Avatip, these innovations take place very much within a finite vocabulary of themes and motifs; and as a result competing versions of the same myth are usually, to use Lévi-Strauss' term, transformations of each other, though of a simple and superficial kind. But these invariably occur, however, as part of political conflicts between groups and are rarely if ever, as Lévi-Strauss has sometimes suggested, the products of a purely theoretical and disinterested play of the intellect (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1975:10).

Because their versions of the disputed myth are so similar, the arguments used by the two sides in a debate to support their own often involve what seems, to an outsider, much hair-splitting and casuistry. Debating could well appear to an observer as nothing more than the expenditure of great heat, ingenuity and sophistry upon the most trivial or improbable mythical events; and it was perhaps this which induced Bateson, writing of Iatmul debates, to observe that "(t)he problems which most exercise the Iatmul mind appear to us fundamentally unreal" (Bateson 1958:229). However, very real and vital issues hang upon these hotly disputed minutiae.
I will now turn to some of the man name-disputes - or, more accurately in three of these cases, complexes of name-disputes - which have dominated Avatip political life for about two generations. Most of these have been what I called in the last chapter major name-disputes; the case-studies that follow are meant to illustrate the mythological strategies employed in these disputes, the historical course which such disputes run, and the political and sociological contexts in which they are conducted. The principal groups involved - Maliyaw, Yimal, Sarambusarak and Valik - are the four largest subclans at Avatip and the most dominant in the debating system; and, taken together, these case-studies provide a fairly full picture of the major political ties and cleavages within the community in at least the post-contact period.

ii. Case 1: The dispute over the ownership of the name Tòpasawun

This dispute is between the Ngölâ'angkw subclan Yimal and the Wuluwi-Nyawî subclan Maliyaw; it goes back nearly two generations and was still unresolved at the end of my fieldwork. Although the only name-dispute to have taken place between Yimal and Maliyaw in living memory, it is a very important one. For the protagonists are the two largest and politically dominant subclans at Avatip, and the dispute concerns the parts they each claim to have played in the creation of the village.

The growth of Maliyaw to its present size seems to have occurred fairly rapidly and within the past three generations or so. It is genealogically and in mythological terms a junior group; and the available evidence suggests that in the course of its expansion it has engaged in large numbers of name-disputes in a long-term bid to improve its mythological status. This process is still continuing; the Tòpasawun dispute is one of the controversies involved, and a number of others will be described below.

It is said that at the time of the cosmogony the site of Old Avatip lay submerged under several feet of water. Two totemic ancestors existed there; these were bird-ancestors, though they are represented in myth usually in anthropomorphic form. One was the kwa'as, a totemic bird of Makôm subclan, and the other the domestic fowl (tapuk), a totemic bird of the subclan Nambul. These two subclans are accordingly regarded as the oldest and most senior groups at Avatip. The Nambul ancestor was situated at the upriver end of the village site, the tamavall or 'canoe-prow' as this spot is known; and the Makôm ancestor at its downriver end, the malvall or 'canoe-stern' of the village. The major ceremonial houses of Makôm and Nambul are to this day often referred to as the malvall and tamavall of the village, and they are the two mythologically most senior and important ceremonial houses at Avatip. Each is said to be inhabited by one of the two tutelary spirits of Avatip, totemic ancestors of Makôm and Nambul, who are called Tòpayimborman and Kwasa'am respectively; these two figures are said to keep supernatural guard over Avatip as a whole, and are invoked with sacrifices during times of crisis.
Myth states that the two bird-ancestors, although the first beings present at the village site, were however entirely inactive; they simply stood immobile, up to their chests in the water, and were moreover covered from head to foot in repulsive sores. They were found in this condition by a totemic ancestor of Yimal subclan, whom Yimal claim bore the exoteric name Tapasawun. Tapasawun offered to restore them to health, but they refused, saying that others would come later to cure them; his task, they told him, was to raise land out of the water and create the village site. Yimal possesses a magical technique for draining swamp and reclaiming land, which invokes the spirit of a variety of ginger bearing the totemic name Sinaworkanawei (see Appendix C); and Tapasawun employed this magic to create dry land between the tamaval and malval.

Totemic ancestors of other subclans arrived, and some of these cured the Makam and Nambul ancestors of their sores; the latter then raised the malval and tamaval above the water-level, completing the village site. A small settlement began to form, Tapasawun allocating a section of the site to each subclan as its ward. Those subclans still in the isolation of their mythical villages, on observing smoke rising from the settlement, dispatched totemic ancestors there, and eventually every subclan was established at the new village. The last subclan to arrive was Maliyaw, coming from its mythical village Ambiaggai in the hills far to the north of Avatip; Tapasawun created a temporary causeway across the Sepik River, again using the Sinaworkanawei magic, to enable them to cross into the village. He made a pact of friendship with them, to signify that his descendants and theirs would gain their livelihood together and share the natural resources surrounding the village; taking a fish, he placed its head in the mouth of one of the Maliyaw ancestors and its tail in his own, and then cut the fish in two. In corroboration of this act, Maliyaw subclan possesses the personal name Ambakami ('fish-head') and Yimal the name Ngginyakami ('fish-tail'). The act is said to have been a sa'al, a sacred and supernaturally sanctioned oath. Having performed it, Tapasawun assigned Maliyaw its ward.

All indications point to this myth as being the longest-established version of the creation of the village, and it is still the most widely accepted. Formally, the two most senior subclans in the myth are Makam and Nambul; but this seniority is almost wholly nominal, and the myth so to speak takes pains to depreciate the part these groups played in the village's formation. Yimal, though a later arrival at the site, effectively plays the central role in the myth; and for those who accept this myth, Yimal owns the village site and is the group responsible for the existence of the settlement.

The counter-myth to this put forward by the subclan Maliyaw appears to have been in existence for a little under two generations. There is evidence, as I shall explain below, that one of the elderly Maliyaw debating-stimbuka still active at the time of my fieldwork was knowingly involved in its creation.
The single most crucial feature of this counter-myth is that Maliyaw claim Toposawun to have been a totemic ancestor of their own subclan. The two main protagonists in this version are Toposawun and another figure called Apasawun, a totemic ancestor of the Sambalap tonamb Makapangku, a totemic-sibling group of Maliyaw. Maliyaw and Makapangku claim that this pair were the two very first ancestors to come upon the village site; they arrived there not only while it was still submerged, but before even the Makom and Nambul ancestors had arrived there. A small akwi, or island of floating grass, ran aground against them and took root to form a plot of dry land; this spot, which is said to have been between the tamaval and malval, was thus the first part of the village site to be formed. Later, the Makom and Nambul ancestors appeared and, after them that of Yimal; Maliyaw and Makapangku deny, however, that this figure was called Toposawun and claim that he bore some other, unspecified, name. From this point onward, the myth essentially follows the Yimal version, but with one fundamental difference. A compact was made between the Maliyaw and Yimal ancestors, just as Yimal claim; the head of the fish being put in the mouth of the Maliyaw ancestor and its tail in the Yimal ancestor's mouth. But it was the Maliyaw ancestor who was called Toposawun, and he who offered the fish, performed the oath and cut the fish in half. It was, in effect, Maliyaw that invited Yimal to settle in the village and share in its resources, and not the reverse. Yimal may indeed have later settled the other subclans at Avatip, as it claims; but Yimal had itself been allowed to settle there in the first place by Maliyaw.

The dispute, as one can see, revolves around three contested elements in the myth: which of the two ancestors was called Toposawun; which of the two was the first to arrive at the village site and create dry land there; and, in the scene with the fish, who in fact was giving the fish to whom.

While the dispute concerns the relative seniority of Maliyaw and Yimal in the village foundation-mythology, a further and still more vital issue is also involved. Setting aside Maliyaw, the most senior groups in this mythology are, apart from Nambul, the subclans of Nggola'angkw; and all these groups possess, as the sanction of their status, sorcery to destroy the community by infesting it with poisonous snakes and insects (see Chapter 3). Of the four most important Maliyaw debating-simbuka at the time of my fieldwork, at least one knew this sorcery, for all four were sisters' sons of Makom subclan; their fathers had also learned it before them as sisters' husbands of Makom. By attempting to revise the seniority of their subclan in the foundation-mythology, the leaders of Maliyaw have in effect for two generations been attempting to gain for their subclan, and for Makapangku, permanent title to perform this sorcery; to have their own subclan, and its totemic-sibling tonamb, included among the groups which wield this sanction.

The foundation-mythology, and the ownership of the name Toposawun, have been debated by Yimal and Maliyaw without result several times; the last two debates were held in 1972 and, just before my arrival at Avatip, in 1977. Both sides employed etymological arguments, among other kinds. Maliyaw
and Makapangkw claimed that Tapasawun and Apasawun were totemic sawun, or egrets - a joint totemic species of theirs, they argued, but not one of Yimal. Yimal countered this argument by claiming that while the name does indeed contain the element -sawun, their Tapasawun was not an egret but their own totemic bird, the cormorant (tambul). They pointed to the segment Topo-, from tep, or 'village'; any personal name containing this term must belong to their own subclan, whatever other lexical elements it may contain, for their subclan was responsible for the formation of the village. (This may not seem, to us, a very convincing argument, since it involves a petitio principii, but I do not know if this was pointed out by Maliyaw).

An interesting sociological sidelight on the dispute is that it involved conflict not only between Yimal and Maliyaw, but also a secondary and more submerged conflict between Makapangkw and Nambul. Nambul is not only one of the two formally most senior subclans in the foundation-mythology, and thus one of the holders of the plague sorcery, but is also the subclan immediately senior to Makapangkw within Nambul-Sambolap clan. Relations between close collaterals tend, as I have explained, to be intensely competitive; and while Nambul was not directly involved in the Tapasawun dispute, it is clear that the involvement of Makapangkw in it (in the form of the figure Apasawun) was part of an attempt by this group to equal or better the mythological status of its senior.

But to turn to the main protagonists: I explained earlier (see Chapter 6) that relations between the Yimal leaders - particularly M. of the tonomb Silikindu - and the Maliyaw debating-sirribu had for many years been embittered, and numerous private disputes had taken place between them. These had been all the more aggravated by the fact that M. was a sister's son of the Maliyaw tonomb Wapikas and had married into Matikerriban, the other Maliyaw tonomb; thus he should in theory have been a close ally and supporter of his affines and matrikin. He had learned much of Maliyaw mythology from N., the leader of the tonomb Wapikas and his classificatory mother's brother; but he had later poured scorn on N.'s knowledge of mythology, claiming publicly that all the lore N. had taught him was spurious. This so infuriated N. that he swore a formal oath never again to teach his subclan's mythology to his allies. If anything, however, this action only advantaged M., for it made him one of the few men in the community from whom this esoterica could still be learned.

Late in 1977, M. attempted to re-open the Tapasawun dispute, challenging Maliyaw to another debate. With rhetorical hyperbole, he demanded that he and N. debate the name single-handedly in a kind of verbal duel, the loser's subclan to leave the village for ever. Eventually the two subclans agreed tentatively to hold a full-scale debate early in the new year. N. announced that during this debate he would publicly swear a matiyira sa'al to the effect that Topasawun was a totemic ancestor of his own subclan; people could judge for themselves whether he was lying, by whether or not he died as a result.
However, as the time for the debate approached it became clear that N. was in fact reluctant to swear such an oath; and this suggests that he knew his subclan's version of the disputed myth to be of recent origin, and that he may himself as a young man have been involved in its creation. He announced to his subclansmen that the debate would have to be indefinitely postponed; they had recently debated against Sarambusarak subclan, he said, for the ownership of the name Manggalam (see below), and he did not want to strain his followers' resources further by holding another full-scale debate so soon. In this way he managed to renege on his promise without loss of face, and his subclansmen were in fact grateful to him for what they interpreted as his magnanimity toward them.

In this he was aided, if unwittingly, by W., the debating-simbuk of the Yimal tonomb Kwindjambangk. He too wished to postpone the debate, though for different reasons. He was in the process of building a new house, a task which would take another year or so to complete, and prevailed on M. to allow the debate to be put off until the house was finished; only then would it be possible for him, W., to devote his energy and resources to organising a debate on an adequate scale. There are, as I have said elsewhere, often latent rivalries between leaders of the same subclan; and it is likely that W. felt M. to be taking too much of the initiative in organising the debate, and that W. therefore wished to put a stop to the train of events that M. was attempting to set in motion. The end result was that the debate fell through, and had still not taken place when I left Avatip for the last time nearly two years later. In the meantime, M. channelled his antipathies against Maliyaw in other directions: the dispute over the ownership of the name Yanggonmawai with Makom, the maternal subclan of most of the Maliyaw debating-simbukes, described in the preceding chapter; a dispute with his maternal tonomb over the ownership of a stand of palms; and finally, just as I was about to leave late in 1979, his divorce of his Maliyaw wife amid bitter recriminations and mutual threats and accusations of sorcery between himself and his affines.

This case provides a good example of the kinds of ingenious 'twists' which groups give to each others' myths when challenging their mythological claims. Yimal and Maliyaw, it should be noted, are not only the two largest subclans at Avatip but also belong respectively to Nggala'angkw and Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pairs; the Toposawun controversy is the largest-scale and most important name-dispute known to have occurred between any two marriageable subclans. Most such disputes, it will be recalled, take place between agnates and in this way do not jeopardise the affinal and uterine ties which are the fundamental basis of the integration of the community. In this sense, the Toposawun dispute was an unusual
one in its potentially disruptive effects. It is perhaps not surprising that it was accompanied by the effective collapse of the personal affinal and matrilateral ties of the main protagonists.

iii. Case 2: The attempts by the subclan Valik to legitimise its control of the ceremonial house Kamandja'amb

For as many generations as can be remembered, the subclan Makom has had no ward of its own, and most of its men have resided with those of Valik, the subclan fourth after Makom in seniority within Nggala'angkw clan-pair. Makom possesses as a nggala'al-asa'at the ceremonial house Kamandja'amb; this is the mythologically most senior and prestigious of the Nggala'angkw ceremonial houses, and is expected to be maintained always as the largest and finest. It is identified with the malval, as I mentioned earlier, the mythological 'canoe-stern' of Avatip, and is said to be inhabited by one of the community's two tutelary spirits; it is also the usual venue for performances of the Ndumwi ritual.

Ever since Makom has been residentially incorporated into Valik, Kamandja'amb as well has stood in the Valik ward and Valik have been in effective control of the building. All the decisions relating to the running of the house are in practice made by the senior men of this subclan; because of its small size, Makom has often been for long periods without men of sufficient ritual status. At the time of my fieldwork, for example, all the Makom men were relatively young, and none were of the highest ritual grade until two were promoted late in 1978 (see Chapter 6).

The formal status of Makom as owner of Kamandja'amb is still, however, nominally respected. Whenever the house is rebuilt or repaired, a Makom man must lay his hand to the work first, so as not to give offence to the spirits associated with the building. He must strike the first - but only the first - axe-blows when a tree is felled for a post, break the ground when a post-hole is dug, and so forth. But Makom is then expected to leave the rest of the task to the Valik men who complete it with their superior manpower. The latter speak of themselves, self-deprecatingly, as "just the workmen (in Melanesian pidgin wokboj) of Makom." But it is clear that they think of themselves as just as much the owners of Kamandja'amb as Makom. Sometimes, for example, they say: "We sit on one half of Kambakanawyleis (the totemic stool-name of Makom) and Makom sits on the other" - i.e. the two groups are equally rightful occupants of Kamandja'amb.

This situation is as yet, however, still largely one of simple customary usage, and has no mythological authorisation, or at least only a minimal one. Valik does have the mythologically sanctioned right to keep its slit-drums in Kamandja'amb, and this formally entitles it to at least some say in the management of the building; Makom is prohibited under the same sanction from having its slit-drums in Kamandja'amb and keeps them in the ceremonial house of the subclan Warangga'amb (see below). But Valik nevertheless
has no significant mythological ties with Makom; and in particular it plays no part in the mythology concerning the creation of the building, and almost all the personal names connected with it are owned either by Makom or by Yimal. One exception is the name Ndijikananggi, the totemic name of the *ndjik*, the cross-pieces supporting the floor of the loft, which Makom granted to Valik about a generation ago in recognition of its contributions to the maintenance of the building.

Most if not all of the name-disputes I have recorded in which Valik has been involved have been part of a long-term attempt by this subclan to strengthen its mythological rights in Kamandja'amb and consolidate its links with Makom. One quite specific motive for this appears to be that Valik possesses a *simbuk*-ship, which requires a major ceremonial house in which to perform most of the rituals connected with this office. These rites are performed in Kamandja'amb; but this is, however, somewhat anomalous since a *simbuk*-ship, and the ceremonial house ritually linked with it, should ideally both be mythologically vested in the same group.

None of the name-disputes in which Valik has been involved have been with Makom itself. On the contrary Valik has always been a staunch supporter of the patrimonial rights of Makom. It is clear that Valik regards any threats to the mythological status of Makom as, indirectly, a threat to itself; its special relationship with Makom is useful to it only so long as Makom retains its important position in ritual and cosmology. Over the past few generations, for example, Valik has repeatedly taught Makom men their own mythology so as to keep them able to defend themselves against the many attempts by the subclan Yimal to challenge their hereditary entitlements. In its own name-disputes the strategy of Valik has been to challenge groups linked mythologically with Makom, in an attempt to displace these groups and acquire these ties for itself. In these controversies, Makom has maintained a studied neutrality, so as to avoid antagonising any of the parties involved.

The most important, and oldest, of these disputes has been with the subclan Warangga'amb and concerns the ownership of the name Wasakwuapan. Like the Topasawun dispute, this controversy concerns the creation of Avatip. It will be recalled that when the (Yimal) Topasawun discovered the Makom *kwa'as*-ancestor, the latter refused Topasawun's offer to cure his sores, saying that another would come later and do so. Warangga'amb claim that this later arrival was a totemic ancestor of their own subclan and that his exoteric name was Wasakwuapan. This figure, they say, cured the *kwa'as*-ancestor with magic, raised him out of the mud in which he was immobilised and set him on dry land. This enabled the latter to marry and beget a number of children, who became local spirits associated with the village site. In gratitude to his benefactor he transferred most of these offspring - and the rights to employ their public and esoteric names - to Warangga'amb. This myth is said to give Makom men the right of residence in the Warangga'amb ward, though this is an option which few if any seem to have used at least for several generations; it also seems to be as part of this
mythological link between the two groups that Makom keep their slit-drums in the Warangga'amb ceremonial house.

Most men not directly involved in the Wasakwuapan dispute regard the claims of Warangga'amb - at least privately - as authentic; and all other indications are that the Warangga'amb version of the disputed myth is indeed far older than that of Valik. The Valik counter-myth follows quite closely their opponents' version; the main difference is the simple but crucial one that they claim Wasakwuapan to have been a totemic ancestor of their own subclan and not of Warangga'amb. It was their ancestor who restored the kwa'as-ancestor to health and enabled him to marry, and who was given in repayment a number of the latter's children. The names of these offspring have not themselves as yet been brought into dispute by the two subclans, at least openly; the transfer of the children is in fact a secret detail of the myth. But the dispute does illustrate, incidentally, a common feature of Avatip name-disputes; that a conflict over the ownership of one strategic name often involves, by implication, the rights to a whole set of additional names.

Although Warangga'amb is a small subclan, and the most junior within Nggala'angkw, its possession of the name Wasakwuapan gives it a relatively important place in the village creation-myth. This may be one motive for the attempts by Valik to acquire the name; but possession of the name would also give Valik the status of benefactor of Makom in myth, and this would provide a mythological basis for its co-residence with Makom and control of the ceremonial house Kamandja'amb. If the Wasakwuapan myth had ever been part of some residential or other association between Warangga'amb and Makom, it has long since effectively ceased to be so; but it is as it were tailored to suit exactly the contemporary state of relations between Valik and Makom, and it seems to be primarily for this reason that Valik is attempting to plagiarise it.

The Wasakwuapan debates have focussed mainly on a single episode in the disputed mythology. It is said that at Wasakwuapan's arrival at the village site two totemic ancestors - Kwalungkwundimi, of the Sambelap tonamb Makapangkw, and Tuwindjameli of Sarambusarak subclan - were in the process of creating the Sepik River. These two figures passed by the village travelling downstream, pushing open a channel for the river, and as they did so they called out to Wasakwuapan and asked his name; and he shouted ('wasahmmand, from wasakuima 'to shout') his name to them in reply (hence Wasakwuapan, or 'strong shout'). Both Valik and Warangga'amb conceded in debate that the other indeed possesses an ancestor who shouted out in this way; but each has attempted to prove that its own shouted first and is therefore the 'true' Wasakwuapan. In these arguments Warangga'amb has been able to present the more convincing case; at Old Avatip, it points out, its ward stood upriver from that of Valik, and its own ancestor must therefore have been the first to encounter the two figures as they came down the Sepik.

Wasakwuapan has been debated by Valik and Warangga'amb many times, but always inconclusively; it was first debated in pre-contact times, and was most recently debated three times in close succession during the 1970's. One incident during this
protracted dispute provides a revealing sidelight on the debating system in general. In the early 1950's the two groups took the dispute to Ambunti for adjudication by the kiap, or patrol officer. Bemused, one can only surmise, by the nature of the dispute, the officer nevertheless attempted to arbitrate it, and was apparently convinced by Warangga'amb that the name was rightfully theirs. He told Valik to give up the name and sent everyone home with a warning to keep the peace. Valik however ignored his ruling, on the grounds that the kiap was no expert in mythology, and the dispute has since continued unresolved. After this egregious failure of the European legal system to deal with name-disputes, none have ever again been brought before it.

Another and more recent name-dispute in which Valik has been involved is with Nggambak, the subclan immediately senior to itself with Nggola'angkw. Nggambak has a minor mythological tie with Makom, as part of which it owns the name Kalmalandikei, the totemic name of the loft-floor of Kamandja'am'b ceremonial house, and has accordingly the exclusive right to inaugurate the construction or repair of this component of the building. In 1976, the senior men of Valik gave this name to a child of their subclan, claiming the name was theirs, and a small-scale debate between the two groups took place. Nggambak challenged the Valik men to demonstrate knowledge of the secret equivalent of the name; the latter communicated to them what they thought to be the correct version, but this was announced a miscall, and after a few more half-hearted attempts, all of them wrong, Valik conceded defeat and relinquished the name. They have not since tried to re-open this dispute.

Myth states that a pair of ancestral eagles belonging to Nggambak and Makom, and called respectively Kalmalandi and Ambun, created Kanggwuvol, a lagoon in the direction of the Washkuk Hills. Although small, it is an important crocodile hunting-ground in the dry season; and the magic to control its fertility, which invokes Ambun and Kalmalandi, is owned jointly by Makom and Nggambak. In the myth of the creation of the lake the two ancestral eagles perched on Kalmalandikei in course of fashioning Kanggwunvol. In laying claim to the name, Valik seems to have been attempting primarily to acquire totemic ownership of the Kamandja'am'b loft-floor, and the right to supervise its maintenance; but it may be that it was also attempting to have itself ratified in myth as a co-owner, together with Makom and Nggambak, of the Kanggwuvol lagoon and its fertility-magic.

Valik was also involved more recently in a dispute with the subclan Sambolap, over the ownership of the name Sawunmbi. Sambolap, like Warangga'am'b and Nggambak, has a mythological link with Makom; as part of this tie it stores its initiatory flutes in Kamandja'am'b and owns the name Sawlei, the totemic name of one of the posts of the ceremonial house. But most importantly, it owns Sawunmbi, the totemic name of the rear half of the building's tupwi, the ceremonial mound standing in front of it; the front half of the tupwi belongs to Makom and bears the totemic name Maiwar. A ceremonial mound bears its owners' totemic plants and other plants employed in male initiatory ritual; it is the major ritual focus of a ceremonial house, and plays a particularly important role in the rites associated with the office of simbuk. Thus while
the Kamandja'amb *tupwi* is an important element in all the rights connected with the Valik *simbuk*-ship it is not, however, a *ngwara'ai-aai*-ai of this subclan.

Early in 1979, one of the Valik *tANDOM* made an attempt to rectify this situation and appropriate the name Sawunmbi. This occurred under the following circumstances.

One of the two debating-*simbuk* of the Valik *tANDOM* *Ndjemalwan* died in late 1978, and this left the leadership of the *tANDOM* solely to R., a young orator in his late forties and the dead orator's classificatory son. Some three months later, R. laid claim to the totemic ownership of the rear half of the Kamandja'amb *tupwi* by giving the name Sawunmbi to a girl born recently to his *tANDOM*, and the subclan Sambolap responded by challenging Valik to a debate. R.'s move seems to have been, at least partly, a means of publicising his new status as sole leader of his *tANDOM*. It was vigourously opposed by S., the debating-*simbuk* of the other Valik *tANDOM*, R.'s senior by five years and his classificatory elder brother. It may well have been that S. genuinely wished to avoid a quarrel with Sambolap. But it is clear that one reason for his response was his resentment at R.'s attempt, as he saw it, to challenge his own authority. Rivalries of this kind between co-leaders of the same subclan are, as I have elsewhere explained, quite common. S. publicly denied that his subclan had any right to the name Sawunmbi, and forbade his *tANDOM*-agnates and their allies from taking any part in the debate with Sambolap. In fact, he took the extraordinary step of supporting Sambolap against R. and the latter's *tANDOM* during this debate, and made speeches against R. demanding of him: "Why do you want this name? What grievance do you have against me that you want to leave me and go to that other place (i.e. why do you want to claim for your *tANDOM* a place in myths in which our subclan plays no part)?" With the support of half of his subclan withdrawn, and S. siding with his opponents against him, R. realised that he was in an impossible position and abandoned his claim to the disputed name.

Valik, it should be noted, does in fact have remote reversionary claims in the estate of Makøm; for it is the most junior subclan of the clan of which Makøm is the most senior. Thus Valik's control of the Makøm ceremonial house is an example of the way in which property belonging to a declining subclan can sometimes escheat to a group very junior to it, a group which has so to speak 'jumped' the successorial queue. This case also shows that a name-dispute often involves more than simply a direct contest between two groups for some special status or privilege. For the disputed privilege may not in fact have the same significance for both sides. The mythological ties which Warangga'amb, Nggambak and Sambolap have with Makøm, and which Valik tried to acquire for itself in its name-
disputes with these groups, are more valuable to Valik than they are to the three other subclans.

iv. Case 3: The name-disputes between Maliyaw and Sarambusarak

Of the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans, Maliyaw and Sarambusarak are the two largest and most frequently involved in name-disputes and debating. Over the past forty years or so they have disputed the rights to three personal names with each other; this has involved a total of nine full-scale debates, the highest number of major disputes I have recorded for any pair of subclans. Two of the disputed names are closely linked in myth and are essentially part of a single mythological dispute. I will describe this controversy first, and turn later to the dispute over the third name, which is a separate issue and the most recently arisen.

It will be remembered (see Chapter 5) that the subclans Ambasarak and Maliyaw have the two most important and prestigious positions in the organisation of the yam harvest ritual. They control two of the three yam ritual associations, hold the joint right to decide the timing of the ritual, and supervise the construction and erection of the two largest of the three effigies which form the focus of the initiatory version of the ritual. The status of Ambasarak in the ritual is, however, formally senior and superior to that of Maliyaw; for its ritual water-hole is considered the origin-place of all yams, and its effigy stands as 'elder brother' to that of Maliyaw and must under supernatural sanction be erected before it.

The public and secret names of Nggoleinwakon, the Ambasarak effigy, are owned by Ambasarak itself; but a number of other names connected with the figure belong to Sarambusarak, the subclan genealogically immediately junior and one with which Ambasarak has very close mythological and totemic ties. One of these names is Manambunyawor, the totemic name of the nyawdr, a yellow clay, said in myth to have been applied to the face of Nggoleinwakon after his birth. A second is the name Manambundjombandu, the totemic name of the ndjerrib, or carved designs, stated to have been made upon him at the same time. It is said that Nggoleinwakon was born in the form of a plain tree-trunk, just as a tree-trunk is used as the armature for his effigy at the present time. It was totemic ancestors of Sarambusarak that were responsible for his being fitted with a head and ornamented with nyawor and ndjdrrib; and while Nggoleinwakon himself is considered a totemic ancestor of Ambasarak, it has always been the right of Sarambusarak men to perform these functions whenever the effigy is constructed.

Ambasarak and Sarambusarak claim that the Maliyaw effigy, as the junior of the two, was born after their own, and had its head fitted and its nyawor and ndjemb applied later. Maliyaw, however, has for some decades been attempting to invalidate these claims and alter the relative seniority of the two effigies.
Forty or fifty years ago Maliyaw laid claim to the name Manambundjømbandu, asserting that this totemic name was that of carved designs which their own effigy, Kobavwi, had received as a neonate; moreover they had been applied to him before Nggoleinwakon received his designs, which, they also claimed, carried some name other than Manambundjømbandu. Three full-scale debates were held over the ownership of the name over a period of about a decade, and during the last of these Maliyaw appear to have proved themselves acquainted with at least some of the Sarambusarak esoteric lore concerning the creation of Nggaleinwakon. There are indications that they were as a result able to force Sarambusarak to accede to a revision of this mythology: according to this new version Nggaleinwakon was abandoned by his mother immediately after birth and fostered, together with Kobavwi, by the latter's mother. As they sat together on her lap they had carved designs applied to them simultaneously. To signalise this it was agreed that Maliyaw would take the name Manambundjømbandu and Sarambusarak its female form, Manambundjømbata'akw. The issue, however, is still considered only partially settled and both groups claim they will again debate the name at some time in the future. In the meantime, Sarambusarak have begun to claim that Kobavwi's mother held Nggaleinwakon on the inner part of her lap and Kobavwi outermost; and that Nggaleinwakon therefore clearly remains, by this minimal criterion, still the senior.

In the late 1950's, Maliyaw attempted to appropriate the name Manambunyawor, claiming similarly that this was the totemic name of face-paint applied in myth to its own effigy, Kobavwi, and that Kobavwi was decorated in this way before Nggaleinwakon. Their own figure was thus in myth the first of the two to be completed, and is therefore the senior. Four full-scale debates have taken place over the ownership of Manambunyawor, the last three in the late 1960's and early 1970's; all have been inconclusive, neither side being able to demonstrate any knowledge of the other's esoteric names. In the meantime, Kobavwi still remains formally the 'younger brother' of Nggaleinwakon, and continues to be erected after it during the yam harvest ritual.

I explained earlier that some generations ago Ambasarak had its esoteric sakima'andj restored to it by Maliyaw after losing possession of this lore; and that as a result it has ever since been obliged to support Maliyaw in debating. An important feature of all the debates which have taken place between Maliyaw and Sarambusarak is that while most of Ambasarak and its allies have sided with Sarambusarak, Ambasarak has each time assigned a number of men to support Maliyaw (see Figure 15); even though it is Ambasarak itself that owns Nggaleinwakon and, therefore, whose mythological status would suffer were Maliyaw to win the Manambundjømbandu and Manambunyawor disputes. Ambasarak is in effect in the unhappy position of having its ritual prerogatives the subject of dispute between two other subclans, both of which moreover have claims to its support. A further complication in these debates, I might mention, has been that Sarambusarak customarily provides men for both of the yam ritual associations which Maliyaw and Ambasarak control (see Chapter 5); and this has been the cause of long recriminations between Sarambusarak and Maliyaw during all their debates.
More recently, a rather different mythological dispute broke out between Maliyaw and Sarambusarak, revolving around the ownership of the name Manggalaman. According to myth the magic to control storms and call down thunderbolts was created by totemic ancestors of the most senior Wuluwi-Nyawi subclan, Nyakaw, in an aerial ceremonial house called Nyapal. Nyapal was later visited by a figure belonging to Sarambusarak, whom this subclan claim bore the exoteric name Manggalaman, and this ancestor learned the storm-magic there from those of Nyakaw; as a consequence both subclans now possess this technique. The storm-magic is the single most important hereditament of Sarambusarak, and it is held in great fear even by its owners; it will be remembered that according to legend it was a man of Sarambusarak who destroyed Asiti by this means.

In 1972 the name Manggalaman was discovered being borne simultaneously by a Sarambusarak and a Maliyaw child, and a dispute immediately broke out between the two groups, both claiming the exclusive right to the name. After many delays a full-scale debate finally took place in 1976, which produced no settlement, and a second in 1977. Manggalaman, Maliyaw claimed, was a totemic ancestor of their own subclan, and it was he who flew to the ceremonial house Nyapal and acquired the storm-magic there. They conceded that Sarambusarak also had an ancestor who visited Nyapal; but this figure did so later, was not called Manggalaman and acquired no magic.

It appears that the Maliyaw debating-stimbucks had either fabricated their own version of the storm-magic or - and this seems more likely - had somehow managed to learn the formula held by Nyakaw and Sarambusarak; in either case, it was clear that they were in effect claiming that it was their subclan, and not Sarambusarak, that shared with Nyakaw the right to perform this magic. These claims were lent credibility by the fact that Nyakaw does have stronger mythological and totemic links with Maliyaw than with Sarambusarak, in connection with the membership of the Nyakaw tonomb Mbwindimi in the yam harvest ritual association controlled by Maliyaw. In the Manggalaman dispute Nyakaw maintained, however, careful impartiality, as is the usual practice for a group in such a position; in debate Mbwindimi formally aligned itself with Maliyaw, and the other Nyakaw tonomb with Sarambusarak, but both attempted to play mediatory roles.

One of the totems of Maliyaw is the tree ma'angk (Homa tim poitidum), which is personified in its mythology as an ancestor bearing the name Manggandimi. The ma'angk has a very tall, straight trunk with a light crown, and in myth the crown is represented as the head-dress (ambawccwi) of Manggandimi. Maliyaw claimed in debate that Manggalaman is the name of this head-dress, and that it was this figure who acquired the storm-magic in Nyapal. They supported this claim with an etymological argument, deriving the segment Mangga- from ma'angk on the parallel of Manggandimi; while -laman, they said - from lamana (to glow, shine forth) - referred to the bright red leaves of the ma'angk. Only their own subclan, they insisted, had the right to personal names containing the segment Mangga-, and for another subclan to employ this lexical item was a deliberate affront. They accused Sarambusarak of trying to usurp totemic ownership of the
ma'angk tree, and asked them rhetorically whether they had no totemic trees of their own.

In the first debate Sarambusarak tried to counter this argument with an etymology of their own. Their Manggalaman, they claimed, flew to Nyapal carrying firebrands with his hands and feet; -laman referred to the glowing of these brands, while Mangga- derived from the word ma'an (leg). This etymology, however, was received with general dubiety, and in the second debate Sarambusarak tried another approach. They conceded that Mangga- did indeed appear to derive from ma'angk, but denied that this implied any attempt on their part to claim ownership of this tree. They stated emphatically that they acknowledged this tree to be a Maliyaw totem, and recounted the names of their own totemic trees as evidence that they possessed more than sufficient of their own. There was only one ma'angk-ancestor, Manggandimi, over whose name there was no dispute; but Manggalaman was not a tree-ancestor of any kind but a man - an ancestor in entirely human form. The dispute had nothing to do with trees, and Maliyaw was deliberately confusing matters by trying to "put the name inside a tree" (kwalemir kawlana). Sarambusarak, the debating-simbua of this subclan also pointed out, possesses several names containing the element Mangga-; Manggapa'akw, for example, the name of the digging-stick with which the Sarambusarak ancestor Tuwindjameli dug open the course of the Sepik River (see above). If Maliyaw claimed ownership of all names containing Mangga-, why then was it not also laying claim to these?

Before the second debate took place, some of the younger and more hot-headed Sarambusarak orators had threatened to use the storm-magic during the debate and call down a destructive hail of 'stones' upon all the participants. The debate began in an atmosphere of some apprehension, which was heightened when storm-clouds appeared around mid-day and a heavy shower disrupted the affair. But after an hour or so the weather cleared and, after the debate, the more senior Sarambusarak leaders claimed that they had managed to dissuade their more volatile juniors from employing the magic.

During this debate, while each side were testing their opponents' knowledge of esoterica, one of the Maliyaw orators correctly whispered the secret name of the Sarambusarak Manggalaman. The Sarambusarak side were in an uproar, and demanded that he tell them instantly how he learned this name. After some hesitation he named a former orator of Sarambusarak, long dead, as the individual who revealed the name to him. Sarambusarak were highly suspicious and tried to force him to swear a ma'iyira sa'al to substantiate this. But he was not prepared to do so, despite the protests of his opponents, and thereby made it appear that he was in fact lying.

Sarambusarak accused him of having learned the name "yesterday" - i.e. by bribing someone shortly before the debate. The test was resumed, the two sides turning their attention to the father, mother and mother's brother of each other's ancestor, but neither was able to demonstrate any knowledge of the secret names of these figures. Sarambusarak
demanded that Maliyaw allow them an indefinite number of attempts at their version of the secret name of Manggalaman, to make amends for having used bribery; they would, they said, simply exhaust their knowledge of all Maliyaw names known or suspected to have esoteric significance until they hit upon the correct one by pure chance. As a conciliatory gesture Maliyaw allowed them a few attempts, but these were all unsuccessful; and Maliyaw then called for the test to end, claiming that both sides were risking illness if it continued any longer.

Neutrals began to call on Sarambusarak to concede defeat and abandon the name. The latter replied that Maliyaw had demonstrated no genuine knowledge of Sarambusarak esoteric mythology; all they knew of this lore was a single name which they had discovered by bribery. Maliyaw had not, in other words, shown itself qualified to make any authoritative statements regarding Sarambusarak mythology, and all its assertions therefore remained unproven. In short, Sarambusarak refused uncompromisingly to relinquish the name and the debate ended, late at night, a stalemate.

Shortly after the debate, the senior men of Sarambusarak promulgated a rumour to the effect that they had since discovered, by bribery, all the secret names connected with the Maliyaw Manggalaman; they let it be known that they would debate the name with Maliyaw again and, when this occurred, they would defeat Maliyaw outright. Whether this was bluff or not I do not know; the name was not again debated during my fieldwork. But in any case it seems to have had the effect - no doubt intended - of restraining Maliyaw from exposing the secret name of their own ancestor, at least for the time being.

The importance attached to etymology in the arguments used in the Manggalaman debates is typical of Avatip debates. Maliyaw and Sarambusarak, it should be noted, belong to different clans of the same clan-pair. As distant agnates, they are in a sense 'ideal' major name-dispute partners, as they have neither affinal nor close agnatic ties to discourage such disputes between them. And given that they are also by far the largest subclans within their own clans, it is hardly surprising that they have been frequently involved in major name-disputes with each other.

v. Case 4: The attempts by Maliyaw to tread the subclan Nanggwundaw underfoot

Although Maliyaw is genealogically the most junior subclan of Wuluwi-Nyawi, it nevertheless possesses some quite important ritual capacities. It is invested with a ceremonial office which is both a simbuk-ship and the leadership of a yam harvest ritual association; and it is considered, together with the Wuluwi-Nyawi subclans Nyakaw and Ambasarak, a co-creator of the Malyir ritual and shares with these groups the right to inaugurate this ritual.
All the functions it holds are, however, said to have originally been brought into existence by totemic ancestors of Nanggwundaw, the senior subclan of the same clan as Maliyaw, and then to have been yielded to Maliyaw during the cosmogony. This mythology is focussed upon a mythical village called Ambianggai. This sakttap, it is said, was created by Nanggwundaw, whose totemic ancestors furnished it with its ceremonial houses and all other sacra; but they then abandoned it and the nggwa'al-aal'ai of Maliyaw took possession of it and all its contents in their stead. A number of the personal names deriving from this mythology are, however, still in the possession of Nunggwundaw; the name Ambianggai itself, for example, and Ambunyaworombi, the name of the most important ceremonial house said to have existed there. Many other names, however, are used by Maliyaw; while some others again have been the subject of disputes between the two subclans.

Nanggwundaw is a small group, with only 30 members in 1978, and as I explained in Chapter 5, there is every indication that Maliyaw has been attempting for a number of generations, with considerable success, to exercise reversionary claims in its senior's estate. The two subclans have been at odds over the Ambianggai mythology for as long as can be remembered; and, although they are close collaterals, most of their name-disputes have in recent times as a result been waged in full-scale debates.

Two of the earliest names known to have fallen into dispute between them are Kwuta'akw and Kwusunâmbor. When this controversy started is no longer known; but it appears that the two subclans had agreed to take it in turns to use these names. At the time of my fieldwork they were being borne by two elderly Maliyaw women. Nanggwundaw had begun to remind Maliyaw publicly that once these women died it would then fall to their own subclan to employ the names; the Maliyaw leaders, however, indicated that they might in fact be reluctant to allow this when the time came, and it seems likely that the two groups are heading for a renewed conflict over this issue.

Both names are those of sacra said to have been created at Ambianggai, and which play very important present-day roles in the ritual functions of the Maliyaw simbuk-ship and yam ritual leadership. Maliyaw admit that these sacra are by genealogy totemic ancestors of Nanggwundaw, but claim they were granted in perpetuity to their own subclan. In laying claim to their names, Maliyaw has in effect attempted to further consolidate its mythological title to ritual office which it holds. Kwusunâmbor is the totemic name of the tupwi, or ceremonial mound, of the mythical ceremonial house Ambunyaworombi; this mound is said in myth to have been the focus of all the ritual capacities created at Ambianggai. Maliyaw hold that the mound is now represented in the form of their own tupwi at Yentshanggai. Kwuta'akw is the totemic name of the tanggayendjemb, the hearth at the front of Ambunyaworombi; Maliyaw claim similarly that this hearth now physically exists in the form of the tanggayendjemb of its
own major ceremonial house. This hearth is the ritually most important area within a major ceremonial house; the installation of a new *stnrbuk*, for instance, involves his lighting a fire upon it, and during the harvest ritual the leaders of the three yam ritual associations perform all their magical tasks at their respective *tanggayendjermb*.

Nanggwundaw have been in a weak position to contest the ownership of these and the other mythological figures claimed by Maliyaw. For Nanggwundaw belongs to the yam ritual association headed by Maliyaw, and thereby effectively accedes to the ritual authority of Maliyaw over itself. In most cases it has accepted the assertions of Maliyaw in principle, while arguing that these figures still remain in purely genealogical terms its own totemic ancestors and, therefore, that it holds at least a partial right to employ their names.

Forty or fifty years ago the two subclans held a full-scale debate over the ownership of the name Marongkayevinambør. This is said to be the totemic name of the *ndja'am* or sitting platform, in the mythical ceremonial house Ambunyawarambi. The sitting-platform is another ritually important part of a major ceremonial house, as it may be used only by men of the highest ritual grade. The *ndja'am* Marongkayevinambør plays a prominent part in the myth of the creation of the ritual office now held by Maliyaw; and Maliyaw claim that it now exists in the material form of the sitting-platform of their own major ceremonial house.

It is said that for this debate Nanggwundaw built a sitting-platform on the debating-ground in order to demonstrate its mythological claims. At the time, it possessed an elderly but highly expert debating-*stimbuks*; during the debate this orator climbed up on to the platform to re-enact some scene from myth and make a speech, and in doing so he collapsed and shortly afterwards died. The debate was abandoned; and later Maliyaw let it be known that they themselves had killed him by sorcery, claiming it as a great coup to have finished off one of their opponents in the middle of a debate. Because of its inauspicious associations, the Marongkayevinambør debate was never again resumed, and both sides continue to use and claim ownership of the name.

Nanggwundaw has a totemic-sibling relationship with the Nggola'angkw subclan Makom (see Figure 11), and the two groups, together with their allies, support each other in debating. As part of this tie they are linked in the Ambianggai mythology; this village, it is said, was created and furnished with all its ritual sacra by a figure called Yuananggorman, whom Nanggwundaw claim was a totemic ancestor of their own subclan. In these tasks, they also claim, he was assisted by a partner, an ancestor called Yuandanai and belonging to Makom subclan.

During the 1970's Maliyaw began to lay claim to these two names, asserting that both figures were in fact totemic ancestors of their own. It is not Nanggwundaw and Makom but their own subclan that was responsible for the creation of Ambianggai and all its ritual accoutrements. They pointed to the fact that both names contain the element Yu-, the term
for the greensnail shell, an exclusive Maliyaw totem. The implications of these claims were radical. Previously, Maliyaw had held that the ritual prerogatives it possesses had been ceded to it by Nanggwundaw; now, it was in effect asserting that they were entirely its own creation and that Nanggwundaw had played no part in bringing them into existence.

Maliyaw first laid claim to the name Yuandanai, and held a full-scale debate against Makom and its Nanggwundaw supporters in 1973. There seem to have been several reasons why Maliyaw decided to first challenge Makom. Firstly, the name does not have the strategic importance for the mythological status of Makom that it has for that of Nanggwundaw, for Makom is only tangentially involved in the Ambianggai mythology and its cosmological status rests elsewhere; Makom might therefore have been more easily induced to relinquish Yuandanai than Nanggwundaw would have been to part with Yuananggorman. If Maliyaw could first take Yuandanai, it would then be in a stronger position to claim Yuananggorman. Secondly, Maliyaw had as I have earlier explained largely monopolised Makom's alliances for a number of generations; most of the sisters' sons of Makom at the time of my fieldwork were Maliyaw men and, of these, four were Maliyaw's most eminent debating-simbuks. These four were all competent in the esoteric mythology of their maternal subclan, one of them, L. (see Chapter 6), particularly so. They no doubt judged themselves to stand a good chance of defeating Makom in a debate; for it will be recalled that Makom is a small group with no debating-simbuks of its own, and it relies heavily on its Maliyaw sisters' sons for support in debating.

The Maliyaw leaders may have thought that they knew the Makom version of the secret name of Yuandanai; if they did so, they were however proved wrong when the debate took place. Makom was championed by another of its sisters' sons, the principal orator of the subclan Nyakaw; interrogating the Maliyaw orators on the debating-ground, he found them ignorant of the relevant esoterica. But neither was the Makom side able to demonstrate any knowledge of the esoterica of Maliyaw; and the debate ended with the two sides arranging to debate the name again at some future date.

Maliyaw laid claim to the name Yuananggorman shortly afterwards. Over the next five years or so, this issue was raised frequently whenever public gatherings gave Maliyaw and Nanggwundaw an opportunity to voice their claims. But when I left the field in 1979 the name had still not been formally debated, although the two groups had agreed in principle to a full-scale debate.

Like Makom, Nanggwundaw has at the present time no effective orators of its own, and it relies in debate almost wholly on the support of its sisters' sons and other allies. It possessed, until his death in 1979, an old and very knowledgeable expert in sakima'andj; but he had been bedridden and incapable of taking part
in debate for many years. Makəm and Nanggwundaw are both formally senior but small subclans in the process of being 'trodden underfoot' by large and powerful subclans junior to them - Makəm by Yimal, and Nanggwundaw by Maliyaw. I suggested in Chapter 5 that totemic-sibling ties generally develop in response to the need of groups for support, outside their own clan or clan-pair, in name-disputes with their own agnates. Both Nanggwundaw and Makəm are in particular need of such support; and the totemic-sibling relationship between them is, I suggest, in effect a coalition between them in this shared predicament.

vi. Conclusion

One can see that name-disputes generally involve relatively slight changes to mythology; and while new mythological claims are regularly being put forward, it is almost certain that the essential form of much of Avatip mythology has remained fixed and stable over long periods of time. It would not be far from the truth to say that almost all that changes is the ownership of the personal names which appear in myth; these names migrate from one group to another, but the narratives themselves endure.

This raises a further point: that the total universe of hereditary rights and prerogatives enshrined in myth is conceived as finite and fixed, and that these rights are so to speak permanently scarce in relation to demand. These are the necessary conditions for inequalities in mythological status between groups, and for the chronic competition for these privileges that characterises Avatip society. Neither could occur were it possible for any group to create these patrimonial entitlements \textit{ad libitum}. Like the names and myths in which they are vested, these capacities form an apparently closed system; and all that changes are the groups which hold them.

It might seem that there was in principle no reason why a group could not simply manufacture for itself any hereditaments it might desire. For each group holds, in theory at least, sole control of the esoteric mythology legitimating its corporate privileges; and these are for the most part 'immaterial' forms of property - ritual specialisations, magical formulae and so forth. The question therefore arises as to how the closure of the whole system is in fact maintained in the absence of any centralised regulation or control.
It is true that some forms of corporate property, such as land, are by their nature fixed in quantity; but it would however be possible in principle to multiply the number of parcels of land owned by groups simply by subdividing existing plots and affixing new eponymous ancestors to these subdivisions. It is also true that Avatip cosmological traditions are highly conservative. Magic is believed effective only if it has been handed down from the totemic ancestors. And it is thought that any change to the organisation of ritual would call down supernatural affliction; a group which pronounced itself in possession of a novel ritual function would attract sickness and death, as would any outsiders reckless enough to take part in performing this innovation. But conservatism alone cannot fully account for the stability of the system; for the simple demographic success of a group can, as I have explained, be taken as an index of the authenticity of any mythological claims it might make.

The maintenance of society and the natural order is viewed as dependent upon a system of 'cosmological' reciprocity, in which each group holds the power to provide, or withhold, a specific service or set of services. The cosmological relationship between groups is one of 'organic' interdependence; groups have unequal statuses in this system, but the principle of the system is that of reciprocity. At the same time, the reality of the hereditary rights held by social segments is entirely dependent upon their being accepted and recognised throughout the society. If one group were to invent, ex nihilo, an entirely novel prerogative for itself, this would be met with suspicion or outright rejection; not simply because of conservatism, but because it would necessarily change, however slightly, the pre-existing balance of cosmological powers throughout the total society and thus represent a more or less direct challenge to the cosmological status of every other group. The tendency of each segment toward what might be called cosmological self-aggrandisement, which might otherwise flourish unimpeded, is kept in check by the others. It is a corollary of the axiom of cosmological reciprocity that any gain in mythological status by one group is conceived as by definition a loss to the rest.

If Avatip myth and cosmology are relatively stable over long periods, as they seem to be, this is not due to a simple attachment to tradition or to the fear of supernatural affliction; it is as much
the result of the scepticism - even rationalism - which groups evince towards any attempts by each other to inflate their status in this system.

It seems likely, however, that the closure of the system is at all times only partial, and that once in a while entirely new entitlements are created and gain currency. But in by far the majority of cases, when a subclan acquires a new prerogative it does so by usurping one already held by another group. Its aim, in other words, is not simply to demonstrate title to a particular right but at the same time to demolish the title of some other subclan to it; and the competition is as it were a zero-sum game taking place entirely within the framework of the existing cosmology. If it is successful, this process of course involves a readjustment of the balance of cosmological powers between groups; but the change poses far less of a threat to uninvolved groups than it would were an entirely new cosmological power invented, since all it entails is the transfer of an already established capability from one group to another. The only group whose mythological status is diminished is the former holder of the prerogative concerned; and for this reason the change is likely to give uninvolved groups little cause to offer resistance to it.

In order to properly understand the nature of power relations between Avatip groups, an important distinction needs to be borne in mind: between what I have called the mythological status of a group - its hereditary prerogatives in ritual and so forth - and its status in the debating-system. The first depends upon its position in mythology and the second upon factors such as size, the number of orators who support it and the extent of their knowledge of sakima'andj. There is a long-term tendency for the two to be brought into accord, as groups successful in the debating arena raise their cosmological status, but it is doubtful that this accord is ever complete. A group may be mythologically highly senior, and yet be ineffectual in disputes over names; while a relatively junior group may be one of the most dominant in the debating arena. Makôm, for example, holds among other privileges part of the right to inaugurate the Ndumwi ritual, and this very important ritual could not take place without its consent; and yet it has clearly been for many generations one of the weakest groups in the day-to-day world of name-disputes. The subclan Maliyaw occupies a far less important
place in mythology, and yet it is the most aggressive and powerful group at Avatip in the debating system. There are in effect two distinct, though related, axes for the ranking of groups: one by formal mythological status, and the other by the effective power to wage name-disputes.

The first is in theory fixed and rigidly hierarchical, with the position of each group secured by mystical sanctions; but the powers which groups hold operate only within special circumscribed contexts, primarily the sphere of male initiatory ritual. The second, on the other hand, is informal, fluid and highly competitive; and the forms of political activity connected with it - bribery, fissions, succession disputes, sorcery feuds, the teaching or withholding of myths, the rendering of women, goods and services to debating-simbuks, and so forth - ramify through almost every domain of social life.

While some name-disputes are short-lived, others have existed for several generations or are part of dispute complexes of quite ancient standing. Most of the cases I have described in this chapter are of this kind. Such disputes are of sufficient importance and long standing that a relatively enduring nexus of political ties and cleavages has crystallised out of them, dominating Avatip politics for a number of generations and acquiring a kind of immemorial status: for instance, the conflict between Yimal and Maliyaw, the two largest subclans at Avatip, over the parts they played in the foundation of the village; their parallel involvement in 'treading underfoot' the small but mythologically important subclans senior to them, Makəm and Nanggwundaw respectively, and the totemic-sibling coalition between these two latter groups against their reversioners; the attempts by Valik to keep the patrimony of Makəm intact from Yimal, and to mythologically ratify its own ties of co-residence with Makəm and its effective control of the latter's prestigious ceremonial house; and the attacks by Maliyaw upon the mythological status of Ambasarak and Sarambusarak. While the ranking of groups in the debating system does fluctuate and depend upon achievement, it nevertheless has something of the stable and - almost - something of the 'ascribed' quality of their ranking by mythological status.
Name-disputes are discourses about cosmology and have a 'meta' status in relation to it; and a very important corollary of this is that the influence which groups exert in the debating system is power of a higher 'logical type' than the cosmological powers they hold, for this influence consists in the ability to vindicate and challenge the ownership of such capacities. The greater part of Avatip politics is as it were of a second order, a kind of meta-politics, in which groups compete not with the ultimate forms of power which they hold, but over their possession. The scheme of totemic exchange on which the existence of society is conceived to depend, and the axiomatic values associated with it, remain insulated from dislocation or abrogation for political ends; all that changes is the relative positions of social segments within this system. Although totemic cosmology is the subject of continual dispute between groups, the shared values and conceptualisations embodied in it are, paradoxically, continually regenerated in this conflict itself. For the issue at stake in a name-dispute is never the existence of the system of cosmological exchange itself, but the relative status of groups within it; this system is the universe within which the competition takes place, and 'outside' of it this conflict could not occur. Avatip is, as I have said, the largest and internally most fractious of the Manambu communities, and the most intensely involved in name-disputes; but if cosmological disputes between Avatip groups are particularly intense, so as the same time these groups all the more deeply affirm the ultimate basis of their solidarity (cf. Gluckman 1955).
Chapter Nine

CONCLUSION

'His name is Ferrars,' said he, in a very audible whisper; 'but pray do not tell it, for it's a great secret.' (Jane Austin, Sense and Sensibility)

i. Semiology of debating

One problem involved in an analysis of Avatip politics lies in the apparent 'unreality' of the goals fought for, in comparison with the concreteness of the means used to achieve them. Fissions, succession disputes, sorcery feuds and so forth are all a familiar part of politics in traditional societies (see for example Turner 1957); the difference lies in the fact that at Avatip these are all aimed solely at gaining control of personal names and the cosmological prerogatives connected with them. The strategies themselves are intelligible enough; it is the ends to which they are directed that seem, to us, to require explanation. It is for this reason that a large part of this thesis has been concerned with Avatip ideas about the nature of society and the cosmos, for it is these which give meaning to Avatip politics.

An important point is that while groups continually compete for mythological status, the question at issue in one of these disputes is never whether a specific cosmological power exists, but rather which group is its rightful owner. It would in fact be impossible in a debate for one side to challenge the actual existence of a magical power claimed by the other side; there are simply no mechanisms by means of which opposing claims of this kind could be compared and such a dispute resolved. A group can disprove that another possesses a particular magical power only by claiming that power for itself; the only types of conflicts which a debate is capable of arbitrating and settling are those sharing the same assumptions about cosmology. In debating, considerable intellectual energy can be spent in disputing the allocation of cosmological powers among groups, and conclusive results reached; but there is no institutional context within which the reality of these powers could ever be called into question.
In short, while debating is the only context in which cosmology is publicly opened to dispute, the mechanics of debating make possible only certain types of arguments about cosmology, and in doing so preclude examining the common assumptions on which these arguments rest. The debating system provides groups with a mutually intelligible 'language' of strategems, manoeuvres and so forth in terms of which to conduct their political relations; but the actors' immediate preoccupation is always with using this language - the moves and counter-moves through which they 'speak' it to each other - not with examining the principles of its intelligibility. These - the shared cosmological ideas on which Avatip politics is based - are taken for granted and remain tacit, implied, part of what Bourdieu calls doxa: the universe of the undisputed, as opposed to that within which conflicts of opinion are possible (Bourdieu 1977:159-171). The 'reality' of totemic cosmology forms a meta-message of Avatip political discourse, and therefore cannot be contested within the framework of this discourse; whatever conflicting arguments are put forward in debate, or whatever legitimate or illegitimate means are used to win, everything simply reiterates it.

The manner in which this occurs can perhaps be most clearly illustrated using some of the concepts developed by Barthes for the analysis of semiological systems. The first of these is that of connotation: a form of signification in which a sign (a signifier united with a signified, in Barthes' Saussurean terminology) itself functions as signifier within a second sign. This is the case, for instance, in Barthes' example of the Paris-Match photograph of a French Negro soldier saluting the tricolour: while in itself an autonomous sign, the picture serves in turn to signify by connotation a specific ideology, which Barthes calls 'French imperialism' (Barthes 1972:116).

Debating, in a quite analogous way, is a complete sign-system in itself, and yet also functions as part of another, wider, system of 'second order' significations. The activity of debating continually 'connotes' the basic premise of Avatip cosmology: that society rests on a division of cosmological powers between groups.

Moreover, the issue which debating concerns is the manner in which mythology, and the personal names it contains, signify the distribution of cosmological powers among groups. That is to say, the
The subject-matter of debating is itself a system of significations; in this respect debating operates, in Barthes' terms, as a meta-language - a sign-system which has another sign-system as its signified, and which it is designed to 'speak about' (Barthes 1967: 89-94).

Debating, in other words, is involved simultaneously in at least three interconnected signifying systems 'staggered', to use Barthes' term, in relation to each other: the signs of one system forming the signifieds of a second, and this system in turn constituting the signifiers within a third. Debating is a metalanguage for 'speaking' the significations of myth but the operation of this metalanguage itself signifies, by connotation, a specific ideology and set of cosmological premises. These relations are represented schematically in Figure 16, using Barthes' diagrammatic conventions.

An important point about this system is that it is essentially closed and self-validating: debating continually 'connotes' the reality of the issues which form its own subject-matter. This circular relationship between ideology and political action is, I think, the key to understanding the manner in which the community remains integrated in the face of the powerful divisive forces within it. The specialised cosmological functions which groups hold are viewed as the ultimate basis of their social solidarity; name-disputes, however acrimonious or violent, cannot threaten the idea of this solidarity because they can only signify it. Reciprocally, it is only because this ideology is so effectively signified - that is, that groups are conceived as so vitally interdependent upon each other's magical and ritual services - that these powers carry such prestige and their ownership is the subject of such hot dispute. At Avatip there is absolutely no contradiction between the idea of society as a single moral collectivity, and the reality of a permanent state of conflict within it. For this conflict between groups is motivated by a specific conception of their solidarity, which this conflict in turn continually reiterates and reproduces; Avatip is an intensely divided society because, at another level, it is intensely unified, and vice-versa.
Fig. 16. Debating as a semiotic system
ii. Totems as signs and as stimuli

Lévi-Strauss has shown that it is entirely artificial to
isolate totemism as an institutional complex in its own right;
totemism is simply one manifestation of the propensity of the mind
to create logical codes, and as such the 'problem' of totemism is
part of the wider problem of systems of classification (Lévi-Strauss
1969). In the course of his argument Lévi-Strauss criticises
attempts, such as that of Malinowski (1954), to explain the use of
animal and plant emblems by social groups on the basis of the
affective associations or utility of these species. Natural species,
he argues, are used in this way not because they are 'stimuli' but
because they are signs (ibid:135). It is their capacity to signify
that is important, and the impulse behind totemism is "primarily of
an intellectual kind" (ibid:177): to represent social segments as
simultaneously unified and differentiated, and as such forming a
global whole standing in a relation of homology with nature.

In another work, Lévi-Strauss has shown that a system of this
kind may coexist with a variety of marriage rules, and may or may
not be accompanied by any of a number of types of food prohibitions
or prescriptions, and that these can all stand in a variety of
'logical' relations: they may reinforce, complement, compensate for
each other, and so forth (Lévi-Strauss 1966:Chs.3,4). In this thesis
I have tried to show that at Avatip these systems are homologous:
that the same thing is being 'said' in terms of marriage rules as is
being 'said' in the exchange of magico-economic services and also,
at another level again, through the transmission of esoteric
knowledge. The same rules underlie all three of these 'communication
structures', to use Lévi-Strauss' term (1963:296). But the point I
would like to make is that in a society such as this the distinction
between signs and stimuli, or between what Lévi-Strauss elsewhere
calls signs and values (1969:496; 1963:61,297), cannot be drawn
absolutely. In the case of women, Lévi-Strauss would of course
himself be the first to point this out (1969:496; 1963:61). At
Avatip, for example, the marriage system is broadly conceived as a
communication, between the 'moieties' Wuluwi-Nyawi and Nggo1a'angkw,
of their putatively red-skinned and black-skinned women respectively.
Women, in effect, are conceived as being exchanged both as concrete
values, and as signs - members of "different social species", as
Lévi-Strauss puts it (1966:125).
Conversely, it might be thought that the function of esoteric knowledge is simply to signify; but it is also an eagerly sought after value, since it is a requisite for leadership and success in debating, and by being communicated it creates binding social ties. The exchange of these messages is surrounded by much of that "affective richness, ardour and mystery" of which Lévi-Strauss speaks as having once pervaded "the entire universe of human communications" when words, like women, were simultaneously signs and values (1969: 496).

Just as the women, and the secret lore, exchanged between groups are conceived as having the double character of both values and messages, so too are these groups' totemic accoutrements. The relations of 'unity-within-difference' between social segments which their totemic insignia express are not only logical but are also conceived as instrumental. Groups, that is to say, are thought of as functionally interconnected by the interlocking cosmological powers they hold. In a system such as this, in which totems do not only form a code for classifying groups but are also treated as the media of a system of exchange between groups, the properties of these species as 'stimuli' are as important as their capacity to act as signs. But this does not in any way imply, as Lévi-Strauss seems to think, that the impulse behind the system is therefore any less 'intellectual'. For it is not simply because they have value or utility that species become totems, but because having these properties they can be used to create a scheme of magico-economic reciprocities expressing the social solidarity of groups. A scheme of this kind as as much an intellectual construct as are the kinds of logical codes which Lévi-Strauss discusses.

When species are thought of as subject to control by the groups with which they are identified, the relations between these species are not only 'logical' but also involve differences and equivalences in value. To hold magical power over yams is more prestigious than to hold magical power over mayflies; to 'own' thunderstorms carries more weight than owning rainbows. Totems may be equivalent insofar as they are all signs, but as values they are by no means equal; and the relations of value between them are used to 'say' something about status equalities and differences between groups.
The principles used in selecting totems have been a topic of long and continuing debate (see for example Bulmer 1978; Firth 1950-31, 1970; Fortes 1945; Hiatt 1969; Radcliffe-Brown 1951, 1952; Worsley 1955, 1967). So far as Avatip totemism is concerned, I have tried to show in this thesis that the reasoning by which species are selected as totems, the manner in which certain of these totems are singled out for ritual attention, and the distribution of all these among social segments - in short the 'message' of Avatip totemism - can be decoded only if it is understood that the totemic appurtenances of groups are regarded as simultaneously signs and values. This, I think, is the implication of Avatip cosmogonic myth - the issuing forth of phenomena into the world, from which they had originally been withheld in the mythical villages. This is essentially an account of the manner in which, at the beginning of the world, its isolated elements were brought together into simultaneously conceptual and instrumental relations, to form a whole which not only signifies but also functions.

iii. Some Melanesian comparisons

The institutional complex on which I have focussed in this thesis can be thought of as composed of a number of different strands: the hereditary ownership by groups of magical and ritual specialisations; the idea of names as magically efficacious and as a form of property; and esoteric knowledge and skill in oratory as a basis of leadership. These themes occur in a number of Melanesian societies; and if Avatip seems a society atypical of Melanesia, it is only because of the manner in which these themes are combined.

In a paper whose importance has not, I think, been fully appreciated, Morauta has identified what she calls a magical division of labour as a definite 'pattern' recurring in lowland Melanesian social systems (Morauta 1973). To the societies which she gives as examples of this type, I would add the Manambu, and perhaps the Iatmul and Chambri (see Bateson 1932:446; Gewertz 1977:48-49; Mead 1963:247); and there is evidence in the ethnographic sketches given by Newton that this pattern may exist in other areas of the Sepik as well (see Newton 1971:34, 36, 51-3, 83, 89). The study of societies of this kind, as a distinct type of social system in their own right, represents an important gap in the ethnographic literature on
Melanesia; and this has perhaps in part resulted from an excessive concentration on the New Guinea Highlands, where these systems appear to be absent.

Developing Morauta's argument, one might construct two contrasting 'ideal types' of Melanesian social system. In one, the exchange of material wealth is an essential mechanism for mediating political relations, maintaining between groups, or between individuals, a state of more or less competitive or cooperative alliance (cf. Strathern 1971:130) in which social status is achieved through productivity and the control of wealth. In the second type, an 'organic' interdependence is maintained between groups by means of a division of magical or ritual responsibilities between them, and the status of groups and individuals is based on the relative importance of the specialisations they hold and on their control of associated esoteric knowledge. Both systems are characterised by an "ethic of political egalitarianism", as Morauta calls it (Morauta 1973:144), as is typical of Melanesia; but the second type is likely to favour, as do the traditional Madang polities which she discusses, an element of ascription in leadership and the development of what she terms, following Young, a 'submerged' ranking of groups (Morauta 1973:144; Young 1971:63-4).

The first type of system is perhaps compatible with a wide range of the forms of local organisation occurring in Melanesia. But the second, I would suggest, is most likely to be manifested in societies in which the local political unit is a multi-clan settlement - the multicarpellary parish of Hogbin and Wedgwood's typology (Hogbin and Wedgwood 1953-4). For since it involves the distribution of a finite set of capacities among an equally finite number of groups, this system is best suited to a form of local organisation capable of operating as a conceptually self-contained social system.

The point I would like to make is that the principle underlying both systems is the same, namely, that of reciprocity. The ultimate difference between them is the medium of this reciprocity: material wealth in one case and magical and ritual services in the other. The societies of the New Guinea Highlands all appear to approximate to the first type; lowlands societies, on the other hand, seem to either
combine elements of both systems or else, in a few cases such as Avatip, evince the second type in a relatively 'pure' form. This geographical distribution may be connected with differences in the subsistence patterns characteristic of the two regions; the Highlands economies are based typically on relatively intensive agriculture capable of supporting large pig-herds for use in ceremonial exchange, while those of the lowlands are characterised by lower intensity agriculture and pig-husbandry and a greater dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering.

In most of the Melanesian societies which evince a division of magical and ritual functions between groups, the production and exchange of wealth is also an important part of the political system. Morauta observes that this is the case in the Madang societies which she discusses, and in some of the other societies she mentions as examples of this pattern. The relative importance of the two media seems to vary from one society to another; in some, a division of cosmological responsibilities may exist in only vestigial form while in others, such as Avatip, the reverse may be the case. But the point I would stress is that Avatip should not be regarded as in any way an ethnographic anomaly in the Melanesian context. Melanesian societies can be thought of as ranged along a continuum according to the relative weight they place on material or intangible values as means of mediating relations between groups through reciprocity; Avatip simply manifests in a comparatively 'undiluted' form a pattern also apparent in varying degrees elsewhere in the ethnographic area.

The ownership of personal names by groups is quite widely reported in lowland Melanesia. It is found, for example, in the Trobriands (Malinowski 1954:199-200), among the Kove of New Britain (Chowning 1974:179,190), in the Madang area (Morauta 1973:141), among the Keraki of the trans-Fly (Williams 1936:117,177) and, in the Sepik, among the Iatmul (Bateson 1932:401-413), Chambri (Gewertz 1977:48-49), Kwoma (Bowden 1977:54), Abelam (Kaberry 1971:58) and Bun (McDowell 1975:212). In many of these societies names are thought to have magical virtues or are connected in some way with the ownership of resources such as land. Morauta, for instance, notes that in the Madang region spells "usually consist of secret ancestral clan

1 A similar observation has been made by Forge (1972a:530-1).

2 See also Forge (1972b), who reports that among the Abelam rights to a name may be transferred from one clan to another by the killing of the name-holder.
names" (Morauta 1973:141). McDowell writes of the Bun that bush- and water-spirits, together with their names, are owned by clans (McDowell 1975:212). Both the Iatmul and the Chambri use clan-owned names in magic to control natural resources (Bateson 1932:446; Gewertz 1977:48-49). The subclan-owned spells of the Trobrianders contain lists of the magically efficacious names of the dead (Malinowski 1954:190-215); and Hau'ofa (1981:41,162) reports that among the Mekeo the names of ancestors above the second ascending generation are incorporated into spells, though it is unclear whether the names themselves are corporate property. Once again, the ownership of names, and a belief in their magical properties, appear to be phenomena restricted to the lowlands and are not, so far as I know, found in the New Guinea Highlands.

It is, I think, easy to see how they can be integrated functionally into a system of specialised cosmological responsibilities. For in a society in which social segments hold distinct magical prerogatives, these groups require a means of validating and protecting their patrimonies. One means of doing so is for the patrimony of each group to be in effect invested in a corpus of personal names which its members alone are entitled to carry; in this way its magical herediments are as it were bound indissolubly to itself as a corporate body.

Many Melanesian societies, in both the Highlands and lowlands, place a high value on skill in oratory and view it as a prerequisite for leadership, or at least as an adjunct to it. Often, oratory accompanies ceremonial wealth exchanges; special rhetorical styles may be used, and speech-making accompanied by stereotyped bodily actions as in Avatip debating (Burridge 1967; Read 1959; Reay 1959: 118; Strathern 1971:120,240-42). The fact that debating is the central focus of Avatip political life, and that skill in debating is the essential basis of leadership, is again best viewed as a specialised development of a pattern common in Melanesia. These debates are designed to deal specifically with mythology and involve a contest in esoteric knowledge; and these features can similarly be thought of as the specialised creation of a society in which names and cosmological privileges are the most valued forms of property owned by groups.

I should note that a very similar institution appears to exist
in two adjacent Sepik societies. Firstly, everything in Bateson's references to Iatmul debates suggests that they are close analogues of those of the Manambu (Bateson 1958). Secondly, Gewertz (1977b) gives an extended account of a debate among the Chambri, at least part of which appears to have concerned the ownership of a magical technique and the names associated with it. It is likely that the debating system I have described in this thesis is, no doubt with modifications, an institution shared by these three neighbouring societies. The Chambri, like the Manambu, appear to have been consistent importers of Iatmul culture (Gewertz 1977a:28), and it is possible that debating represents one of the many borrowings of these two societies from the Iatmul.

iv. 'Symbolic' power

I argued in Chapter 7 that Avatip debates play a role functionally analogous to that of competitive ceremonial exchange in some other New Guinea societies: it provides an institutional arena for individuals and groups, in these largely egalitarian social systems, to compete for power and status without threat to their overall social integration. There is, of course a fundamental difference between a debate and a bout of competitive exchange; in the latter material wealth passes between the two sides, while in a debate all that is 'exchanged' are words. A competitive feast or wealth exchange is a test of each party's capacity to produce or mobilise economic resources, while a debate is a test simply of their knowledge and oratorical skills. To be worsted in ceremonial exchange may entail severe economic or other penalties. Strathern, for example, observes that a group which lost badly in a sequence of moka exchanges "could become politically dependent on the victor" (Strathern 1971: 129). Young, likewise, refers to the debts, which may take years to repay, incurred by the loser in a bout of abutu competitive food exchange (Young 1971:205). In a debate, on the other hand, neither a loss nor a win carries any benefits or penalties in material terms. The medium of exchange, and the rewards and penalties at stake, are all essentially intangible or symbolic.

On closer comparison, however, the differences between the two systems appear rather less clear-cut. Firstly, Avatip debates have a remarkable formal similarity to some of the competitive exchange systems reported elsewhere in Melanesia: to the abutu system of the
Goodenough Islanders of the Massim, for example (Young 1971), and to
the long yam contests of the Abelam, the northern congeners of the
Manambu (Forge pers. comm.). The manner in which supporters are
recruited, the organisation and physical layout of the affair, the
participation of women, the use of body decoration, and the affective
'style' of the proceedings, all offer some surprisingly close
parallels. The contest in esoteric knowledge which forms part of
an Avatip debate could quite easily be replaced by a competitive
exchange of yams; very few other institutional modifications would be
necessary in order to convert a debate into an entirely typical
Melanesian exchange contest. The kinds of political relations
expressed in these two systems are, in other words, formally the same;
the primary difference between them is in the objects of the exchange
in which these relations are symbolised. To regard debating as a
'symbolic' contest, and ceremonial exchange as an 'economic' contest,
is therefore in a sense artificial and obscures an important point.
Both systems are equally 'symbolic' in that the political power which
groups are displaying, or competing for, is symbolised in the objects
which they transact. But this power itself is not any more or less
symbolic in the one case than in the other; for in both it is a
property of a field of social relations and is not an intrinsic
quality of the exchange objects themselves.

It has often been shown that the prestige goods used in
ceremonial exchange in Melanesia are associated symbolically with many
of the most important values and beliefs held by these societies (see
for example Tuzin 1972; Young 1971:Chs.7-8). Their significance does
not lie only in their utility - and in some cases, such as in the
Kula system (Malinowski 1961:86-91), not in their utility at all - but
rather in what they mean. In the context of ceremonial exchange, a
yam is altogether as much a symbolic object as is a well-turned
speech in an Avatip debate.

I am not suggesting that there are no important differences
between the political relations involved in a contest of words and
in one employing tangible wealth; obviously, there are many. What I
am arguing is that the most useful way of expressing these differences
is not in terms of a contrast between 'economic', or 'real', and
'symbolic' forms of power or status. All that is necessary for a
relation of power to exist is a consensus between the parties involved
as to the nature of the tokens through which the relationship is
expressed; I would argue that these can be words, material objects or possibly almost anything else. These may then be spoken of as symbols. But the relationship itself will simply exist; it will not be any more or less 'symbolic'.

There is, however, a quite different sense in which a concept of symbolic power is valid, and in fact essential for an understanding of Avatip politics. Power can be regarded as symbolic if it also signifies the capacity to exercise power of another kind. For example, the capacity of an Avatip subclan to successfully appropriate prestigious personal names in debate is symbolic power in this sense; for success in debating signifies the capacity of the group to acquire and exercise powers of a different order - that is, magical and ritual prerogatives. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that I would speak of Avatip debates as in any way distinctively 'symbolic' contests.

If it is defined in this way, symbolic power may have either a material or an immaterial basis. This is a confusion apparent in Bourdieu's otherwise perceptive distinction between what he calls economic and symbolic capital among the Kabyles of Algeria (Bourdieu 1977:171-183). The symbolic capital of a Kabyle lineage is what otherwise might be called its honour or reputation; its economic capital consists in its land, livestock and so forth. Bourdieu makes the point that the two are interconvertible: material wealth augments a lineage's symbolic capital, and at the same time the group may, when necessary, draw on its symbolic credit to recruit labour and other forms of economic assistance. The distinction between 'real' and symbolic forms of capital is, I think, potentially a very fruitful one; but there is an ambiguity in Bourdieu's use of this distinction. He seems, firstly, to distinguish economic from symbolic capital essentially on the basis of their physical properties: reputation is symbolic in that it is intangible, while land and livestock are real, material assets. Secondly, he could be interpreted as implying that symbolic capital 'symbolises' economic capital; that the material wealth and prosperity of a lineage is expressed or reflected symbolically in the form of its reputation.

These two ways of defining symbolic capital are, I suggest, quite different and bear no necessary connection with each other. In one, the two forms of capital are distinguished in terms of their physical properties; and according to the second, in terms of
standing to each other in a relation of signifier to signified.

In short, I would amend Bourdieu's argument in the following way. In some societies, types of capital may exist which are immaterial: the hereditary names and spells of an Avatip subclan, for example, or, even more intangibly, the corporate honour of a Kabyle lineage. These might be called immaterial capital. There may also exist forms which have, among other properties, that of symbolising the possession of capital of other kinds; I suggest reserving the term 'symbolic' for these. There is no necessity for immaterial and symbolic forms of capital, if they co-exist within the same society, to coincide. That is, there is in principle nothing to prevent the symbolic capital of a group from consisting in material property, or to prevent the capital which this symbolises from consisting of intangibles. The difference is entirely a relative one, and all that defines it is whether the function of the assets concerned is predominantly to signify or to be signified; and as far as this is concerned their degree of physical reality is in principle irrelevant. I would regard the symbolic capital of an Avatip subclan, for example, as consisting of its personal names; for their principal function is to signify the magical and ritual techniques which the subclan holds. Although these techniques are themselves, like names, entirely immaterial and consist simply of verbal formulae, I would not term them 'symbolic', but perhaps 'symbolised' or 'signified', capital.

In summary, the contrast between 'symbolic' and other forms of assets is best used to refer to a difference not in their physical properties but in 'logical type', to use the term I employed in Chapter 8. That is to say, the distinction between them is relative and not absolute; it cannot be determined extrinsically but only through examining the relation between forms of power of differing logical orders operating within the same social system. 'Real' power, if one wants to use this term, is simply power which, within a particular society, is wholly 'signified'; whether it is expressed through material objects or not is an important but entirely separate issue. The cosmological privileges for which Avatip subclans compete in debates represent 'real' power in this sense; for within the structure of Avatip politics they are irreducible and do not denote any other form of power of a lower 'logical type' than themselves.
v. Structure and history

In his writings Lévi-Strauss has occasionally made use of a distinction between what he terms 'cold' and 'hot' societies as a way of defining the contrast between primitive and modern:

the former seeking, by the institutions they give themselves, to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity in a quasi-automatic fashion; the latter resolutely internalising the historical process and making it the moving power of their development (Lévi-Strauss 1966:233-34; see also Lévi-Strauss 1978:29-30; Charbonnier 1969:32-42).

Referring to 'totemic' societies, which are his paradigmatic exemplars of 'cold' societies, Lévi-Strauss speaks of "a sort of fundamental antipathy between history and systems of classification", a "permanent conflict between the structural nature of the classification and the statistical nature of its demographic basis" (Lévi-Strauss 1966:232). In this section I would like to consider to what extent the conflict which Lévi-Strauss posits between structure and history is true of Avatip.

The first point I would make about Avatip totemism in this connection is that, as I explained in Chapter 5, it is conceptually entirely distinct from descent as a mode of social classification. Although totemic and descent groupings should in native theory ideally coincide, they are nevertheless conceived as being based upon quite different principles: in the one case, on the possession of a common corpus of myths, totems, personal names and cosmological functions, and in the other on the possession of a common agnatic pedigree. The totemic organisation, very much in the manner of Lévi-Strauss' 'cold' societies, is thought of as the utterly changeless common structure shared by society and nature; a system of fixed positions, each consisting in a specific set of cosmological powers and attributes. On the other hand, the villagers are perfectly well aware that their descent groups have an entirely historical character, and regularly grow, decline, amalgamate, die out and so forth. The problem which these demographic contingencies are viewed as posing is that of ensuring that every position in the totemic system has at all times a specific descent group installed in it. As I have shown, there are institutional mechanisms with the explicit purpose of ensuring this. These are the reversionary rights which collateral descent groups hold against each other. When any position falls vacant -
because the group occupying it has become either extinct or so small that it can no longer effectively exercise the capacities vested in that position - a junior group in theory then moves up the system to take its place. It is as though the villagers conceptualise the totemic organisation as a kind of rigid mould with a number of compartments, and descent group organisation - the continually fluctuating demographic resources of society - as its contents, which must be regularly redistributed in an attempt to keep all the chambers filled.

It would therefore be mistaken to state simply that Avatip society attempts to suppress or deny history. The villagers do not in any way attempt to disguise the fact that descent group organisation is contingent and subject to change, nor do they have any overall concern with preventing such change. It is simply that whenever an alteration of this kind threatens the totemic system it is allowed to occur and recognised openly, and another quite deliberate change is then put in motion in an attempt to redress its effects. The attempt is made, that is to say, not to deny history but to allow it to operate freely only within the universe of descent, where it is an essential ingredient in the means used to ensure that the totemic system itself remains outside of history.

This helps to explain the curious double attitude which the villagers evince towards their cosmology: on the one hand it is regarded as timeless and unalterable, and on the other it is the subject of continual manipulation and dispute. The point is that it is not so much cosmology that is manipulated as the manner in which descent groups articulate with it; it is the relation between these groups and the categories of the totemic system that the villagers view as the subject of dispute, not the organisation of the totemic system in itself. It is therefore in fact quite consistent for them to treat cosmology as immutable and yet an arena of conflict. For descent groups are from the start regarded as nothing more than contingent entities situated entirely in an historical flux, holding their positions in totemic cosmology only as long as they demonstrate themselves capable of doing so.

This brings me to my second point: Avatip is a competitive society, and the process of replacing declining groups by their successors through reversion is not in any respect smooth or
automatic. It invariably involves a struggle - often prolonged - between the parties concerned. As I have shown, the majority of name-disputes and debates are part of precisely these processes. The end result is that the demographically more successful inevitably emerge the victors. The competition for cosmological prerogatives is based ultimately on competition of a different and cruder kind: the struggle for demographic viability. Like Lévi-Strauss' 'hot' societies, Avatip society does indeed draw "change and energy" (Lévi-Strauss 1978:29) from conflict between groups; the difference is in the use to which this energy is put. At Avatip, it is directed toward maintaining the totemic system; for to preserve this system against change requires, as the villagers are perfectly well aware, that viable groups regularly displace those headed for extinction. It is thought essential that dying groups are prevented from carrying their cosmological powers into extinction with them; that the totemic system, in effect, is continually detached from descent and prevented from entering the stream of history, where it would simply disintegrate. Continual energy is needed for this; the energy necessary to overcome the resistance of dying groups to relinquishing their cosmological powers. In fact, Avatip politics and history consist essentially in this process.

The Lévi-Straussian antinomy between the 'structural' nature of a system of totemic classifications and its 'statistical' demographic basis is in a sense resolved, and by means of a system which allows for and in fact makes full use of these statistical fluctuations. In effect, groups are 'played off' one against another in a competition which uses the demographic differentials which arise randomly between them to ensure the continual occupation of all the categories of the totemic system. Nor is it necessary to assume, as Lévi-Strauss appears to do, that the static 'mechanical' mode of functioning which he speaks of as characteristic of 'cold' societies (Lévi-Strauss 1978:29) requires that these societies "try, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid... division between the various members of the community" (Charbonnier 1969:34). At Avatip, it is rather that the political ambitions and self-interest of groups and their leaders, and what the villagers conceive as the interests of their society as a whole, in an important sense ultimately coincide. Society and the world are viewed as dependent for their existence upon a scheme of 'totemic' reciprocities between groups;
at the same time, were it not for the continual competition between
groups for positions within it, this scheme would gradually collapse.
Debating, stealing names, and all the bribery, bluff and other
strategems which these involve are motivated by narrow segmentary
and personal ambitions; but they also represent the effort required
to maintain in operation this system of 'timeless' interdependancies.

vi. An historical reconstruction

In the previous section I described the manner in which history -
at least, demographic history - operates within what one might call
Avatip cosmological politics. A further question, however, is that
of historical change not within the system but of it. In this final
section I would like to make some suggestions as to the manner in
which this institutional complex itself evolved.

It is likely that the system evolved from a relatively simple
magical division of labour, involving a few types of gardening magic,
weather magic and so forth. These techniques would presumably have
been based, as they are now among the Manambu, on secret ancestral
names vested in groups, and the whole scheme would perhaps have been
accompanied by some simple form of totemism. As I mentioned earlier,
systems of this kind have been identified by Morauta as a relatively
common lowlands New Guinea phenomenon.

Debates - that is, debates specifically over the ownership of
names - were almost certainly a subsequent cultural development.
Originally the means simply by which groups exercised their magical
functions, secret names in effect acquired a second significance:
they became in addition the means by which groups resolved disputes
over the possession of these functions.

One way in which the development of the debating system could
at least in part be explained is that it was a response to some
sudden increase in settlement size, which increased the rate of
disputes between groups over their hereditary magical and ritual
prerogatives. Laycock has suggested the foothills south of the
middle Sepik as the place of origin of the Ndu-family languages
(1965:192-7); and if this was indeed the case, it is possible that
the growth in settlement size to which I referred occurred when the
Manambu and Iatmul (or, perhaps, their common ancestors) first
moved onto the Sepik and adopted the riverine life-style which
encouraged the formation of the large, permanent villages now characteristic of the middle Sepik. In short, I suggest that these groups brought with them into the middle Sepik a relatively simple scheme of corporate magical specialisations and created the institution of debating 'on top' of this in response to the growth in size of their villages. The river environment, and the largely fishing and sago gathering adaptation of the river villages to it, make possible a certain degree of affluence; but as I explained in Chapter 1 they do not facilitate the forms of surplus production associated with the 'big-man' style of politics. Once on the Sepik, then, the mode of livelihood would therefore have tended to encourage groups to base their status and prestige increasingly upon their hereditary cosmological powers, rather than upon their ability to physically produce or control material resources.

I argued earlier that Avatip totemic cosmology, and the incessant competition between groups for names and cosmological prerogatives, tend to reinforce each other and form a kind of closed and self-validating system. This, I think can help to explain the manner in which the system evolved into the elaborate and involuted form it has now. For once the self-confirming relation I described had been created - once the system had been given its initial 'push' - it would tend if conditions were favourable to simply gather its own momentum and develop under its own internal dynamics.

The manner in which this occurred was probably something as follows. Firstly, although the villagers themselves would deny it, there can be no doubt that the totemic organisation has itself changed through time, as groups moved together through history jostling each other for status within it. I would argue that most of this change has been in the direction of increasing elaboration. Avatip totemic classifications are comparatively complex and extensive; but they owe this more to the highly competitive nature of relations between groups, than to a purely intellectual impulse as Lévi-Strauss tends to suggest. Bateson has made a similar point for the apparently equally complex totemism of the Iatmul (Bateson 1958:127-8,229). One can easily imagine Manambu descent groups beginning at an early stage in the history of their society to vie with each other for totemic ownership of as much of the universe as possible. This process would have resulted in a gradual elaboration of totemism,
of the system of cosmological functions, and of the mythology legitimating these capacities.

As the totemic cosmology grew in complexity, the debating system developed; for these two processes, as I suggested earlier, would have tended to reinforce each other. If it was usual, from early in Manambu history, for collateral segments to have reversionary claims in each other's cosmological patrimonies, an increase in settlement size and proliferation of descent groups would exacerbate the need for some institutional means of resolving the disputes which these rights create. The response to this was what I called the minor or small-scale debate: a debate typically between close agnates, involving a 'name with a single face', and provoked by one party activating its residual claims in some magical or ritual competence vested in the other.

It was probably subsequent to this that the more sophisticated strategies involving 'names with two faces' developed: the strategies, that is to say, typically used in major name-disputes and which are not, as small-scale disputes tend to be, tied to processes of segmentary change. With the evolution of name-disputes of this kind, and of the associated institution of the full-scale debate, the circumstances existed for the debating system to become the focal arena for political action within the village; for it was now in principle possible for any group in the village to successfully challenge the mythological claims of any other at any time.

Something like the historical processes I have sketched may also have occurred among the Iatmul. For it is clear from Bateson's material that debates over the ownership of names form an important part of Iatmul intra-village political life. But his data also suggest that they by no means form the whole of it, and that leadership among the Iatmul involves other aspects as well: in particular, elements of the 'big-man' pattern common in Melanesia, with its attendant focus on wealth and ceremonial exchange (e.g. 1932:258). In comparison with the Iatmul, then, the Manambu are in this respect culturally specialised. While debating forms only part of the political culture of the Iatmul, the Manambu have developed their own political patterns exclusively around this theme.
The Iatmul are a large group, and one gains the impression from reading Bateson that they have a relatively high rate of inter-village mobility (e.g. 1958:64,68). The Manambu, on the other hand, have always been in comparison a small, closed and insular society, occupying for much of their history only a single village: first Asiti and, later, Old Avatip. A single politically autonomous community with its own language, culture and social organisation is, other things being equal, under relatively little pressure to accommodate its cultural institutions to those of the groups around it. It is therefore, I suggest, an environment conducive to the development of specialised and involuted cultural forms; and particularly to the formation of a self-validating and conceptually closed universe of significations such as that which Avatip politics has as its arena.

All the factors I have outlined apply with particular force to Avatip. Continually at war with its Iatmul neighbours and with the Amoku River bush-peoples, the community has always placed great emphasis on maintaining its solidarity and numerical strength. One of the largest and militarily most powerful of the river villages - yet also one of the most insular and economically independent - Avatip was fertile ground for the development of a relentlessly sociocentric cosmology; that is to say, a world-view in which it made no concession to the existence of other groups around it but systematically interpreted the cosmos wholly in terms of its own structure, viewing itself as coeval with the cosmos and responsible for its maintenance.

In an important sense Avatip was throughout its history held together more from the 'outside' - by the perceived need to maintain military unity against its neighbours - than by internal means of preserving social integration. The rivalries between its segments, which might otherwise have split the village apart, were prevented from doing so, primarily by the exigencies of warfare. As a result, these groups' rivalries were instead channelled into the creation of increasingly grandiose cosmological claims against each other and into the development of the debating system. In effect, the external pressures upon the social system produced a kind of 'hot-house' cultural climate, in which what might be termed the fissive energies of the society were trapped within it. Denied any but a symbolic
expression, they resulted in an original cultural nexus of names, totemism, magic and so forth undergoing a form of hypertrophy. Itself unable to fragment, the society instead created a fragmented reflection of itself, in the form of the mythical villages and the whole cosmological complex of which these are the framework. And a system evolved in which the village descent groups, forced into this uneasy consociation, fought out their conflicts not against each other physically but, symbolically, against the names their members carry; that is to say, not so much against each other as objective entities but, above all, as ideas.
Fig. 17b. Avatip descent groups.
APPENDIX A: THE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTEMIC SPECIES AMONGST
AVATIP DESCENT GROUPS (KEY TO FIG. 17)

This is not an exhaustive list of Avatip totems, and many
of the less important are not included.

The correspondence between indigenous and European names
should be viewed only as approximate.

(P) indicates a term in Melanesian Pidgin.

1. Nggola'angkw clan-pair and Nambul Ndjiwji:
decorative plant ? mbandai

2. Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair, Valik Ndjemalwan and
Sambolap Makapangkw:
yams Dioscorea esculenta and
D. alata nya'ankamngga'aw

3. Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair and Nambul Wanakji:
the sun nye

4. Nambul-Sambolap clan and Sarambusarak subclan:
the Sepik River nya'amb

5. Nggola'angkw clan-pair:
Goura Pidgeon Goura victoria kwandj
catfish ? asikami
" ? karu
fish ? mba'aw

6. Wuluwi-Nyawi clan-pair:
dragonflies ? mbimber
Bee-eater (?) ? Merops sp. kwarawi
Swift (?) ? pali
flying-fox Pteropus sp. kumbwi
bat Pteropus sp. kwa'andj

7. Nambul-Sambolap clan:
Domestic fowl Gallus gallus tapuk
Plumed Egret Egretta intermedia sawun
Whiskered (Marsh) Chlidonias hybrida ngga'andj
Tern
Hooded Butcherbird Cracticus cassinus ka'amb
Diadem Fruitdove Ptilinopus ornulatus sendjan
Emerald Ground-
dove Chalcophaps indica kupupulatu
Mango tree Mangifera indica nggwarambi
Nar (P) tree Pterocarpus indicus marok
Laulau (P) tree Syzygium versteegii ndaka'ap
" " S.?aquenum ndjanggurus
" " S. heterobotrys miaka'ap
Caryota palm (?) ? Caryota sp. kambu
lizard ? nggerep
" ? kwa'ap
mayflies ? ka'al
mosquitoes Anopheles, Culex spp. kepi
8. Makom, Kambuli, Nanggwundaw and Nawik subclans:

- tree: Cerbera floribunda
- " Ardisia sloanacea

9. Makom, Kambuli and Nanggwundaw subclans:

- duck: ?
- Water Whistleduck: Dendrocygna arcuata
- Comb-crested Jacana (Lotusbird): Jacana gallinacea
- sago-palm: Metroxylon spp.
- fern: Nephrolepis biserrata
- water-lily: ?
- " tree: Mischocarpus sundaicus
- marine and freshwater crocodile: Crocodylus porosus
- gecko: ? Hemidactylus frenatus

10. Ambasarak and Sarambusarak subclans, Valik Ndjomalwan and Sambolap Makapangkw:

- Cassowary: Casuarius casuarius
- female Eclectus: Eclectus roratus
- parrot: ?

11. Ambasarak and Sarambusarak subclans, and Sambolap Makapangkw:

- red-leafed cordyline: Cordyline sp.
- wild sugarcane: Saccharum robustum

12. Nyakaw subclan, Nanggwundaw Mamiandimi and Nambul Wanaki:

- wild sugarcane: Saccharum robustum

13. Nyakaw subclan, Wanokaw Wainembuk and Nambul Wanaki:

- decorative plant: Acalypha wilkesiana

14. Nyakaw subclan and Wanokaw Wainembuk:

- decorative plant: Crinum asiaticum

15. Nyakaw subclan and Nambul Wanaki:

- areca palm: Areca catechu
- breadfruit tree: Artocarpus altilis
- vulva -

16. Sarambusarak subclan and Sambolap Makapangkw:

- Erima (P) tree: Octomeles sumatrana

17. Maliyaw subclan, Wopuna'amb Wapanggeli and Sambolap Makapangkw:

- Hibiscus: Hibiscus rosa-sinensis

18. Maliyaw subclan and Sambolap Makapangkw:

- tree: Terminalia sepikana
- earth tremor -
19. Nggambak and Nambul subclans:
   Borassus palm  Borassus sp.  temeyaman
20. Makom and Yimal subclans:
   Sulphur-crested Cockatoo  Caucatua galerita  wa'aman
   Nankeen (Rufous) Nightheron  Nycticorax caledonicus  putu
   Black-browed Triller  Lalage atrovirens  sindengwulandai
   Ground Mannikin  Lonchura grandis  marumbwi
   White-marked Honeyeater  Meliphaga albonotata  mwendjel
   green-leafed cordyline  Cordyline sp.  mbaritangger
   reed  Phragmites kanka  kwali
   Mangas (P) tree  Hibiscus tiliaceus  pen
   Black-browed Triller  Lalage atrovirens  mdoamandj
   Ground Mannikin  Lonchura grandis  kamban
21. Nggambak and Valik subclans:
   wild aroid  ?  ya'amb
   snake  ?  ndemakaw
   male Death-adder (?)  ? Acanthophis antarcticus  kanu
   female " " (?)  ? A. antarcticus  keraki
   eel  ?  wa'andj
   ground spider  ?  varu
22. Wopunamb, Kambuli and Warangga'amb subclans:
   bird  ?  kukulei
   palm  ?  kambakenson están
   " "  ?  ai
   " "  ?  mbaru
   tree-fern  ?  anbañ
   " "  ?  nggambaiyan
   pandanus  Pandanus sp.  ngger
   Tulip (P) tree  Gnetum gnemon  yiper
   lizard  ?  waru
23. Nyakaw subclan, Nanggwundaw Mamiandimi and Wansak Wainombuk:
   tree  Maniltoa schefferi  ndjangwian
24. Nyakaw and Maliyaw subclans:
   Croton  Codiaeum variegatum  akar
   tree  ?  sikei
   Kwila (P) tree  Kingiodendron  tawruk
   " "  alternifolium
25. Ambasarak, Sarambusarak and Nawik subclans:
   male Eclectus parrot  Eclectus roratus  sa'ar
   Colonial Starling  Aplonis metallicus  nggolanggasi
   Friarbird  Phileman buceroides  kamanggasi
   vine  Wedelia biflora  sweer
   grass  Cymbopogon sp.  mbanggi
26. Maliyaw subclan and Nanggwundaw Mawiyanggen:
Fork-tailed (Black) Kite
bird

27. Maliyaw subclan and Wanakaw Kambanawur:

28. Maliyaw and Sarambusarak subclans:
fragrant plant Cicada bandicoot

29. Makam subclan:

30. Yimal subclan:

31. Nggambak subclan

Lesser Bird of Paradise Palm cockatoo Rufous-bellied Kookaburra bird Sita (P) tree Aindin (P) tree tree plant sugarcane (1 cultivar)
32. Valik subclan:
- Scrubfowl: *Megapodius affinis* sar
- Collared Scrubturkey: *Talegalla jobiensis* wa'ar
- Hornbill: *Aceros plicatus* rom
- Herb: *Athyrium sp.* mbawar
- Bamboo: *Bambusa sp.* mbali
- Tree: *Myristica hollrnungi* nggun

33. Wopunamb subclan:
- Bird: ? nggwundjeran

34. Nyakaw subclan:
- Common Paradise: *Tanysiptera galatea* piamben
- Purple Swamphen: *Porphyrio porphyrio* wundameli
- Pied Heron: *Ardea pioata* kasambi
- Orange-breasted Figparrot (one sex?): *Cyclopsitta guilielmiterti* kwarkwar
- Bird: ? mandiyambun
- "?: susai
- "?: kasai
- Cuckoo: *Chrysoococcyx minutillus* esakawi
- Frogmouth: *Podargus papuensis* kunggamb

35. Ambasarak subclan:
- Tree: *Barringtonia racemosa* nyanggel
- Banana (1 cultivar): *Musa sp.* la'ap
- Sugarcane (5 " )
- Tree: *Saccharum officinarum* mainggwi
- "?: nggep
- Tree kangaroo: *Chalcosia sp.* manyapel
- Turtle: ? nggwas
- Crayfish: ? kasai
- Sky: - tumbw
- Moon: - mbapw
- Rain: - wa'ali
- Fog: - ngga'and
- Pleiades (?) - namosi

36. Sarambusarak subclan:
- Bird: ?
- Taro: *Colocasia esculenta* ma'aj
- Liana: *Entada usdens* kaka
- Leafy green: *Amaranthus tricolor* mbajar
- Banana (4 cultivars): *Musa sp.* la'ap
- Sugarcane (2 " )
- Fish: *Saccharum officinarum* mainggwi
- Eel: *Apam* wangi
- Turtle: *Varanus sp.* mbambol
| Tree-frog  | ? | ka'ai | nanggwubiai |
| Scorpion  | ? |       |             |

37. Nanggwundaw subclan:

| Bird   | ? | wulaketskai | mamai |
| Banana (3 cultivars) | ? | la'ap | mainggui |
| Sugarcane (1 cultivar) | Musa sp(p). | na'anggwikawi |
| Sago-grub | ? |       |       |

38. Maliyaw subclan:

| Orange-fronted Fruit-dove | Ptilinopus aurantifrons | vivak |
| Orange-fronted Tree | Homalium poitidum | ma'angk |
| Orange-fronted " | Diospyros ferrea | angki |
| Bandicoot | ? | wias | nyawerkei |
| Moths and butterflies | Turbo marmoratus | yu |

39. Sambalap subclan:

| Orange-breasted Figparrot (one sex?) | Cyclopsitta guilemiterti | pakel |
| Orange-breasted Tree | ? | marawul |
| Sugarcane (1 cultivar) | Saccharum officinarum | mainggui |
APPENDIX B: CROSS-CLAN-PAIR TOTEMIC RELATIONSHIPS AT AVATIP

Makom/Kambuli/Nanggwundaw/Nawik

These four subclans are linked together as the mythological co-creators of Chambri Lake. In their joint mythology, Chambri Lake bears the totemic name Kumboranggawi; the Nanggwundaw kaularaep is said to lie on its shores.

Nanggwundaw has totemic-sibling relationships with both Makom and Kambuli. These latter two subclans, although they belong to the same clan-pair, have themselves a very similar tie with each other: they hold their sisters' children in common, cooperate in exchange and support each other in debates. This is the only instance at Avatip of such a relationship obtaining between subclans of the same exogamous unit. Nawik has nawi ties with Makom and Kambuli.

A generation ago there was an affair between a Nanggwundaw man and a Makom woman, and in the recriminations that followed the two groups ceased cooperating in exchange. This situation has continued to the present day, but in other respects their totemic-sibling relationship remains operative.

Ambasarak/Valik Ndjemalwan

Ambasarak and the tonomb Ndjemalwan are nawi. This is a recently created tie, and can be dated to the 1940's when a series of myths associating these two groups was 'revealed' after having purportedly been kept secret until then. Totemic ancestors of Ndjemalwan were incorporated into the myths surrounding the Yanggalimbaw water-hole, and this gave Ndjemalwan a place in the Yanggalimbaw yam ritual association and made it the only Nggola'angkw group to be an owner of the yam harvest ritual. Secondly, Ndjemalwan totemic ancestors were made to figure in the Ambasarak mythology concerning the creation of the Yimi, the western tributary of the Amoku River, and of the Amoku itself. As a result, Ndjemalwan is now considered one of the owners of these rivers. The Yimi is said to flow from Paiyanwaris, the mythical lake associated with the Ambasarak kaularaep Paiyansaanggwulnggai; according to myth, Ambasarak and Ndjemalwan ancestors created the river by breaching this lake.
According to myth, a set of totemic ancestors of these two groups jointly completed the creation of the Sepik River, which had been begun by ancestors of the subclan Nambul. Because of this myth, Nambul, Sambalap Makapangkw and Sarambusarak are considered the joint totemic owners of the river.

Sambalap Makapangkw and Sarambusarak are also associated in the mythology concerning the Yanggolimbaw water-hole, and Makapangkw is accordingly a member of the Yanggolimbaw yam harvest ritual association, the only non-Wuluwi-Nyawi group apart from Valik Ndjomalwan to be an owner of the yam harvest ritual.

Makapangkw and Sarambusarak are totemic-sibling groups.

Makom/Yimal/Nambul Ndjęwí

These three groups are mythologically associated, firstly, in the creation of the Ndumwi ritual. Nambul Ndjęwí is an owner of this ritual and of the fish-fertility complex, and the only non-Nggola'angkw group to be so. In accordance with this the Nambul-Sambalap ceremonial house, Waroman, is a legitimate location for performances of Ndumwi. Ndjęwí has the right and responsibility, together with Makom and Yimal, to preside over all propitiatory sacrifices to the spirits of the Nggola'angkw fishing-lagoons.

Secondly, totemic ancestors of Makom, Yimal and Nambul Ndjęwí figure in myth as the co-creators of the site of Old Avatip. The three groups consider themselves the most senior in the mythology concerning the foundation of the village and the joint owners of the village site.

Makom and Yimal stand to Ndjęwí as nawi groups.

Maliyaw/Wopunamb Wopanggali/Sambalap Makapangkw

Wopanggali and Makapangkw are linked with Maliyaw in the myths of the creation of the Maiyir ritual; although they do not belong to Wuluwi-Nyawi, these two tonombs are considered owners of this ritual. Maliyaw has totemic-sibling relationships with Wopanggali and Makapangkw; these two groups, I should note, have no such tie with each other.
As part of the tie between Makapangkas and Maliyaw, the Maliyaw tonomb Wapikas is a part-owner of the Nambul-Sambolap ceremonial house, Waroman. There is evidence to suggest that this particular mythological tie was created about sixty years ago. The fission of the original Maliyaw tonomb (see Chapter 5), which occurred around 1920, left Wapikas without a ceremonial house of its own, and this posed a problem when a certain Wapikas man achieved a homicide and a venue was needed at which this could be celebrated. At the time, the Nambul-Sambolap ceremonial house was a small shelter-like building, Nambul-Sambolap for some reason - perhaps lack of initiative or even lack of manpower - not having built a full-scale version of it for some years. Wapikas and Makapangkas then 'revealed' a set of myths disclosing the totemic ancestors of Wapikas had taken part in the creation of Waroman; and it appears that the ownership of the personal names of certain of the posts of the ceremonial house was transferred to Wapikas. This tonomb, now a mythologically-sanctioned part-owner of the building, built it in their own ward at its proper size and held their homicide celebration there. When they left Old Avatip for Yentshanggai in the mid-1930's, Wapikas again built it in their new ward, where it still remains under their custodianship.

Nyakaw/Nambul Wanaki

These two groups have a totemic-sibling tie. They are linked as the co-creators of the sun (and hence of daylight) and of the vulva; they are also the two most senior groups in the mythology surrounding the separation of the sky from the earth.

Nyakaw/Yimal

The totemic ancestors of these two subclans are associated in myth as the creators of the first sacred flutes (ka'ai). The two groups have a nawi relationship; rather anomalously, they do not share any totemic species or personal names, though their nawi tie does prohibit debates between them. This situation appears to have arisen as a result of a dispute which occurred between them about two generations ago.

At that time, Nyakaw and the Yimal tonomb Kwindjambangk had neighbouring wards at Old Avatip, and Kwindjambangk were regarded
as part-owners of the Nyakaw ceremonial house, Awlimbor. A quarrel apparently broke out between the two groups over their relative seniority in the myth of the creation of flutes; and this resulted in Kwindjambangk dissociating itself from Awlimbor and building a ceremonial house of its own, Kawsimbi, in its own ward. This toɔɔmmb owned the personal names of the spires (mai'yım) of the ceremonial house Awlimbor, and, as one informant put it, 'when they left Awlimbor they took the spires with them'. That is, they made a curse invoking the secret names of the spires, forbidding Nyakaw to construct spires on subsequent versions of Awlimbor on pain of affliction by the spires' ancestral spirits. As a consequence, each re-building of Awlimbor since that time has been in a plain pitched-roof style.

Nggambak/Nambul

These two subclans stand to each other as totemic-siblings. I was unable to discover the mythological significance of this tie; it seems to be rather more important at Malu and Yuanamb than it is at Avatip, and Avatip may have imported it from the two other villages. At Malu and Yuanamb the relationship is between Nambul and Yeloku, a subclan not represented at Avatip but which belongs to the same clan as Nggambak and whose position in mythology is filled at Avatip by this subclan.
APPENDIX C: MAIN COSMOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES OF AVATIP SUBCLANS

Makom

This subclan is said to have been responsible, together with Yimal, for the creation of the Nggola'angkw lagoons, and Makom consequently has the responsibility to help perform the sacrifices made to the spirits of these lagoons during shortages of fish. Makom is also considered one of the owners of the Old Avatip village site; according to myth, its totemic ancestors created the downriver end of the site, the malval or 'canoe stern.' The malval is identified with the ceremonial house Kamandja'amb, of which Makom is the senior owner, and which is one of the two most senior and important ceremonial houses at Avatip. Each of these buildings is said to be inhabited by one of the two tutelary spirits of Avatip; that associated with Kamandja'amb is called Tepayimborman and is a totemic ancestor of Makom. As the most senior of the Nggola'angkw ceremonial houses, Kamandja'amb is the ideal location for performances of Ndumwi, a ritual of which Makom is the most senior owner and during which its men occupy the most senior of the seating-areas of the Nggola'angkw subclans. In the past Kamandja'amb was the venue for the scarification of novices of the Mbanggwos initiatory moiety. It was also a wakom tangger - a ceremonial house at which shamans, after raiding expeditions, would ritually cleanse homicides of their pollution.

Makom is one of the mythical creators of Chambri Lake, and possesses fertility-magic for certain totemic species belonging to the groups associated in this mythology: the sago-palm, the crocodile and certain duck species. Makom also owns fertility-magic for the green-fruited variety of coconut-palm.

Yimal

Yimal is considered, with Makom, a co-creator of the Nggola'angkw lagoons, and its men must accordingly assist in all sacrifices made to these. Yimal is second to Makom in the organisation of the Ndumwi ritual and shares with Makom the right to inaugurate this ritual.

Yimal possesses magic for drying out swamp, and which also has the potential negative use as a means of silting up fishing
lagoons. This subclan also owns the *mbanggui* Sakinêmei and the love-
magic associated with it. Yimal claim that their totemic ancestors
created the middle section of the Old Avatip village site and played
the main role in the formation of the village. Yimal *kwindjambangk*
are one of the mythical co-creators of sacred flutes.

**Nggambak**

This subclan holds the right to inaugurate the scarification
ritual. It possesses the *simbuk*-ship of the Waróman 'senior' *laki*,
and is the senior owner of the ceremonial house Kumbonwali.

**Valik**

Valik possesses the *simbuk*-ship of the *laki* Nyakawlaki. The
Valik tønømb *Ndjemalwan* is a member of the Yanggolimbaw yam harvest
ritual association, and the only Nggala'angkw group to be an owner
of this Wuluwi-Nyawi ritual. As part of its tie with the
Yanggolimbaw core-group Ambasarak, it is a totemic part-owner of
the Amoku River.

**Wopunamb**

This subclan is the senior owner of the ceremonial house
Waika'amb. The Wopunamb tønømb *Wopanggali* is one of the owners of
the Wuluwi-Nyawi third-stage initiatory ritual, Maiyir.

**Kambuli**

Kambuli is one of the mythological creators of Chambri Lake,
and shares with the other subclans associated in these myths the
fertility-magic for the sago-palm, crocodiles and certain duck
species. It possesses the Waróman 'junior' *simbuk*-ship, and the
love-magic associated with the *mbanggui* Nambapali.

**Warangga'amb**

This subclan has a relatively senior place in the mythology of
the foundation of Avatip, but otherwise appears to possess no major
mythological entitlements.
Nambul

This subclan is one of the totemic owners of the Sepik River. It possesses magic to control Yambunmanuwei, the west wind which brings the rains of the wet season. It has fertility-magic for the mayfly, which breeds on the Sepik, and sorcery to cause plagues of mosquitoes.

Nambul is the creator of the tamaval, or 'canoe prow', the western end of the Old Avatip site, and claims, together with Makom, to be the first subclan to have appeared at Avatip. Nambul is the senior owner of the ceremonial house Waroman, which is said to have stood at the tamaval at the foundation of the village and is regarded, together with the Makom ceremonial house Kamandja'amb, as one of the two most important and mythologically senior ceremonial houses in the village. Like Kamandja'amb, Waroman is said to contain a tutelary spirit of Avatip; this figure is called Kwasa'am and is a totemic ancestor of Nambul.

Nambul Ndjuwi is one of the owners of the fish-fertility ritual Ndumwi; and Waroman, though not a Nggola'angkw ceremonial house, is consequently a legitimate location for performances of this ritual. In connection with this, the men of Ndjuwi are expected to take part in propitiatory sacrifices to the spirits of the Nggola'angkw lagoons.

As part of its totemic tie with the subclan Nyakaw, the Nambul tonomb Wanaki possesses fertility-magic for the areca-palm and the breadfruit tree, and shares with Wuluwi-Nyawi the magic of sky-collapse.

Sambalap

Sambalap is one of the totemic owners of the Sepik River, and shares with Nambul the magic to control mayflies, mosquitoes and the wind Yambunmanuwei.

The Sambalap tonomb Makapanglaw is one of the owners of the Wuluwi-Nyawi yam harvest and Maiyir rituals, and a member of the Yanggolimbaw yam harvest ritual association. It also possesses magic to produce earthquakes.
Nyakaw

This subclan owns the ceremonial house Awlimbor. The Nyakaw tonomb Kamei possesses the hereditary leadership of the Meipornimbor yam harvest ritual association, which performs the ritual at Awlimbor. In connection with this, the subclan as a whole possesses a form of gardening-magic specific to the *Dioscorea esculenta* gardens on the Amoku River; while the Nyakaw tonomb Mbwindimi shares with the Maliyaw tonomb Mapikas the hereditary right to ritually inaugurate the yearly cultivation of the *D. alata* gardens on the Sepik River.

Nyakaw is one of the subclans said to have created sacred flutes. It owns magic to control storms, and fertility-magic for the red-fruited variety of coconut-palm, a turtle species, prawns, the areca-palm and the breadfruit tree. It shares with the subclan Nanggwundaw the Nyava'at weather-magic; and shares with Maliyaw and Ambasarak the right to inaugurate the Maiyir ritual.

Ambasarak

Ambasarak owns the ceremonial house Nyanggolambi (see Plate 7), and the hereditary leadership of the Yanggolimbaw yam harvest ritual association. This office is simultaneously the *simbuk*-ship of the *laki* Ndjimbor. Yanggolimbaw is the mythologically most important of the three yam harvest ritual water-holes; according to myth, it was from this hole that all yams were released into the world. Ambasarak have as a totemic ancestor the effigy Nggoleinwakon, the senior of the two effigies erected during the major version of the yam harvest ritual, and which is constructed in Nyanggolambi by the Yanggolimbaw association. Ambasarak shares with the subclan Maliyaw the right to inaugurate the yam harvest ritual, and possesses yam-magic for the *D. esculenta* gardens. In the past it was at Nyanggolambi that novices of the Mbanggwos initiatory moiety were inducted, after their scarification, into the second initiatory grade during the major version of the yam harvest ritual. Ambasarak is also one of the totemic owners of the Amoku River, the western tributary of which is said to flow from its hamulatop Paiyansanggwulngai. It shares with the subclan Sarambusarak fertility-magic for taro, edible pitpit and several leafy greens and types of banana. It also shares with Nyakaw and Maliyaw the hereditary privilege of inaugurating the Maiyir ritual.
Sarambusarak

Sarambusarak is one of the totemic owners of the Sepik River, and also of the Amoku river. It possesses magic to cause thunderstorms, fertility-magic for edible frogs and a turtle species, and shares with Ambasarak gardening magic for taro, pitpit, leafy greens and bananas.

Wanokaw

This subclan owns the ceremonial house Maliyeraman. This building is a waken tangger - a ceremonial house at which, before pacification, shamans would ritually cleanse homicides of their supernatural pollution.

Nanggwundaw

Nanggwundaw owns the ceremonial house Womburaman. It is one of the subclans said to have created Chambri Lake, and possesses in common with these groups the fertility-magic for the sago-palm, crocodiles and certain duck species. It owns the weather-magic Nyava'at, and the love-magic of the mbanggui Meivanunggwes.

Nawik

Nawik is one of the totemic owners of Chambri Lake. It is a member of the Yanggalimbaw yam harvest ritual association and, in the default of the subclan Ambasarak, had until 1978 for a number of years held the simbuk-ship of the laki Ndjimber and the leadership of the Yanggalimbaw association. This office was returned to Ambasarak in 1978, when a man of this subclan was promoted to sufficient ritual seniority to assume it.

Maliyaw

Maliyaw owns the ceremonial house Pakanombor. In the past, this was the venue for the scarification of novices of the Warom man initiatory moiety and for their later induction into the second initiatory grade during the major version of the yam harvest ritual. It was also the usual site for performances of the third-stage ritual Maiyir, a ritual of which Maliyaw is regarded as one of the creators. Pakanombor was also a waken tangger.
The Maliyaw tanamb Malikemban possesses the hereditary leadership of the Awiwa'anggw yam harvest ritual association, an office which is simultaneously the simbuk-ship of the laki Pukandu. This tanamb owns a form of gardening-magic for the *D. esculenta* gardens, and shares with Ambasarak the right to inaugurate the yam harvest ritual. It has as a totemic ancestor the effigy Kobavwi, which is constructed in Pakanambor by the Awiwa'angkw groups during the main version of the harvest ritual, and which is the junior of the two such effigies assembled and erected as part of the ritual. The Maliyaw tanamb Wapikas shares with the Nyakaw tanamb Mbwindimi the right to ritually inaugurate the yearly cultivation cycle of the Sepik River *D. alata* gardens.

Maliyaw is a totemic owner of the Amoku River, the eastern tributary of which is said to flow from its kwulatep Ambianggai. It also shares with Sambelap Makapangkw magic to produce earthquakes.
APPENDIX D: AN EXAMPLE OF mba’ar sena (A FORMAL SPEECH OPENING A DEBATE)


Yambunmali, kwulatopa wa’anggw, wa’anggw suwlakak ronand. At Yambunmali, the lake at the new village, it sits ready to dive into the lake.

Kondāka ronand. Yamburiyambundumand. Here it sits. It is the mba’ar Yamburiyambundum.

Namarwali, kwulanggai wali, wali suwlakak ronand. At Namarwali, the lake at the new village, it sits ready to dive into the lake.

Kondāka ronand. Ka’alanyawaranduand. Yambundumand. Here it sits. It is the mba’ar Ka’alanyawarandu. It is the mba’ar Yambundum.

Yambunmali, kwulatopa wa’anggw, wa’anggw suwlakak ronand. At Yambunmali, the lake at the new village, it sits ready to dive into the lake.

Kondāka ronand. Ndjamawnyawaranduand. Yamburiyambundumand. Here it sits. It is the mba’ar Ndjamawnyawarandu. It is the mba’ar Yambundum.

Namarwali, kwulanggai wali, wali suwlakak ronand. At Namarwali, the lake at the new village, it sits ready to dive into the lake.

This speech was given in late April 1978 by Apakwaru of Sambālap subclan, at the start of a debate at Malu Village between his group and the subclan Yeloku (a group not represented at Avatip) over the ownership of the name Karekondawai. Yamburiyambundum (or, in its shortened form, Yambundum), Yambwimba’ar, Ka’alanyawarandu and Ndjamawnyawarandu are all totemic names of the Sambālap mba’ar. Yambunmali and Namarwali are totemic names of the mythical lake (wa’anggw or wali) associated with the ancestral village (kwulatopa) of Sambālap subclan, and which is said to be the source of the Sepik River. Apakwaru pictures the mba’ar as a diving bird, about to swoop into this lake. Possibly, this image was meant to suggest that his side were ready to enter the debate in a similarly aggressive manner.

Although a mba’ar sena speech is declaimed rhythmically rather than sung, it has a form in common with that of much of Manambu lyrics. It consists of essentially identical stanzas, each stanza within the pair differing mainly in the use of alternative totemic
names, or combinations of such names, for the same objects. Often, this is accompanied by the use of Western Iatmul terms in the second stanza of each pair: in Apakwaru's speech, for example, the Sambolap mythical village is referred to in lines 2 and 6 as a *kanulatop* (Manambu: *top* = village), and as *kanulanggai* (Iatmul: *nggai* = village), in lines 4 and 8. The aim, in short, is to create an effect of symmetry between pairs of nearly, but not quite, identical parts. This is in fact the most important principle of the aesthetics of all Manambu oral composition.
Nimbi ('arrows') consist of arrangements of decorated arrows and sticks set up on the debating ground by each side to represent their totemic ancestors (nggw'af'asa'ai) and apical ancestors (vei). The purpose of the array is to diagram the subclan's version of the main genealogical ties of the ancestor whose name is in dispute. This ancestor and, among others, usually its father, mother and mother's brother (the four figures whose secret names play so vital a role in the debate) are all represented by specific sticks and arrows (see Plate 16).

Three main conventions are used in arranging nimbi. The first of these is the use of a row of arrows to represent a set of siblings in their birth order, a line of patrilineal descent, or a combination of both of these. The second convention is that the wife and wife's brother of any of these figures may, if desired, be shown by a pair of arrows placed at the side of the arrow representing him. All of these arrows are decorated with totemic leaves and bird plumes indicating the group affiliations of the ancestors concerned. Thirdly, if a further generation of ancestors is to be diagrammed, this may be done with sikirep - short sticks topped with a round, orange fruit (mbandi) - arrayed in sibling sets alongside the arrows representing their fathers.

An example of a nimbi array is given in Figure 18 below. An arrangement such as this could represent the apical ancestor of a subclan, his sons (the founding ancestors of the subclan's extant and extinct tonombs), and a selection of the totemic ancestors begotten by these tonombavei; alternatively, it might represent a segment of a tonomb's ndja'amama'andj, or alliance narrative. For the sake of clarity, Figure 18 shows only 31 ancestors; in reality, a nimbi array might contain two hundred or more.
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