SOUND-PRODUCING INSTRUMENTS IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

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SOUND-PRODUCING INSTRUMENTS IN
TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: A STUDY OF ESOTERIC
INSTRUMENTS AND THEIR ROLE IN
MALE-FEMALE RELATIONS

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New Guinea Research Unit
The Australian National University
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1975

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Author's Note

While this paper is complete so far as Papua New Guinea is concerned, it should be regarded as part of a work of much broader scope in which the writer is at present engaged and which will eventually examine the role of esoteric instruments as spirit voices on an inter-continental basis.

I would like to place on record my grateful appreciation of the assistance given by Hart and Karen Sturm at Goroka, and of Gisela Seidensticker-Brickay at Zaria in elucidation of the works by Bamler, Höltker and Aufenanger, Keysser, Lehner, Neuhauss and Vicedom and Tischner. Final responsibility for translations from the German appearing in the text is, of course, my own. I also wish to thank the Papua New Guinea Department of Information and Extension Services, the Creative Arts Centre of Papua New Guinea, the Papua New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery, Mr J. Kunst and Dr Ron May for the photographs which they made available.

K.A. Gourlay

Chapter 1

Introduction

In Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia Allen (1967) shows how the incidence and form of initiation ceremonies are related to social structure in some fifty societies throughout Papua New Guinea and the adjoining islands. This paper is more specifically ethnomusicological in that the aim is to investigate three sound-producing instruments: the bullroarer, sacred flutes and the slit-gong. All are esoteric in the sense that the prerogative of playing them, at times even of seeing them, is restricted to one section of the community - initiated males. This restriction, the ideology that provides its justification, and the corresponding taboos on women and children can be understood only as part of a wider culture complex that includes, on the one hand, male cults and secret initiation ceremonies, on the other, male-female relations, especially those of overt antagonism.

Initiation ceremonies are not, however, the only occasions on which bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs are found. A full understanding of their nature and the role they play in society can be obtained only by investigating their overall usage. The field of study is thus widened to include not only initiation but all occasions on which the instruments occur.

At the same time, as cult objects, bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs are focal points for beliefs, the significance of which can be appreciated only by studying both the symbolic interpretation attributed to the instruments by different cultures and the basis of such beliefs as revealed through myth and explanatory folklore. The method of investigation thus becomes an exploration in depth of cultural rather than social factors. The intention is not to deny the importance of the latter but to follow a method appropriate to the subject matter while avoiding repetition of material available elsewhere. If, owing to under-emphasis of social

factors, the result is somewhat one-sided, it may serve as a corrective to those interpretations which perceive all phenomena in relation to social organisation rather than as resulting from a dialectical interplay of cultural and social factors.

As a corollary to this approach, generalisation tends to replace comparison. Although we begin by attempting to distinguish culture areas based on the incidence and usage of instruments, instead of relating the variables to different forms of social organisation, the approach is to look for similarities rather than differences. While a study of such differences may eventually form the subject of further research, in a preliminary survey such as the present it is considered desirable to concentrate on general principles rather than on interesting exceptions.

This approach in turn facilitates the adoption of a less 'static' view of the working of society. In attempting to establish correlations between two sets of phenomena, for example, the degree of secrecy attributed to sound-producing instruments and the extent of male dominance in social organisation, a writer may achieve greater precision especially if he is able to use statistical methods; but his approach gives little indication of the dynamics that enable society to operate, even within a synchronic context. By 'dynamics' is meant less the 'forces of social change', which for some Papua New Guinean societies is almost a contradiction in terms, than those forces within a society whose interaction produces an 'equilibratory stasis'. This concept is elaborated in the concluding section on male-female relations which, it is suggested, in the light of evidence from the body of this study, should be interpreted less in terms of a dominant male-submissive female syndrome than as one in which social connivance is seen as the leading factor in maintaining the status quo. The importance of esoteric instruments lies in the fact that, without them or an equally effective substitute, such connivance would become impossible and the existing social order would lose its viability.

The remainder of this chapter attempts to present all three instruments in broad geographical perspective through the demarcation of culture areas. This is followed by a brief note on the use of other instruments for esoteric purposes before proceeding to the main body of the study which is divided into five parts: the instrument as material object; the instrument in action; the instrument as symbol; the instrument as prototype - myths of origin; and the instrument

and inter-sex relations. Within each section (except the last) bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs are considered separately save where their joint use dictates the inclusion of two or more under the same heading. Although reference is largely to the past, the present tense is used throughout in describing traditional practices.

The establishment of culture areas

In an attempt to establish broad culture areas, data on the occurrence, absence and major uses of bullroarers, side-blown flutes and slit-gongs were obtained for 233 societies, places or areas throughout Papua New Guinea. The sources listed in Tables 1 and 2 comprise all written anthropological and ethnomusicological works available in Papua New Guinea at the time of research and students of Goroka Teachers' College for the years 1972-74 whose contributions are indicated by an 'x' in the 'Source' column.¹

Of the 233 sets of data obtained, references to one or more of the instruments under investigation occurred in 150. These are listed in Table 1 where Column A gives the occurrence of the instruments and Column B indicates that they are associated with initiation ceremonies subject to inter-sexual taboos and restrictions, or both. In assessing 'negative evidence' (Table 2) it was not always possible to determine whether failure to mention instruments signified their absence or was due to either ignorance on the part of informants or deliberate omission as outside the scope of the work in question. It was decided therefore, to include as 'significant' only those societies for which a reasonably complete list of instruments was available. Of the 83 sets of data making no reference to bullroarers, sacred flutes or slit-gongs, 42 were discarded as referring to one or two

¹ I would like to thank the students of Goroka Teachers' College during the years 1972-74 whose regularly completed assignments on 'Traditional Musical Instruments' provided part of the data on which this section of the study is based. Although this was not the original intention, their contributions, both in written work and discussion, proved too valuable to be allowed to languish in the inevitable academic wastepaper basket. I can only hope that some, at least, were rewarded with a little deeper insight into the workings of their traditional culture.

instruments only and a further 11 (from student sources) eliminated on the supposition that some educated informants might be unaware of esoteric instruments. The procedure is over cautious: instruments as important as those under discussion are more likely to be reported than such minor exhibits as leaf-reeds, buzzing-nuts or ocarinas. Table 2, therefore, is an underestimate of societies in which the instruments are not found.

In order to show distribution and usage, data from Tables 1 and 2 are presented in map form (Fig.1), occurrence being indicated by outline symbols, association with esoteric cults by shaded symbols and absence by a line under the figure.

Inspection of the maps suggests tentative culture areas based on the distribution and usage of instruments.¹ The analysis at this stage is purely quantitative and no attempt is made to establish the relative importance attributed to instruments within a particular area. Culture areas were finally established by statistical methods. Their main characteristics are shown by means of symbols in Table 3 and their boundaries and the basis of classification are given, together with brief comments on the source of material used.

¹ The methodological objection that the map reveals less of instrumental distribution than that certain areas have been subject to anthropological research may be refuted on two grounds: (i) anthropological sources provide evidence for absence as well as presence of instruments and (ii) separate plotting of data from student sources produces an overall distribution pattern which correlates broadly with that from written records. If there are more examples from Sepik than from, say, Western District, this may indicate that the former has attracted more anthropological research (or provided a higher proportion of students at Goroka Teachers' College). It does not invalidate the overall position.

Table 1

Distribution of sound-producing instruments:sources of information

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A*			B*			Source
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
<u>West Sepik</u>							
1. Vanimo (incl. Warimo, Wutung Wutung and Yako)	X	X	X	X	X	x;	Chinnery (ndA: 48-9); Thomas 1941:184)
2. <u>Aitape/Berlinhafen/Sissanu/Tumleo/Alf Island</u>		X	X	X			Chinnery (ndA: 48-9); Finsch (1888:T.12, Pl.XIII.; 1914: 538); <u>Official Handbook</u> (1937: 415); Luschan (1899: 492-97); Neuhauss (1911: 231, 316, 317); Palmer and Dean (1972: 70)
3. Wapei	X	X	X	X		x	
<u>East Sepik</u>							
4. Karesau		X		X			P.W. Schmidt (1907: 1032, 1039)
5. Wogeo	X	X	X	X	X	X	Firth (1936: 13, 111); Hogbin (1970: passim)
6. Mushu Island			X			x	
7. Boiken	X	X	X		X	x	
8. Tarawai Island	X		X	X	X	x	
9. Arapesh (incl.Kaboibus)	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; Allen (1967: 32,58-9); Mead (1935:26,63,68)
10. Abelam (incl.Maprik)	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; Allen (1967:58-9); Koch (1968: 54-5 & figs. 63-4); Moyle (1972: 814-15)
11. Duo/ <u>Yangoru</u>	X	X	X	X	X		x; Elkin (1956-57: 318)
12. Sil			X			x	
13. Murik/Kaup/Kerau	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; P.J. Schmidt (1923-24: 707-8,725,729; 1926:49-50,53,56,62; 1933: 330-32, 334-46 & figs. 10, 352 and fig.22)
14. Kwoma	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; Whiting (1941: 89-91,131-33); Whiting & Reed (1938: passim)
15. Tchambuli		X	X	X	X		Allen (1967: 66,68); Mead (1935:245,269)
16. Mundugumor	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; Allen (1967:69); Mead (1935:172,181,213); Merriam (1964: 69-71); Newton (1967:47)
17. Avatip	X		X	X	X		x; Behrmann (1922:256)
18. Iatmul	X	X	X	X	X	X	Allen (1967: 61-62); Bateson (1936:158-64, 167-70; 1958:passim)
19. Nor-Pondo			X		X	x	
20. Niaura	X	X	X	X	X	x	
21. Chambri	X		X	X	X	x	
22. Banaro	X	X		X	X		Sachs (1958: 95); Thurnwald (1916:261, 264-66,269)
<u>Madang</u>							
23. Bosmun		X	X				Blackwood (1951: 279,282)
24. Tangu			X				Burridge (1959: 137-50; 1965: 254; 1969: passim)
25. Manam Island (incl. Dugulaba)	X	X	X	X	X	X	x; Allen (1967: 65-6); Finsch (1914:538); Friederici (1912: 206); Wedgwood (1933:134); Werner (1911: 245)
26. Monumbo		X	X	X			Poch (1905:230,236); Vormann (1911:419,426)

* BR - bullroarers; SF - sacred flutes; SG - slit-gongs

Table 1 (continued)

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A Occurrence			B Usage			Source
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
27. Mambuan			X		X	x	
28. Korak			X		X	x	
29. Tokain			X		X	x	
30. Mikarew		X	X		X	x	
31. Karkar Island (incl. Karkar- Takia, KarkarWaskia & GubardauTakia)	X		X	X	X	x	
32. Serang	X	X	X			x	
33. Basken	X	X	X	X	X	x	
34. Megiar		X			X	x	
35. <u>Bagabag Island</u>	X		X	X	X	x	
36. Rao	X	X	X		X	x	
37. Kesup		X				x	
38. <u>Astrolabe Bay</u>	X	X	X	X			Biro (1901: 176-77, 181-93 & Pls.18, 4; XXI 1-20; XXII, 1-17); De Clercq & Schmeltz (1893: after 244 T.IV); Finsch (1914: 543); Kunst (1967: End Pl.33c)
39. Bundi		X		X			Holtker & Aufenanger (1940: 58-60)
40. Maclay Coast	X			X		x	
41. Ngaing	X		X	X	X		Lawrence (1964: 13,15-19; 1965: 199-201,204,207-8, 210-13)
42. Swit		X				x	
43. Tapen	X			X		x	
44. Mebu		X				x	
<u>Morobe</u>							
45. Umboi Island	X		X				Bamler (1911: 512); De Clercq & Schmeltz: (1893: after 244, T.IV)
46. Sio	X			X		x	
47. <u>Siassi Islands</u>	X		X	X	X	x	x; Chinnery (ndB: 42)
48. Hube	X						Neuhauss (1911: 259, fig. 173h)
50. Wampar	X					x	
51. Kai	X			X			Keysser (1911: 34-7)
52. <u>Finschhafen</u>	X	X	X				x; De Clercq & Schmeltz (1893: after 244, T.IV); Finsch (1914: 537)
53. <u>Cape Cretin</u>	X		X				De Clercq & Schmeltz: (1893: after 244, T.IV); Kunst (1967: End pl. 33d)
54. Lae-Womba	X						Neuhauss (1911: 385)
55. Bukawa/Yabim	X	X	X	X			Friederici (1912: 101); Hagen (1899:188); Lehner (1911: 404-14, 437); Neuhauss (1911:384)
56. Tami	X		X	X			Bamler (1911: 494-99,501); Hagen (1899: 190-91)
57. <u>Huon Gulf</u> (General)	X	X	X	X	X		Biro (1899:9 n.514); Bodrogi (1961:28, 39-41, 72-8 figs.32, 34-8e); De Clercq & Schmeltz: 1893: after 244, T.IV); Detzner (1920: 190-91); Krieger (1899: 213); Kunst (1967: End pl.33b); Neuhauss (1911:316)

Table 1 (continued)

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A			B			Source
	Occurrence			Usage			
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
59. Busama	X		X	X			x; Allen (1967:86); Hogbin (1951:214-18)
60. Kela			X				x
61. Gawac	X						x
62. Guhu-Samane	X	X		X			x
63. Zia	X			X			x; Chinnery (ndC; 60)
64. Bia-Waria	X	X		X	X		<u>Official Handbook</u> (1937: 391)
<u>Northern</u>							
65. Binandere	X			X			x
66. Orokaiva	X	X		X	X		Allen (1967: 74); Williams (1930: passim)
68. Korafe			X				x
69. Maisin	X						x
<u>Milne Bay</u>							
70. Trobriand Islands			X				x
73. Utuwala	X	X					x
77. Wedau			X				x
78. Topura	X			X			x
79. Awalama	X						Seligman (1910: 592)
80. Taupota	X						Seligman (1910: 592)
84. Misima Island/Liak			X	X			x
<u>Central</u>							
87. Waima	X	X		X			x; Allen (1967: 76)
91. Tubulamo	X						x
92. Tauruba			X		X		x
<u>Gulf</u>							
95. Wapo-Era	X						Newton (1961: 20)
96. Purari	X			X			Firth (1936: 24); Hurley (1924; 270-71); Newton (1961:23); 1967: 102); Poignant (1967: 89 fig.); Tischner (1958: 133 & fig.4); Williams (1924:165-71)
97. Orokolo	X			X			Williams (1940b: 158-59; 167 fig.7,163-68,204 fig.8)
98. Elema: General	X			X			Newton (1961:25-6,35); Williams (1936b:15,22-4)
99. Toaripi (Motumotu)	X			X			x; Chalmers (1897: 329)
100. Moripi	X	X		X			Holmes (1924: passim)
101. Sepoe	X			X			x
<u>Western</u>							
103. <u>Fly River</u>	X			X			Beaver (1920: 185)
105. Keraki	X	(X)		X	X		(Slit-bamboo flute) Tischner (1958: 135); Williams (1936a:70, 181-84, 191, 194, 197-201)

Table 1 (continued)

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A Occurrence			B Usage			Source
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
106. Kiwai		X			X		Beaver (1920:186); Chalmers (1903:119); Haddon (1900:418,421; 1912:275-78 figs 235,237); Landtman (1927: passim; 1933: 73 & Pl.XXIX, 720-21); Newton (1961:10); Riley (1925:201-2, 204-7)
<u>Southern Highlands</u>							
110. Wiru		X				x	
111. Koke		X				x	
112. <u>Lake Kutubu</u>		X					Williams (1940a: 14,107)
113. Kewa-Lr. Yalibu		X			X	x	
114. Yambalape		X			X	x	
115. Samberigi		X				x	
<u>Western Highlands</u>							
120. Kuma		X			X		Allen (1967: 37); Reay (1959: 139,141,162,170-71, 173-74)
121. Wahgi/Mid-Wahgi		X			X		x; Holtker (1940-41:360); Schaefer (1938:401-3, 406-7, 413-14; Tischner (1939:50 figs 51,52)
122. Babinge		X			X	x	
123. Maipka	X	X		X	X	x	
124. Konombka		X				x	
125. Kagol		X			X	x	
<u>Chimbu</u>							
126. Nondugl		X			X		x; Luzbetak (1954:72-3, 115-17,127); Simpson (1954: 206,216-17)
127. Kamaneku		X			X	x	
128. Kuman		X			X		Allen (1967:35); Elkin (1956-57: 317-18); Malm (1967:8); Nilles (1943:115; 1950:21,30,46-8); Simpson (1954:162); Wirz (1952:9-13,111s 26,26a,27)
129. Dom/Sinasina	X			X		x	
130. Siane/Nambaiyufa		X			X		x; Allen (1967:34); Salisbury (1962:17,32-4; 1965: 60, 64-9,73)
<u>Eastern Highlands</u>							
131. Gururumba		X			X		Newman (1964: 265-6,268-9; 1965:42,67-9,75,80-1)
132. Gahuku-Gama		X			X		Allen (1967:30,32); Read (1952:5,7-25; 1966: 96, 113-18, 126-30,144); Simpson (1954:147-48)
133. Bena-Bena		X			X		x; Chinnery (1934:118)
134. Agarabi		X				x	
135. Kafe/ <u>Kainantu</u>	X	X			X	x	
137. Gimi		X			X		Glick (1972: 821-22)
138. Kamano, Jate, Usurufa, Fore	X	X		X	X		Allen (1967:34); C.H.Berndt (1959:177); R.M. Berndt (1965: 89-91)

Table 1 (continued)

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A Occurrence			B Usage			Source
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
<u>Manus</u>							
139. Ponam Island			X			x	
140. Kurti	X	X	X		X	x	
141. Usiai		X	X		X	x; Parkinson (1907: 346-47, 351, 374)	
142. Vorei (Loi)			X			x	
143. Titans (incl.M'bunai, Rambutyo Island & Mouk)	X	X	X		X	X	x
144. Baluan Island	X		X		X	x	
<u>West New Britain</u>							
145. Nakanai	X		X	X	X	x; Finsch (1914:544); Parkinson (1907:209)	
147. Eklep	X			X		x	
148. Mowehafen	X			X		Allen (1967:90); Buschan (1923:141)	
<u>East New Britain</u>							
149. Ramuaina/Duke of York Island	X		X	X		x	
150. <u>Gazelle</u> : General	X		X	X		Buschan (1923: 126-27); Eberlein (1910: 635-40 & Pls before 635 & Opp.638; <u>Official Handbook</u> (1937: 358-59); Laufer (1961: 459-68); Parkinson (1907: 78-82, 130-33)	
151. <u>Blanche Bay</u>			X		X	Finsch (1914: 539)	
152. Tolai	X		X	X	X	x; Matane (1972: 20-4,49-50); Salisbury (1970: 159, 295,299); Sheridan (1972: 817)	
153. Baining	X			X		Laufer (1959:910; 1970:177-82)	
154. Sulka	X		X	X	X	Finsch (1914:544); Parkinson (1907:204)	
155. Mengen	X	X		X	X	x	
<u>New Ireland</u>							
156. St.Matthias Island			X			Buschan (1923:158); Neverman (1933:218-19 & figs 135-36)	
157. <u>New Hanover</u> (inc.Tungak, Lavongai)	X		X			x	
158. Tiang (Djaul Island)			X			x	
159. Kara			X			x	
160. Nalik	X		X			x	
161. Madak			X		X	x	
162. Sunglik (<u>Lihir Island</u>)			X			x	
163. Laks	X		X			x	
164. Sursurunga			X			x	
165. <u>Namatani</u>			X			Friederici (1912:101); Kramer-Bannow 1916:49-50 & fig 33)	
166. Patpatar		X	X		X	x	
167. <u>King/Kalil</u>	X		X	X		Stephan & Graebner (1907:119 & fig 124,129,131)	

Table 1 (continued)

People/Place (Place names underlined)	A Occurrence			B Usage			Source
	BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG	
168. Barriai			X				Friederici (1912: 190,206)
169. <u>Tanga Island</u>			X	X	x		
<u>Bougainville</u>							
170. Nissan Island			X				Finsch (1914: 539)
171. Buka	X	X	X	X	X		x; Allen (1967:81); Blackwood (1935:215-18,406-10, 414-16); Finsch (1914:544; <u>Official Handbook</u> (1937: 372,377,418); Parkinson (1907: 585)
172. Hakus	X	X		X	X	x	
173. <u>Pororan Island</u>	X	X		X	X	x	<u>Official Handbook</u> (1937: 372n)
174. Teop		X	X		X	x	
175. Eivo		X			X	x	
176. Nasioi	X	X		X			x; Frizzi (1914:49-50 & fig.69)
177. Siwai	X	X					x
178. Nagovisi		X					x
179. Buin (incl.Telei, Uisai)	X	X		X	X		x; Finsch (1914: 539)

Table 2

Significant negative evidence*

People/Place (Place names underlined)	Source	People/Place (Place names underlined)	Source
<u>Morobe</u>		<u>Western</u>	
49. Azera (7)	Holzknicht (1956; 1957)	103. <u>Girara/Kabiri</u> (5)	Beaver (1914:1920); Haddon(1916)
58. Watut (11)	Blackwood (1950); Fischer (1963)	104. Gogodara (8)	x; Landtman (1927;1933); Massola (1957); Wirz (1934)
<u>Northern</u>		107. <u>Buzi</u> (7)	Laade (1971)
67. Arifama (14)	x	108. Bine (14)	x
<u>Milne Bay</u>		<u>Southern Highlands</u>	
71. Bwaidoga (6)	Jenness & Ballantyne (1920)	109. Mendi (7)	x
72. Bwaiyowa (8)	x	<u>Western Highlands</u>	
74. Mukawa (9)	x	116. Enga (4)	x
75. Dobu (17)	x; Fortune (1932)	117. Hagen (6)	x; A. and M.Strathern (1971); Strauss & Tischner (1962)
76. Bwasiaiai (10)	x	118. Malpa (5)	x
81. Tavera (6)	x	119. 'Mbowamb' (3)	Vicedom & Tischner (1943-48), Wirz (1952)
82. <u>Bentley Bay</u> (6)	De Clercq & Schmeltz (1893); Finsch (1914)		
83. Suau (13)	x		
<u>Central</u>		<u>Eastern Highlands</u>	
85. Mafulu/ Fuyughe (5)	Dupeyrat (1954: 1955); Massola (1957); Tischner (1958); Williamson (1912)	136. Gadsup (8)	Chenoweth (1966)
86. <u>Hall Sound/ Yule Island</u> (5)	x; D'Albertiss (1880)	<u>West New Britain</u>	
88. Roro (9)	x; Massola (1957); Seligman (1910); Sheridan (nd)	146. Arawe (11)	x
89. Motu (7)	x; De Clercq & Schmeltz (1893); Finsch (1914); Massola (1957); Sheridan (nd)	<u>Bougainville</u>	
90. Koita (6)	x; Massola(1957); Seligman(1910)	180. <u>Tasman/ Islands</u> (17)	x
93. Hula (12)	x; Chalmers(1895);Seligman(1910)		
94. Mailu (6)	x; Saville (1926)		

* No reports of bullroarer, side-blown flute or slit-gong. Number of known instruments in brackets after group name.

Table 3

Culture areas

Area	Total no. of groups, etc.	Occurrence of instruments as % of total no. of groups			Esoteric usage as % of occurrence		
		BR	SF	SG	BR	SF	SG
A. Sepik	22	++	++	+++	+++	++	+++
B. Madang	21	-	-	+++	+++	-	+
C. Huon Gulf	20	+++	=	-	+	+	=
D. Highlands	25	=	+++	Abs.	()	+++	Abs.
E. Papuan Gulf	11	All	=	Abs.	+++	()	Abs.
F. Highlands Negative	9	Abs.	Abs.	Abs.	Abs.	Abs.	Abs.
G. Eastern Papua	30	=	=	=	=	=	Abs.
H. New Britain	11	+++	=	=	+++	()	+
I. Manus	6	+	+	All	Abs.	()	++
J. New Ireland	14	=	=	All	=	Abs.	=
K. Bougainville	11	+	=	+++	+++	Abs.	=

Key: All - 100%; +++ - 80-99%; ++ - 65-79%; + - 50-64%;
 - - 33.3-49%; = - 0.1-33.3%; Abs. - 0%, () - numbers
 too small to be significant.

Figure 1. Distribution and usage

Figure 2. Culture areas

The eleven culture areas (see Fig 2) are as follows.

A. 'Sepik' 'total' area. Geographically this comprises the administrative Districts of East and West Sepik and is characterised by the occurrence of all three instruments and their use in initiation ceremonies or as esoteric objects. Hence the designation 'total'. Available data suggest that the bullroarer is possibly less important in West Sepik than, for example, in the Sepik River area. Of the remaining apparent exceptions to the overall pattern, some may be due to inadequate student knowledge of esoteric usages, such as among the Mushu Islanders (6), Sil (12) and Nor-Pondo (19), while for the Karesau (14), reference to esoteric instruments is incidental to P.J. Schmidt's (1907) main theme. In terms of the overall pattern it is surprising to find that Thurnwald's account (1916) of esoteric practices among the Banaro (22) makes no reference to the slit-gong; his mention of the bullroarer is, however, perfunctory and we cannot conclude that the slit-gong is missing.

B. 'Madang', refers to the administrative District of Madang, excluding the Bundi (39), who are more appropriately placed in Area E. While the slit-gong is the most widespread of the three instruments, the bullroarer is the most important ceremonially. The area is thus designated '(Bullroarer)-Slit-Gong' on the map, the brackets indicating that the bullroarer is found in under half the groups for which we have information.

The evidence is less conclusive than for Area A. This is in part attributable to the fact that, of the written sources, no information on uses of instruments is available from Blackwood (26), Biro (38) or De Clercq and Schmeltz (38), while Poch (26) is concerned mainly with musical performance and Burridge (24) with the slit-gong as a means of communication. Student evidence is more varied in quality than that from the Sepik. An important exception not revealed by the map is the use by the Ngaing (41) of sacred gourd trumpets in place of flutes (see section on flutes, Chapter 3). While no evidence contradicts the hypothesis that 'Madang', like 'Sepik' may have formed part of a 'North-Coast-Total' continuum, data now available suggest a more advanced stage of cultural disintegration or less tenacity in maintaining traditional cultural patterns under the impact of missions and western education.

C. The 'Huon Gulf' area which is dominated by the bullroarer both in distribution and usage, comprises most of Morobe District (excluding the inland Azera (49) and Watut (58) who have none of the instruments) and extends into Northern District to include the Binandere (65) and Orokaiva (66). Apparent exceptions, such as Hube (48), Finschhafen (52), Cape Cretin (53) and the Lae-Womba (54) are from sources (Neuhauss, De Clercq and Schmeltz, Finsch, Kunst), which give no uses within the present context. Umboi Island (45) is a genuine exception in that the bullroarer is not sacred though the masks associated with it are. The position of the slit-gong is somewhat confused. Kunst's (1967) line demarcating the southernmost extent of the instrument bisects the area and while Lehner (1911:437) reports its disappearance from the Bukawa (55) area by the beginning of the century Holzknacht (1956:68-9) refers to its recent introduction to the inland Azera (49 - classified here as 'negative' from a traditional viewpoint) by the missions.

D. The 'highland flute' area is dominated by the occurrence and esoteric usage of sacred or 'spirit' flutes, the slit-gong being absent and the bullroarer, in the few places in which it occurs, playing only a subsidiary role. Geographically the area comprises the Eastern Highlands and Chimbu Districts, part of the Western Highlands to the east of (and excluding) Mt Hagen and the eastern part of the Southern Highlands. The only groups whose position is uncertain are the three most westerly in the Southern Highlands (110, 111, 112). Side-blown flutes listed for the first two have no esoteric significance, while the people of Lake Kutubu (112) have no flutes and even the bullroarer is a recent importation (Williams 1940a:14). The overall picture would not, however, be affected if these were placed in the negative area, F, though the 'highland flute' area would be slightly more concentrated.

E. The 'Papuan Gulf' area is conclusively bullroarer country, both in incidence and usage. Present data suggest that the area is limited to coastal peoples and while omitting several groups in Western District, include the adjoining Waima (87) of Central District. Information on the inland areas is, however, still very sketchy. The only side-blown flute reported is that of the Moripi (100), mentioned by Holmes (1924); in contrast to his lengthy account of the bullroarer and initiation, he gives no details and one can only conclude that it is not sacred. Conversely, the Keraki (105) possess a sacred flute (see Chapter 2) but it is not side-blown.

F. The 'highlands area of significant absence', characterised by the absence of the instruments under discussion, stretches westward from Mt Hagen to cover those highland areas not included in D and may even extend into parts of Western District and the inland Gulf area. As given, there are no exceptions. The number of examples could have been increased but those given are considered sufficient to establish the overall trend.¹

G. The 'Eastern Papua area of significant absence' comprising the administrative Districts of Central and Milne Bay with extensions into Northern, Gulf and inland areas of Morobe, is less negative than its highland counterpart in that all three instruments occur in a small minority of places. Nowhere, however, are their uses of sufficient importance in the esoteric field to undermine the general tendency. The bullroarer of the Awalama (79) and Taupota (80) is used only at the stepping posts in the construction of a ceremonial house for feasting, (Seligman 1910:592) while no uses are known for three of the remaining four from student sources. That side-blown flutes exist is further attested by an illustration in Hardy and Elkington (1907:op.36) attributed only to 'British New Guinea'. Since only one player is shown, as opposed to the habit of paired performances in areas A or D, the instrument may be considered conceptually different and its use by the Wedau (77) in courtship suggests affinity with the end-blown flute often used for this purpose. The slit-gongs shown for the Trobriand (70) and Misima (84) Islands are outside Kunst's demarcated area, and despite having local names, are most probably comparatively recent importations. Tendencies in the remaining 'island' areas are much less easy to determine. The following suggestions should be regarded as hypotheses for future research rather than as a definitive scheme.

H. New Britain would appear to be 'bullroarer country' with the slit-gong in evidence in some north and north-east coastal groups. The evidence is, however, far from satisfactory and in practice the bullroarer has long since 'degenerated' to a child's toy, the buzzing-nut, in the more developed eastern areas, while the slit-gong is used primarily for signalling and dancing.

¹ It seems probable that the use of sacred flutes extended further westwards than at present. Vicedom and Tischner (1943-48:242) state that, while such flutes are not now found among the 'Mbowamb', adjoining highland peoples possess them and, if myths are taken as evidence, in earlier times even the 'Mbowamb' used such flutes for ceremonial purposes.

I. Manus, despite (perhaps even because of) its established place in the story of anthropological research, remains largely unknown for present purposes. The data suggest that the slit-gong may have esoteric significance in addition to its use in ensembles for dancing.

J. New Ireland is likewise largely unknown. While the slit-gong is reported by all informants, its lack of esoteric significance, except for a small minority, makes the area tentatively negative. Use of the bullroarer for cult purposes in the King/Kalil area (167) may possibly be the result of influence from New Britain as similar masked dances are found in both areas.

K. Bougainville is characterised by widespread distribution of the slit-gong and majority use of the bullroarer. In almost all places where the latter is found, it is reported as having esoteric significance, though this would appear to be more important in the north and south of the island than elsewhere.

Because of the lack of data for the island areas H to K, the present study is limited almost entirely to mainland Papua New Guinea. Where, however, information is available, it has been included, as have references to culturally-related societies to the west which are now within the boundaries of Irian Jaya.

The choice of instruments for detailed study needs little justification. The central role of bullroarers, sacred flutes or slit-gongs in initiation ceremonies, particularly their revelation to initiates and the subsequent secrecy and restrictions on women are widely known and fully documented. The questions, however, may be asked: are these the only instruments associated with esoteric practices or which affect male-female relations and why should these instruments be chosen in preference to others?

The survey of instruments from which Tables 1 and 2 were constructed suggests that, apart from such rarities as the Watut wind-flute,¹ the Orokaiva fern-stem trumpet (Williams 1930:88) and the humming-top reported from Lake Kutubu (Williams 1940a:23,33), Chimbu (Chinnery 1934:119-20; Nilles 1943:116-17) or the Kamano and their neighbours (R. Berndt

¹ See Blackwood (1950:56, frontispiece).

1965:83) (though the last has symbolic associations connected with agriculture), it is impossible to find an instrument not associated with initiation in some parts of the country. The claim is made even for the less common ocarina and for the ubiquitous Jew's harp, which is more often associated with courtship, and for the Tangu at least, symbolises immaturity rather than assumption of manhood (Burridge 1969:172,419ff; 426). The Bukawa, whose use of the bullroarer will be examined in more detail later, use shell-rattles during initiation ceremonies to imitate spirit sounds and the familiar conch-shell to lure the balum spirit from its lair. The conch is also blown when the men return to the village (Lehner 1911:406ff), a usage paralleled by the Tangu who announce the emergence of boys from circumcision by the same means (Burridge 1969:173). The Baining blow bamboo trumpets alongside the bullroarer in their masked dances 'to scare the women' (Laufer 1959:910; 1970:177ff), while in Tami the end-blown flute, usually a solo instrument or used for performing love-melodies and charms, is linked symbolically with paired piston-flutes as wives of the bullroarer (Bamler 1911:501).

Because of their other uses there can be no question of most of these instruments being either secret or sacred (except within the boundaries of particular groups). A few instruments, however, fall into a secret or semi-secret category. Thus, the Sepik River water-stamping drum symbolises, through its sound, the crocodile spirit (Wirz 1959:11ff), while the water-flute of the Murik, Kaup and Kerau is specifically designated a 'spirit-flute' (P.J. Schmidt 1933:346) and that of the people of Mowehafen in West New Britain which is associated with the bullroarer in masked dances (Buschan 1923:141) is considered a sacred instrument and, in consequence, forbidden to women.¹ A factor shared by these instruments and the previously mentioned paired piston-flutes of the Tami is their ability, like the bullroarer, to produce glissando effects or slurred notes. A logical assumption is that it is this feature which is impossible for other instruments, though attainable by the human voice, for example, in Sio funeral dirges, that makes interpretation of the sound as a 'spirit' voice more readily acceptable. In terms of the present study we may note that these instruments are limited to one area or group and so lack the more general significance attributed to bullroarers, sacred flutes and slit-gongs.

¹ See Finsch (1914:530); Parkinson (1907:569).

A final instrument associated with initiation is, in its actual usage, neither secret nor sacred. This is the xylophone carried by Tami women who, during the initiation period, sound it continually when walking as a signal of their presence so that they can be avoided by the novices.¹ This activity arises from the unique circumstances in which, owing to the confines of living space, both women and initiates may be free to go about their business at the same time. This use of the xylophone contrasts strongly with that found at Namatanai in New Ireland where its main association is with courtship (Kramer-Bannow 1916:50).

As to the choice of bullroarers, side-blown flutes and slit-gongs as major esoteric instruments, we may ask what they have in common that makes them peculiarly appropriate as sound producers. Symbolic and mythological considerations apart, there would appear to be little. The slit-gong is an idiophone, the flute an aerophone and the bullroarer an anomalous aerophone in that the performer does not use his own breath to produce the sound. From a musical viewpoint, all are limited acoustically, though the small number of different notes obtainable may not be viewed this way in Papua New Guinea. Historically the bullroarer belongs to the Sachs' (1940:63ff) early stratum, the slit-gong to his middle and the 'cross' flute to his late stratum. Any answer can thus only be hypothetical in which case, the obvious would appear to have as much merit as any other. I suggest that one need seek no further than the fact that, in contrast to Jew's harps, vertical flutes and even skin-drums, our three instruments all make loud and distinctive sounds. When these sounds are further surrounded in mystery and embroidered through symbolism, they become voices of supernatural power, capable of infecting the entire neighbourhood. The sound of a Jew's harp played in the bush at night carries only a short distance; it is appropriately a personal love-charm. The voices of bullroarers and flutes speak to the whole community, causing women and children to hide themselves from danger. Basically they are able to do this only because of the physical properties of the instruments themselves.

¹ See Bamler (1911:500ff); Neuhauss (1911:385ff).

Chapter 2

The instrument as material object

Bullroarers

As a material object the bullroarer consists of a thin spatulate piece of either palm wood or the hard wood of afzelia biyuga or caryota urens (Area C)¹ with a hole at the narrower end for attaching the string. The Keraki Papuans (E) refer to the wider end as gonugo - the head, and to the narrower end as porobu - the tail (Williams 1936a:181). The Orokolo bullroarer (E) is usually 'distinguished by a "mouth" reminiscent of the "fish-mouth" of the Elema drum' (Williams, 1936b:15)² and while most Kiwai (E) bullroarers are 'long and narrow', some may be 'oval or elliptical' (Landtman 1927:75).

Bullroarers for which measurements are available, mostly from areas B, C and E, vary in size, the majority being between 14cm. and 55cm. in length and from 1.5cm. to 7cm. in width.³ The largest Busama bullroarer (C) is allegedly 76.2cm. long (Hogbin 1947:131) and that of the Orokolo 61.8cm.⁴ The data suggest that bullroarers are found in two

¹ See Bamler (1911:497-98); Bodrogi (1961:77); Keysser (1911:36) and Lehner (1911:410). Bamler adds 'whalebone' to this list of materials giving as an example the ceremonial bullroarer of the Wonam, but does not elaborate further.

² See also Kunst (1967:62, fig.24).

³ See Bodrogi (1961:figs 32-38C); Finsch (1914:542-43); Kunst (1967:172 illus 32,33) and Williams (1936a: 181-82; 1940b:166).

⁴ Williams (1940b:65 fig.7). Two bullroarers made for Blackwood on Bougainville were respectively 64 x 9.5cm. and 43 x 7cm. but these cannot be taken as typical (1935:217), while Nakanai (H) bullroarers are reputedly 28.8 to 48.7cm. long (Finsch 1914:544).

sizes: larger (35-56cm. x 3-7cm.) and smaller (14-29cm. x 1.5-3cm.). These correspond to the divisions made by the people themselves such as 'major' and 'minor' (E), 'male' and 'female', 'master' and 'servant' (C) or 'head' (chief) and 'short-legged' (C).

The characteristics and usage of both classes are similar in all areas. The major moiank of the Keraki Papuans (E) is more sacred, has a personal name and is 'possibly never swung' (Williams 1936a:181); that of the Elema (E) is of greater age and merely displayed in the cult house for ceremonial purposes (Williams 1936b:15). The head kani of the Tami Islanders (C), that is, the 'true ceremonial bullroarer', is named and, although made to roar first, is quickly followed by the smaller 'short-legged' bullroarers,¹ while only the chief 'grandfather' bullroarer of the Kai (Keysser 1911:35ff) and the 'master' or 'leading' bullroarers (abumtau) of the Bukawa (Lehner 1911:410) are given names.

In contrast, Keraki minor moiank (Williams 1936a:18), Tami 'short-legged' kani (gegetu) (Bamler 1911:497) and Bukawa 'servant' bullroarers (ngasengomi) (Lehner 1911:410,412) have no personal names. Their main function, like that of the Elema hevehe (Williams 1936b:15) and the smaller Kai bullroarers (Keysser 1911:36ff) is sound production. Lehner goes so far as to distinguish two types of 'servant' bullroarer for the Bukawa: the 'male voices' and the 'Balum's (spirit's) wives' which, being smaller have a higher tone.²

Unfortunately, much of the significance of the names given to large ceremonial bullroarers has been lost. Of the six names cited for the Keraki (E) two are place names, one that of the first bullroarer of myth, a fourth associated with a tree and the remaining two, totems or kaki (ancestors).

¹ Bamler (1911:497-98, 501). Bamler's evidence is slightly contradictory in that he maintains at one point that the head kani is not swung and later that it is swung before the others. We may conclude that it is given only a few 'nominal' swings but never swung continuously.

² Lehner (1911:412). In North Bougainville, however, both large and small bullroarers are considered male and each bears the name of the ancestor it represents (Blackwood 1935:218).

Photo: Papua New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery

Plate 1. Bullroarers

Bullroarers are not, however, equated with ancestors: 'They are simply bullroarers and they possess personal names' (Williams 1936a:182ff). The major bullroarers of the Elema of the same culture area have personal names of unknown meaning which may possibly be derived from secondary characters of myth, vegetable species or birds, but not from ancestors (Williams 1936b:31). Conversely, the different names of Kiwai bullroarers - madubu, yaga, boigu/bigu, buruma maramu - 'seem to imitate the different sounds produced by the instruments' (Landtman 1927:75). Tami bullroarers are rarely given the name of a person but rather the attribute lanqua (old), which is applied also as a mark of esteem to eminent men (Bamler 1911:497). The same term is used by the Bukawa for bullroarers deserving special respect; others, however, are given the same names as men who are recognised by physical characteristics, such as, 'unable-to-talk-properly', with reference to the sound produced, or 'with-outstanding-hips', for a bullroarer with easily recognisable projections (Lehner 1911:410ff).

The distinction between types of bullroarers is exemplified further in the field of ownership. Only minor bullroarers are personally owned, the major usually belonging to the clan or village. The major bullroarers of the Elema (E) 'belong to large kinship groups' (Williams 1936b:15); among the Kai there is a pair of large bullroarers for each district (Keysser 1911:36) and Bukawa clans own only one 'master' abumtau, though in practice a village may possess two through clan amalgamation (Lehner 1911:410). In contrast, minor Elema bullroarers, like those of the Keraki (E), are individually owned (Williams 1936a:181), while Lehner's assertion (1911:410) that 'each clan has many servant bullroarers' and the absence of specific references by Keysser suggest similar practices for the Bukawa and Kai. On Tami Island 'short-legged' kani may be inherited, usually from the father or mother's brother and the son of a non-indigenous woman from Taimi in the Huon Gulf would receive a bullroarer through his mother because she was of the chief's lineage (Bamler 1911:498).

Apart from the Elema (E) where both types are wrapped in a large parcel of palm swathe or coconut fibre and kept in an alcove of the eravo under the care of a curator,¹ the distinction of special treatment during storage is reserved for major

¹ Williams (1936b:15); (1940b:158ff).

bullroarers. Minor moiank of the Keraki (E) are 'carelessly bundled away' when not in use but the major ones are carefully wrapped and placed in the charge of an individual, usually the headman of the local section group (Williams 1936a: 182). Those of the Busama (C) are 'preserved in a carved bowl of the most exquisite workmanship on a special shelf, and when removed for a ceremony ... reverently painted with ochre and decorated with leaves and feathers' (Hogbin 1947:131; 1951:215). The Tami practise a division of labour in which the important village bullroarer is kept by the headman in the club house, usually in a grass container, while the cassowary feathers used to decorate the rod are preserved by his sister or mother (Bamler 1911:496). In the Papuan Gulf (E) Purari bullroarers are either wrapped in a paper-mulberry cloth and concealed in the men's house or placed on the floor beneath a wickerwork 'monster' (Holmes 1924:188; Newton 1961:23).

One reason for this care of the large bullroarer is its alleged power and the consequent dread and respect it inspires even among senior members of the group. The large Kiwai (E) bullroarer, buruma maramu 'is as powerful as it is sacred' (Beaver 1920:186), while the Keraki major moiank is handled with awe amid lowered voices. Only the older men remain when it is removed from its bark-cloth wrapping and if the moiank of a strange group was produced, no one would remain (Williams 1936a:184). The curator of the bullroarer can threaten another with it and warriors address their weapons by the name of the bullroarer and the injunction 'Tomorrow, go fast and get your man' (Williams 1936a:183). Fear of possible misfortune is the main reason behind the Tami practice of carrying the head kani in solemn procession at festivals rather than swinging it continuously lest 'the string might break and the bullroarer be lost in the woods or shattered against a tree' (Bamler 1911:497ff). Even when it is not so sacred as to necessitate careful handling, it can act as the symbol of authority or set the seal on peace agreements (see Chapter 3).

The data suggest that there is no absolute correlation between the type of bullroarer and its decoration, though there is a tendency towards non-decoration of less important bullroarers. The surfaces of both male and female Busama (C) bullroarers are 'engraved with designs of mythological significance' (Hogbin 1947:131; 1951:215); the decoration of Kiwai bullroarers 'with carvings of different colours' varies (Landtman 1927:75) and all of Bodrogi's illustrations (1961) from the Huon Gulf have designs, though one of these (fig.35) is the smallest in actual measurements. Holmes (1924:82)

maintains that the carvings of human faces is characteristic of Moripi (E) bullroarers and Williams (1940b:65, fig.7) gives further examples of this practice from the Orolo (E). Similarly, the head kani of the Tami Islanders 'are nearly always decorated with engraved faces serrated edges or round moon-discs', though 'the ordinary bullroarers are often plain and very unpretentious' (Bamler 1911:498). Conversely, Bukawa designs available do not represent human beings and though much of the meaning has been lost, there are examples interpreted by the people as representing a he-goat, scorpion, sea-snake (as a warning that this should not be eaten) and a tree (symbolising the growth and strength to be attained by boys after circumcision) (Lehner 1911:412-13). Orokaiva bullroarers, however, are 'usually without ornamentation' (Williams 1930:89) and those of the Kamano and their neighbours (D) frankly problematic if we accept C.H. Berndt's statement (1959:177) that though the 'sacred flutes are plain ... the bullroarers are simpler still'! In the long run it is possible that practical, no less than ritual, consideration determines the decision. Of the Huon Gulf bullroarers examined by Bodrogi, those made from palm wood are carved on one side only, those from the harder afzelia on both sides. The engraved lines usually have an inlay of lime and the enclosed patches are either red or black (Bodrogi 1961:77). A characteristic feature is the existence of a groove between the hole and the end of the bullroarer.¹ Both hole and groove may be decorated with saw-tooth patterns, this being the only decoration of some instruments (Bodrogi 1961:78).

With attention focussed on the bullroarer itself, few writers have commented on the means of propulsion, or the sound produced. Biro (1899:514n) refers to the short string attached to the end of a bamboo rod about three metres long and Neuhauss (1911:385) to a few metres of rope attached to a stick. This rod, as may be seen from the drawing made in 1899 by a Yabim, Kamunsanga, (Bodrogi 1961:fig.33) is circled in places with cassowary feathers and plaited bracelets, each with a slot through which the string is pulled to 'facilitate attachment to the rod' (Biro 1899:514n). The Tami also use cassowary feathers to decorate the stick, and in addition, small lancet-shaped bullroarers are attached to the men's armbands on ceremonial occasions (Bamler 1911:496). The larger Kiwai bullroarers 'are swung by means of a string only, but the smaller ... have a stick attached as a handle to the

¹ As seen clearly in Kunst's diagram (1967:68, fig.61).

string' (Landtman 1927:75). It is reasonable to assume that in most places the method is determined by practical considerations and a stick used only when it is of sufficient strength to bear the weight of the bullroarer in motion.

As to the sound produced, if allowance is made for subjective reaction, Bamler's description still remains the most evocative of the atmosphere accompanying a circumcision ceremony.

There is hooting, drumming, singing and shrieking and, as a climax, the Head Kani is swung by itself; then follows a whole chorus of "short-legged" kani so that, for the first day and night there is an infernal howling ... Through its swinging movements the large Head Kani produces a distinctly soothing rumble; the small "short-legged" kani are swung with such skill that they sound like the furious yelping of enraged curs. In still weather one can hear the humming from Tami even in Yabim, three or four hours walking distance away. (Bamler 1911:501)

The transition from bullroarer to sacred flutes is less abrupt than may appear at first sight. The Murik, Kaup and Kerau (A) refer to the bullroarer as the older brother of the flutes (P.J. Schmidt 1933:352), while for the Sepik River area it has been stated that the bullroarer is usually linked with the flute (Reche 1913:426). On Tami the bullroarer has three 'wives' - a pair of piston flutes and an end-blown one (Bamler 1911:501); among the Marind-Anim of Irian Jaya (to the west of Area E but linked culturally) the bullroarer is spoken of as a giant, sosom (see Chapter 3), who carries his 'younger sisters' under his arm. The latter are none other than the split bamboo pipe, haupa, (Haddon 1936:XXVI) which is cognate with the Keraki sacred flute (Williams 1936a:186). Of the Orokaiva Williams (1930:89) remarks that the flutes 'seem to be invariably associated with the bullroarer'. More specifically, on eleven names of bullroarers used at Kerema (E), he comments that five of these are not true bullroarers. The first, consisting of a small open-ended bamboo tube placed in a larger tube half-filled with water, would appear to be a piston-type water-flute capable of producing 'slurring intervals' like those of the bullroarer. Another 'consisted of a pair of bamboo tubes of different length, each closed at the end and they play alternately - do me do me do me, etc.' (Williams 1936b:41n). It is not difficult to recognise in this naive description the sacred flutes which, because of their greater incidence in the highlands and along the north coast, Williams

was unfamiliar with at the time. Whatever the mystery of their appearance at Kerema, the people put them to appropriate use.

Sacred flutes

It is essential to use the plural as the flutes, whether in areas A, B, C, or D, or the solitary example in E, are invariably played in pairs. Except for the last example, the Keraki sacred pipe ari which is made from split bamboo and end blown (Williams 1936a:186), all are transverse flutes made from bamboo with a blow-hole in the side. Usually one node is left intact¹ and the end cut off either immediately or a short distance above it, the other end being left open. Irrespective of the difference in length between members of a pair, flutes vary from area to area. 'Highland' flutes tend to be shorter, for example, the Bundi 45.7cm., the Kuman 30.5-91.5cm.,² the Gahuku-Gama 61-76cm, (Read 1952:5; Sheridan nd:3); those of the Orokaiva (C) are from 122-152.5cm. (Williams 1930:88) in length, while both Kwoma (A) (Whiting and Reed 1938:190) and Wogeo (A) (Hogbin 1970:190) flutes are between 91 and 152cm. long and those of the Iatmul from 122 to 213cm., a general figure for the Sepik River being 183cm. or 198cm. (Bateson 1935:158; Firth 1936:23; Neuhauss 1911:384). The diameter varies inversely with the length, the Orokaiva flutes being only 3.6cm. in diameter (Williams 1930:88) and Iatmul flutes 5cm. compared with the shorter highlands flutes

¹ The Gahuku-Gama leave both ends open and seal one with a handful of mud before playing (Read 1952:5). No information is available as to why this wasteful and unnecessary method is used, though one may surmise that it is an additional precaution against discovery in a society where males are both dominant and at the same time fearful of their secrets becoming known. The Bundi, however, stuff the nodal with wet soil (Holtker and Aufenanger 1940:59) - a possible precaution against the ravages of boring insects?

² See Holtker and Aufenanger (1940:59); Nilles (1950:47).

which may be up to 7.6cm. in diameter.¹ The blow-hole, about 1-2cm. in diameter, and circular, elliptical or rectangular in shape, is either cut or burned into the side of the tube at a point 5-15cm. from the node in proportion to the overall length.²

Little need to be said about decoration. If Wogeo (A) flutes are ornamented with 'feathers, dog's teeth, bands of rattan, small cowrie shells or fur', (Hogbin 1970:73) many highland flutes, like those of the Kamano (D) and their neighbours are 'plain with no incised or painted decorations' (C.Berndt 1959:177) and though the Gahuku-Gama may use 'simple poker-work designs', many flutes are undecorated (Read 1952: 6). This absence of interest in flutes as material objects

¹ See Salisbury (1965:60); Nilles (1950:47); Sheridan (nd:3). Despite the general accuracy of Read's information, I remain sceptical of his description of the Gahuku-Gama nama flutes as being 10-12.7cm. in diameter, though only 76cm. long. From the viewpoint of practical performance this would cause difficulty, especially as the flutes are generally overblown. During two years' residence in Read's area, I failed to come across any flutes corresponding to these measurements. It is of course possible that they may have disappeared in the intervening twenty years or, more probably, been destroyed in an excess of missionary zeal. Similarly, Thurnwald's statement (1916:261) that Banaro 'big bamboo pipes' are 'three to six metres long' requires a suspension of disbelief that I find difficult to sustain.

² As variants we may note that the Wogeo (A) flute is described as an internode of bamboo 'with the terminals pierced' (Hogbin 1970:73) while Reche (1913:426) reports two types of Sepik flute - one open at both ends and played by liping in the manner of a trumpet, the second with a blow in the side and often a finger-hole as well - to which, in fairness, should be added Wirz's sceptical comment (1952:12n,13) that Reche's descriptions are 'not very accurate'. The first would appear to belong to a Sepik bamboo trumpet rather than to a flute. Unfortunately, in much of the literature the distinction is often blurred, the term 'flute' being applied indiscriminately.

has as its counterpart an enthusiasm bordering on reverence for the melodies they produce - an ambivalence of attitude reflected in the data on manufacture. As secrecy is essential, flutes are made in the men's houses or, as among the Gahuku-Gama, for specific ceremonies. No ritual is involved, only technical skill, including trial and error, 'successive pairs being made and discarded until a satisfactory combination is achieved' (Read 1952:6). Absence of suitable bamboo on the island of Wogeo necessitates greater care. When a flute shows sign of wear (after as long as ten years), the headman takes it on a trading voyage, either to the mainland or to other islands of the Schouten group. The new flute is made on the pattern of the old which is then thrown unceremoniously into the bushes behind the club house.¹ The Keraki ari which, as mentioned at the opening of this section, is anomalous not being a transverse flute, is made by making a small split with the thumb-nail at the cut-off end, twisting the bamboo gently so that the split spreads from top to bottom, then twisting it back again so that the split is barely visible (Williams 1936a:186). There would appear to be little specialisation in craftsmanship, though among the Mundugumor (A) the ability to carve stoppers for flutes (a feature found mainly in the Sepik area) is allegedly inherited (Mead 1935:172).

Among the Kwoma (A), Murik, Kaup, Kerau (A), Wogeo (A) and Orokaiva (C) the longer flute of a pair is referred to as the male and the shorter as the female, a method of classification reversed by the Bundi for whom the male flute is both shorter and thinner². To the Iatmul the longer is known as the 'elder brother' (Bateson 1958:246) and kinship terms are also used by the Mundugumor (Mead 1935:213) for the purpose of differentiation. Each pair also has a name. To the Wogeo these are 'all words with no other meaning' (Hogbin 1970:73). Among the male-dominated Gahuku-Gama, however, the pair are

¹ Hogbin (1970:73). This corresponds broadly to Bundi practice. A flute examined by Holtker and Aufenanger (1940:59) still bore the measuring mark for fixing the position of the blow-hole.

² See Whiting and Reed (1938:190) on the Kwoma; P.J. Schmidt (1926:33) on the Murik, Kaup and Kerau; Hogbin (1970:73) on the Wogeo; Williams (1930:185) on the Orokaiva and Holtker and Aufenanger (1940:59) on the Bundi.

referred to as 'age-mates' while the names are possibly an onomatopoeic (sometimes shortened) version of a tune (Read 1952:5-6). This applies also to the Keraki where flutes have the onomatopoeic collective name of yaku yaku (Williams 1936a: 187). It is claimed that both Wogeo and Gahuku-Gama listeners, including women, can distinguish pairs from their sound and thus identify the local group responsible (Hogbin 1970:73; Read 1952:5-6). During ceremonies nama flutes are given special treatment; when not in use they rest in the men's house side by side in a bed of leaves and crotons. From time to time they are decorated with flowers or perfumed grasses, while small pieces of cooked pig sprinkled with salt are placed in the mouthpieces. Afterwards the men eat the pork and, while admitting that the nama do not eat it, regard the offering as an 'act of faith' (Read 1952:7). Spirit flutes of the Vanimo-Aitape area (A) are likewise stored in the men's spirit house but those of the Bundi (D) are placed in a hollow tree in the bush if not discarded completely and new ones made for the next occasion.¹

Accounts of performance among the Kwoma (A), Wogeo (A), Iatmul (A), Orokaiva (C), Gahuku-Gama (D), Kuman (D), Siane (D) and even Keraki (E) reveal basic similarities.² Hogbin's description of the Wogeo (1970:73) gives the basic procedure:

... the two players face one another, the man with the male flute holding it in the left hand, the one with the female holding his in the right. They slowly revolve in a clockwise direction, the former proceeding forward, the latter backward, beating time with the free hand on the thigh as they go.

Williams adds (1930:89) that an Orokaiva player sometimes 'covers one ear with one of his hands. Sometimes he covers both ears and holds the flute in the crook of his arms', while Bateson stresses the importance of 'breath control' and the need for alternate action (hocket technique). As the Iatmul flute 'requires the whole air of a man's lungs and the player

¹ See Chinnery (ndA:48-9); Holtker and Aufenanger (1940:59).

² See Whiting and Reed (1938:190); Hogbin (1970:73); Bateson (1935:159); Williams (1930:89); Read (1952:5-6); Nilles (1950:16); Salisbury (1965:60) and Williams (1936a: 186).

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 2. Flautists from the highlands

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 3. Flautists from the highlands

must continually stop to draw breath ... The two men blow in turn, and each man inhales while the other is blowing' (Bateson 1935:159). Even the Keraki ari are played in pairs though, as split bamboos, 'the player puts his mouth completely over the open end' (Williams 1936a:186). While the larger instruments depend entirely on antiphonal effect or lipping, the smaller offer greater scope through the player's ability to open or close the more distant end, either partly or fully, with the palm of his hand or the first and second fingers. The Kuman and Bundi even use both methods though the latter's shorter, male flutes are played by lipping, the longer, female flutes by hand manipulation (Nilles 1950:47; Holtker and Aufenanger 1940:59). Recordings show that the Gahuku-Gama nama flutes are usually overblown except at the beginning and end of a performance. Doubtless the intention is for the sound to carry a longer distance.

Bateson provides a more detailed account of the musical sound. Because of the absence of 'lateral stops' the Iatmul flute player is

... limited to the series of natural harmonics provided by the tube. A flute will give about seven notes distributed over three octaves, but the intervals between the notes are too large to admit of any tune being produced by a single flute. This difficulty is overcome by a scheme of alternation. The flutes are always played in pairs and in each pair one flute is a tone higher than the other. In the playing, as a result of the difference in pitch between the two instruments, the harmonics of one alternate with the harmonics of the other; so that the two performers, who blow in turn, can together produce simple tunes.¹

¹ Bateson (1958:246: 1935:158-59). Bateson's 1958 account should be supplemented by reference to his earlier 1935 article in which he gives transcription of flute melodies. Whether intervals are 'too large to admit of any tune being produced by a single flute' can be interpreted only in terms of what is acceptable to Iatmul culture. The 300 cent (minor third) interval between the harmonies (transcribed as a Major third but corrected in the footnote) would be acceptable elsewhere, though the Iatmul prefer to insert the intermediate tone a Major second above the lower. Transcriptions of wando and nama flutes from the Eastern Highlands (Sheridan's Wattle

Since the flutes are secret and their melodies respected, both learning to play them and practice afterwards present difficulties (as Bateson discovered (1935:158) when, having bought a pair, he wished to acquire proficiency in performance). Although little information is available on this subject, it seems reasonable to assume that most societies follow the example of the Nondugl, whose young men go out into the bush to practise (Luzbetak 1954:115-17), or the Kwoma, who take themselves outside the village for this purpose (Whiting 1941: 89-91). In view of the emphasis on secrecy we may note in passing that even uninitiated boys of the latter group may be shown the instruments at this time but are warned against

(Footnote 1 continued)

Recording, Music of New Guinea, side 2, Band 1g and Simpson's 1949 recordings for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Cut 9 respectively) show intervals of a minor third (309 and 311 cents) in the melody. The flutes are so tuned that the higher tone used by one flute is the same as the lower tone of its partner. Moreover, the overall range of the melodies - 1032 cents for the wando and 1028 cents for the nama - is considerably wider than the 400 of Bateson's Iatmul transcription. This is unaffected by differences in pitch, the nama being considerably higher than the wando throughout.

Thomas's description (1941:185) of the Vanimo people (A) offers the type of unusual musical phenomenon which only an anthropologist could report: 'I have not seen the Vanimo flute but I am told that it is blown by two men, one at each end, which explains the varying note heard'.

Since this paper was submitted Dr R.J. May has kindly sent me a copy of an appendix on the Meingapo flutes of the Ilahita Arapesh from an unpublished thesis by Don Tuzin of the Australian National University. This gives considerably more detailed data on performance methods and musical structure, than is previously available without altering the general picture. Like the Wogeo flutes those of the Arapesh are end-blown through a pierced node and, from the lipping process used, may arguably be considered as trumpets. Although played in an ensemble of four, the structural pattern of performance reveals a central pair of 'pig' flutes (mbol) linked by a leader flute (balanga), while the fourth flute (mamana) provides musical cues for start and finish.

revealing their knowledge (Whiting 1941:89ff). When actual performance takes place, Wogeo flautists 'receive regular magical potions from the headman to maintain their strength but after even a single day's performance ... must refrain from contact with the opposite sex ...' (Hogbin 1970:75).

Of the melodies, Williams remarks (1936a:187) that the Keraki (E) construe them as 'meaningless disyllables - yerki yerki - libu libu'; Hogbin comments (1970:75) that Wogeo (A) tunes are mainly traditional 'though occasionally a composer may be inspired to dream a new one' - a common Papua New Guinean method of composition; Nilles writes that melodies of the Kuman (D) represent or imitate something in life, e.g. gandia koa, the name of an opossum, represents mother and child, one flute being the crying child, the other the soothing mother (1950:47). Williams states (1930:89) that the different names of Orokaiva (C) tunes are derived 'from their resemblance to bird-calls and responses' a practice found also in the Wahgi Valley of the highlands (Schaefer 1938:401-3) and among the Nondugl (Luzbetak 1954:115-17) and Gururumba (Newman 1965: 67-9). Read gives details of ownership and aesthetic interest for the Gahuku-Gama (D). Each distinctive tune of a pair of flutes is handed down within the sub-clan as the common property of all male members; in this way sub-clans may own one to three tunes or they may acquire a new one as a gift from a friendly group. The melody, rather than the flute, is the important sacred element which, since it is handed down through the men, cannot leave the group. Aesthetically, the melodies are 'capable of arousing strong feelings, and both players and listeners derive emotional satisfaction from a virtuoso performance'. On the need for two flutes, Read quotes one man as saying, 'By itself it is nothing ... but with its age mate, then there is something one cannot understand; here is something at which to shake the head and wonder'. The melody is a symbol of male solidarity and a link with the 'common ancestral past' (Read 1952:6ff). A slightly different emphasis is provided by the Kwoma (A) among whom performance of flute melodies provides the individual with a personal opportunity for distinguishing himself (Whiting 1941:132-33) and by the Tchambuli (A), whose pride in playing leads to the holding of ceremonies as an excuse for performance (Mead 1935:245).

The flutes themselves are usually owned either by the clan (Siane - D, Gahuku-Gama - D, Iatmul - A, Tchambuli - A)¹ or by the village headman or 'big man' (Wogeo - A, Mundugumor - A),² though among the highland Kuman 'each single family possesses a special flute' (Nilles 1950:16). The question of ownership, however, cannot be considered as satisfactorily resolved until one knows exactly what is owned. Among the Bundi who, like the Gahuku-Gama and Kuman employ a bird symbolism (see Chapter 4), everyone 'owns' a bird and fathers, sons and brothers may own the same bird, irrespective of its embodiment as a flute (Holtker and Aufenanger 1940:58). The statement that 'Our ancestors have already blown this flute and our sons will also blow it' is ridiculous if interpreted literally, as the piece of bamboo in question will either have succumbed to boring insects or been casually thrown out. We may surmise that the question of ownership of the material flute is unimportant or even irrelevant, at least in comparison with that of ownership of the immaterial 'bird'.

The slit-gong

The slit-gong, or as it is more commonly known throughout Papua New Guinea, the garamut, is a hollowed log of wood with a narrow slit along the upper side. Although generally circular in cross-section, it may vary from elliptical to pear-shape with the slit along the narrower part (Burridge 1959:137). Continuing the line of the slit there is a projection at either end which may have practical, aesthetic or symbolic value. With large garamut one projection acts as a convenient point for attaching a rope for haulage (Burridge 1959:137); at the same time much skill is expended in carving both projections. For example, the Manus garamut³ has the chest and head of a human figure at one end and the legs at the other, the hollow gong thus representing the abdomen (Franklin 1970:125). Other common carvings are the head of a crocodile or snake at one end and the 'tail' at the other. The sides also, particularly with Sepik instruments, are often carved with geometrical patterns.⁴

¹ See Salisbury (1965:64); Read (1952:6); Bateson (1958:8); Allen (1967:67) and Mead (1935:237ff).

² See Hogbin (1970:73); Allen 1967:69.

³ Illustrated on the 10¢ stamp of the 1969 'Musical Instruments' issue.

⁴ See illustration 7 in Kunst 1967:59.

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 4. A Tolai playing a garamut in Viviren village in Rabaul

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 5. An intricately decorated garamut, Madang

In the Gazelle Peninsula (H) and doubtless elsewhere, the different parts of the instrument are given names after 'corresponding' parts of the human body (Parkinson 1907:130-33), while among the Tolai (H) the carving of slit-gongs has now become a highly specialised skill rather than an accomplishment expected of all men (Salisbury 1970:159).

Garamut vary considerably in size. Those at Humboldt Bay (in Irian Jaya but adjoining Area A) are reputedly over 3-4m. long; one from the Bismarck Archipelago (possibly Blanche Bay) is almost 1.5m. In North Bougainville the largest is 2.4m, the smallest 91.5cm. in length, and elsewhere in Bougainville they are 2.4-3m. long. Conversely, one from the Sepik River is 570mm. x 170mm.¹

Accounts of manufacture differ and it is possible that the process adopted varies with the size of the instrument and the wood chosen. Sepik (A) instruments are commonly made from vitex sofassus (Franklin 1970:125). One process is for the log to be hollowed out from both ends which are later closed by neatly fitting wooden discs held in place by tree resin. The alternative is for the instrument to be given general external shape, the slit cut along the top and the inside then hollowed out (Burridge 1959:137). The practicability of this process depends on the slit being of adequate width to make the hollowing out possible and the first method is more likely to be used for smaller instruments. That this is no mundane process appears in Lawrence's statement (1965:208) that for the Ngaing (B) the rights to the ritual for the manufacture of slit-gongs are vested in the patriclan, while Burridge's more detailed description of the Tangu (B) shows (1959:138; 1965:245) that manufacture and haulage to the settlement involve a large feast, the sacrifice of a pig and reciprocal co-operation between a man and his wife's brothers. In the Gazelle Peninsula (H) the process of manufacture is accompanied by the performance of magic rites, the enforcement of taboos and a ceremonial procession by which the gong is brought to the village; similar practices are reported from North Bougainville (K).² These examples from widely separated areas

¹ See Finsch (1914:537, 539); Blackwood (1935:407); Guppy (1887:143).

² See Laufer (1961:459ff) and Blackwood (1935:408).

suggest that the gongs in question have an esoteric significance which is difficult to associate with the familiar instrument used for dance accompaniment. Unfortunately much of the data on slit-gongs is marred by a version of the Gertrude Stein syndrome. To most musicologists and anthropologists - Bateson is a notable exception - a slit-gong is a slit-gong is a slit-gong. Consequently the gong is presented as a multi-purpose instrument capable at one and the same time of acting as a secret sound producer during initiation, appearing in public as an accompaniment to dances and in yet another role functioning as the local broadcasting system. Because all slit-gongs are the same shape and produce sound by being beaten (though different methods are adopted for different functions), it is assumed that there is an entity known as the 'slit-gong'. That bullroarers appear as major and minor while flute pairs may include 'male' and 'female' might have led one to look for a similar dichotomy in the garamut family. The only detailed data to support this are those provided by Bateson who distinguishes between 'a slit-gong' and 'the secret slit-gongs called wagan'.¹ The symbolic interpretations of this term are given in Chapter 4. For present purposes we shall adopt the hypothesis that what is good enough for the Iatmul may possibly apply elsewhere. In short, there are 'common or everyday' slit-gongs and 'secret' or 'sacred' slit-gongs. Classification is best determined by function, though it is possible, as we shall see, for some of the sacredness of the secret instruments to rub off onto the secular ones.

¹ See Bateson (1958:7-8). We may note also, as relevant to the present context, that in North Bougainville (K) men are ashamed to beat slit-gongs in front of the women. In consequence, the gong is placed in a covered portico and seldom brought into the open (Blackwood 1935:408). Finsch also reports that the gongs at Finschhafen, Astrolabe Bay and 'Friedrich Wilhelmshafen' are 'tabu', while those in the Sepik and Ramu River areas are used for dancing and thus not tabu (1914:537ff). Conversely, Tuzin's account (see p.32) of the Arapesh includes a footnote reference to 'the two slit-gongs in the ceremonial hamlet' being played in pairs in the manner of flutes, thereby suggesting a distinction between ceremonial and secular gongs.

Ownership and storage reflect this dual role. As specifically ritual objects, garamut are the property of the clan or village (Tchambuli - A, Ngaing - B). Kwoma gongs, however, are reported as being the private property of those who have made them or initiated their construction, so that when a man dies the eldest son divides such personal property among his own brothers and parallel cousins (Whiting and Reed 1938:195). These gongs are stored along the sides of the cult house (Whiting and Reed 1938:185); those of the Vanimo are suspended from the cult house's roof when not in use while Iatmul gongs form a line down the centre of the men's house (Thomas 1941:184; Bateson 1935:166). The practice of storing gongs in the cult house which would appear to be common along the Sepik River (A) (Behrmann 1922:221,227) and to occur also in the Finschhafen area (C) (Finsch 1914:537) and on Manus Island (I)¹, again reinforces the supposition that these are no ordinary instruments.

The method of performance varies less with the type of instrument than according to whether it functions as an accompaniment to ceremonial or social dancing or as a means of communication. On Manus Island ensembles of up to five garamut of different sizes, each with its personal name, are used to accompany singing and dancing. The three smallest, placed on the ground, are beaten with two sticks, one in either hand, as is the largest garamut, which is raised clear of the ground by means of stone or wooden wedges. The fifth garamut is suspended vertically from the branch of a tree or the roof beam of a house and struck with a single curved beater.

Rhythms are learned either by constant imitation and repetition or through verbalised mnemonics. Young boys and girls on Manus use slit-gong substitutes of bamboo (i.e. a hollow, internodal length with part of the side cut away as a 'slit') to copy the rhythms of an adult ensemble during dances (Mead 1930:39). Verbalisation of more complex rhythms is acquired later. Thus, for the Kwoma, a cassowary calling her chicks becomes:

'Kura Kura Kura,
Gadang gading gadang gading
Kura Kura Kura' etc.

¹ See Buschan (1923:104). Conversely, in North Bougainville only 'big men' are allowed to own slit-gongs (Blackwood 1935:407). See also footnote on preceding page.

This is explained as follows: on Kura (presumably the first syllable) all players beat the gongs in unison with both strikers; on ga all left strikers together; on dang the low-toned gongs are struck with the right striker; on ding the higher-toned gongs are struck with the right striker (Whiting and Reed 1938:190).

When the garamut is used as a signalling instrument, only one striker is used. This is bounced rapidly end-on at the edge of the slit, the performer standing at the side and holding the striker in his right hand 'like a spear' while guiding it with his left. The 'flat' of the striker is never used in signalling. The sound so produced may carry three to four miles (Burridge 1959:137-38). There is no doubt that the use of the garamut for signalling purposes extends throughout the whole area of its distribution. Whiting and Reed failed to break the Kwoma (A) signalling code but noted that, as it was not verbally conceptualised and children learned messages by repeatedly hearing particular signals and associating the signal as a whole with the meaning, there was a correlation between the age of an individual and the number of messages he was capable of understanding or beating. They further pointed out the relation with the kinship system, each sib having his own call-signal that combined father's sib with mother's sib, the paternal being sounded first (Whiting and Reed 1938:177). Similarly, Tangu (B) signals occur in 'phrases the mnemonics for which are parts of melodies taken from the songs which accompany dances' or 'quasi-poetic rhythms' or 'purely private and personal rhythms'; in short 'they are not, in fact, words, but are rather, sounds comparable to our own Do Ray Mi etc' (Burridge (1959:138). In order to achieve proficiency Kwoma young men practise slit-gong rhythms outside the village on the same occasions as they perform on sacred flutes (Whiting 1941:89ff). Whether this is due to the need for secrecy, the desirability of avoiding confusion with actual signals, or to prevent the women from identifying perpetrators of mistakes is not clear. A general assessment of evidence suggests that all three factors probably operate.

The 'slit-gong' differs from our other instruments not only in combining secular and ceremonial functions but also in being restricted to a more or less clearly defined geographical area that would appear to be expanding through trade. That this is no recent practice may be surmised from one of the few recorded examples of acquisition, namely that the people of Pororan Island in Bougainville District actually purchased their slit-gongs from the Buka (Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea, 1937).

Chapter 3

The instrument in action

Initiation and other ritual

The role of the bullroarer and sacred flutes, to some extent that of the slit-gong, in the male cult, particularly the ceremony of initiation, is summed up in the phrase 'secret, sound-producing instruments'. It is difficult to determine whether greater importance should be placed on the sound produced by these instruments as interpreted within a symbolic and ritual context or on the aspect of secrecy which, in both negative and positive forms, dominates the rites. Despite differences in procedure and the instruments used, all initiation ceremonies have a structural similarity - the secret of the instruments is revealed to the newly-initiated and, at the same time, initiates are sworn to keep their new knowledge secret. The act marks off a class of those-who-know from those-who-do-not-know (or are supposed not to know). It separates initiated males from the rest of the community, particularly the women. The ceremonies that result in this severance may now be examined in more detail, not for the light they throw on initiation in general, but with reference to the part played by esoteric instruments.

Bullroarers. As stated in Chapter 1 bullroarers play a more important role in the Huon Gulf (C) and Papuan Gulf (E) areas than in other parts of the country. While elsewhere they may be sounded during initiation rites, in these areas the bullroarer figures centrally both through its revelation and its 'physical' role in the ceremonies.

By combining the accounts given by Bamler (1911:499ff), Detzner (1921:190-91), Hagen (1899:186), Hogbin (1951:217-18), Keysser (1911:35ff) and Lehner (1911:403-10) we can form a reasonably accurate picture of the balum and kani ceremonies of the Huon Gulf area whose structural similarities suggest that they are variants of the same cult. The ideological basis (see Chs 4 and 5) is that a spirit-monster who swallows young boys to make them strong, handsome and capable of

producing offspring is summoned for the occasion. He 'bites' the penis but if propitiated by the gift or sacrifice of a pig may be persuaded to regurgitate the boy. If the boy fails to recover from the circumcision, the story enables the men to maintain that the monster has swallowed but failed to vomit him again. The bullroarer's major role in the ceremony is symbolical representation of the spirit-monster's voice.

Each village has a balum-muki ('master of ceremonies') who is responsible for organisation, including the provision of pigs for feasting, invitations to guests and preparing the women to move out of the village. If initial preparations begin three years before the ceremony, the more immediate may take up to twenty months - the time needed for fattening up the necessary pigs and for building the 'spirit house' in which the boys will live and from the rafters of which finely carved bullroarers are suspended.

The ceremony begins by coaxing the monster from his hiding place, either in the forest or in a hole in the ground, using bullroarers and conch-shell trumpets. At first the bullroarer noise is faint, but later the countryside rings with the booming of dozens of bullroarers. Meanwhile, the balum-muki decorate themselves with small bullroarers attached to arm-bands or suspended between their fingers and carry a number of them in their net bags. The men then tear up a rope, which they show to the women, claiming that the balum was tied but broke free. Bullroarers are now whirled continuously, often by the men acting in relays, and the sound increased by shouts from the men, and by the use of shell-rattles which, together with small bullroarers, are hung on trees for the wind to rattle and scare the candidates. After a preliminary feast, the men invade the villages and seize the boys due for circumcision, while the women fight a mock-battle to protect their offspring. Prior to this the candidates (sogu) have selected their sponsors (woganai or dimilol) whose duty is to protect them in the various tests they have to undergo. The boys spend from three to five months in the house under the supervision of two hidden guardians (dauasenom) who ensure that they maintain the taboo on water ('to keep the spell dry') (Bamler 1911:499), drink only coconut-milk and roast rather than boil their taro. Those under six years of age are allowed to return to their families at night; the remainder sing balum songs¹ and pass the time making pandanus mats and fish nets, or carving small bullroarers.

¹ Neuhauss gives three examples of balum songs from the Bukawa.

For the actual circumcision, candidates are led into the house while bullroarers are sounded occasionally. The secrets of the instruments are revealed and each novice's body is stroked with a bullroarer and his chin struck. This is a prelude to the central rite of penile incision. Variants in procedure include (i) passing into the house through a narrow archway which 'swallows' the boys; (ii) men on the roof represent the monster and drink water from a gourd as each boy enters in a symbolic act of swallowing. Successfully completed operations are notified to the women by the presentation to the appropriate mother of a small branch or twig with the leaves removed. The woman who does not receive one knows that she is unlikely to see her son again, for the bodies are hastily dug into the ground without proper burial.

The boys break their 'fast' and during the two to three month period of recovery, are instructed not to reveal anything to the women, not to steal, to be helpful to their friends, to obey the elders and not to chase other men's women (advice

(Footnote 1 continued)

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to test the accuracy of the German translations against the original texts. The first relates how two elders planned to eat a pig during circumcision but heavy rain caused the roof of the hut to collapse. As the rain-maker is forbidden to perform at this time, the act is attributed to a spirit. Nevertheless, the song abuses the rain-maker. The text relates how the bullroarer of the spirit, Tangayabo lanqua, broke and struck him as did the black cloud, thus reducing to nothing the rain-maker's 'glory' (Neuhauss 1914:510 no.49). In the second song, news of the balum is spread far and wide and the spirit of Gumba lanqua heard throughout the land; there is an apparently inconsequential reference to 'enemies' killing the son (though this may be the balum) so that the mother and the women are weeping. They are then told to suppress their grief as 'my spirit' is now present (1914:511 no.2). The third is described as a mourning song sung mainly during the circumcision for two purposes: to drown the boys' shrieks and to persuade the women that the balum has actually swallowed the boys who are being 'mourned'. Ironically, the words blame the women for their absence. 'We are present, but the women, where are they?' (1914:511-12 no.54).

somewhat spoilt when the old men are unable to refrain from boasting of their successes in this field). Meanwhile men take turns in swinging bullroarers, especially at night, so that the initiates are rarely able to sleep. At the conclusion of the rite each boy again has his body stroked with a bullroarer and his chin struck after a final warning not to reveal any of the secrets. Then the bodies of the initiates are decorated and, to the accompaniment of conch-shell trumpets and hand drums, they emerge triumphantly from their seclusion to take part in general feasting. It is obvious from the use of the bullroarer as personal decoration and in the stroking process that it is here regarded as more than a musical instrument. Similarly among the southern Orokaiva of the same area (C), while the 'power' aspect is less evident, emphasis is again on the revelation of secret objects. As with the people of the Huon Gulf, the bullroarer represents the voices of the spirits. The embahi and siango are, however, spirits of the dead which are impersonated by men who subject both male and female candidates to horseplay. As a climax both boys and girls, who are initiated together, are made to sit on a platform of the obu (cult house), their heads covered with hoods or barkcloth, while bullroarers are sounded as evidence of the embahi or siango. The following morning the secrets of the bullroarers are revealed to the boys (Williams 1930:99ff, 182ff).

The Papuan Gulf area (E) reveals greater variations between groups. The Kiwai ceremony is closely associated with yam planting and fertility, the Purari (Namu/Ipi) with the bullroarer-shaped kovave masks and the Keraki with growth and ritual sodomy.

During the first stage of Kiwai initiation the novices are introduced to masked spirit dancers who impersonate the dead (Riley 1925:194-96). In the second stage (muguru) the boys are given yam tops for planting and kept in the club house overnight while bullroarers are whirled outside. Next morning they are taken to a place near the gardens where men, armed and allegedly angry, are sitting in bullroarer formation. After being threatened with weapons, while bullroarers are swung, the candidates are shown the bullroarer, told its name, and threatened with death if they reveal the secrets to women. They then proceed to yam planting. In the afternoon the boys are taken to the club house where bullroarers are laid on mats on the floor (sixteen rows with five in each row placed end-to-end in Riley's diagram) and told the story of its origin (Riley 1925:203ff).

In the first stage of the Ipi ceremony each boy is introduced to a mask as the symbol of kovave. At the conclusion of the ceremony bullroarers are sounded and the boy struck by his sponsor (father or male guardian) two or three times on the chest with a bullroarer and warned against revelation. In the second stage, an old man impersonating kovave gives the novices instruction in behaviour; many bullroarers are sounded and masks are placed on the boys' heads. As soon as the masks are removed, each boy is beaten with a bullroarer 'to harden his body, and to facilitate his growth' (Holmes 1924:121,127).

Among the Keraki (E), boys of thirteen or so are brought by two tabulamant (sponsors) to the waramongo (cult house). For the actual revelation initiates are seated motionless while the first sponsors hold their hands tightly over the boys' eyes. Hunters creep through the bush, place themselves round the clearing and begin sounding bullroarers. During a period of complete silence, the tabulamant withdraw their hands and the initiates see the bullroarer laid before them 'decorated with sprigs of croton'. The second tabulamant is the first person to sodomise the initiate. In addition, each candidate has two uyamade - the first swings the bullroarer to him, the second strikes the first blow in the rough and tumble that follows. The objects of this beating are to cause the boy to grow quickly, to test his manhood and to emphasise that he must not divulge the secrets to his mother. A ceremonial eating of tom (chiefly coconut) leads to a more relaxed atmosphere in which all, including the newly initiated, swing bullroarers (Williams 1936a:181, 188ff). Similar customs prevail even further west in Irian Jaya. During the cult of the sosom giant, who speaks through the bullroarer (the name sosa is used for the bullroarer by the Keraki at Setavi, Williams 1936a:181,188ff), a boy lives in the youths' house under the care of one man to whom he is unreservedly obedient and with whom he sleeps. When sosom comes, 'unrestricted sodomy prevails' (Haddon 1936:XXVI).

It is unnecessary to give further examples of the part played by the bullroarer as the centre of initiation. We may note briefly that Kwoma (A) initiates are shown bullroarers (together with flutes and slit-gongs) and warned against revelation (Whiting 1941:90-1) and that Mundugumor (A) youths are initiated into the secrets (which also include flutes) according to the will and ambition of the twenty or so 'big men' who own the ritual objects (Allen 1967:69). Bullroarers are sounded during initiation ceremonies of the Zia (C) (Chinnery ndC:60), at the first nose-bleeding ceremony of the Kaman.

and their neighbours (D) (R.M. Berndt 1965:91) and, as further examples from outside the major areas of bullroarer usage, at circumcision ceremonies in West New Britain (H) (Parkinson 1907:569) where, in contrast to practice elsewhere, the Mowehafen show them to both boys and girls at initiation (Allen 1967:90). Both here and in the socially-stratified society of North Bougainville (K) they are associated with masks which, in the wapi ceremony, represent ancestors while bullroarers are used as their voices.¹

If bullroarers are often used to represent the voices of spirits, monsters or ancestors - a factor that will be considered further in Chapter 4 - we may conclude, from the data available, that there are areas in which the bullroarer is considerably more than 'a voice', just as there are places where this would appear to be its main function.

Flutes. A number of differences are immediately apparent when, as in areas A and D, sacred flutes replace bullroarers as cult objects in initiation. First, the revelation of the flutes is the central feature of the rites. Among the Kuma (D), for example, 'the boys' initiation is known as "seeing the flutes" (kai kane)' (Reay 1959:170), while for the Gahuku-Gama (D) 'the secret of the flutes is the most important revelation given to the boys' (Read 1952:13). Secondly, while secrecy is stressed equally with that attached to the bullroarer, greater prominence is given to male-female antagonism, particularly to the need for candidates to purify themselves of contaminating female influences through blood-letting. Thirdly initiation ceremonies tend to cover a longer period or to occur in a number of stages.

While these deductions may be the result of more detailed data for certain peoples, there is a practical aspect to consider: flutes require considerably more skill in performance than bullroarers and much of the time spent in seclusion

¹ See Blackwood (1935:315ff); Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea (1937). So far as the islands of Torres Strait are concerned, Haddon reports (1912:276) that only on Muralug is the bullroarer used in initiation ceremonies and 'reckoned so sacred that no woman might see it'; elsewhere it is linked with fertility, rain-making, raising a wind and turtle fishing. For further links between initiation and agriculture see Chapter 3.

is passed in practising. Williams (1930:185) goes so far as to equate the two; for the Orokaiva (C) the duration of seclusion is 'regulated by the skill which the school attains; the sooner they learn, the sooner they come out'. The high status given to musical performance by an undeveloped society could not be more succinctly expressed. As examples of initiation ceremonies centred on the sacred flutes we will consider the Wogeo (A) and the Gahuku-Gama (D).

The major Wogeo difficulty in flute playing is less that of acquiring the technique than of 'attaining the eligibility to practise it' (Hogbin 1970:101). In order to reach manhood each Wogeo male must pass through three distinct ceremonies at which flutes are involved. Only after the third is he allowed to play one.

- (i) As a young boy the Wogeo has his ears pierced. Visitors bring flutes to the village and play them during the early part of the day but remain silent during the actual ceremony which takes place in the house with the mothers present (Hogbin 1970:101).
- (ii) At a later stage he is admitted to the men's club. For this purpose, the nibek monsters, whose voices are represented by the flutes, are summoned before dawn from their home in the sea. The flutes, however, are left on the beach. The boys' sponsors slap them to expel some of the female influence and take them into the club where they can hear flute playing. The night passes in singing. Next day they are taken to the beach, shown the flutes and given a demonstration of the monsters' voices. Back in the club they receive a full explanation that there are in fact no supernatural beings, only flutes, and that these are the mysteries that 'must be hidden from the women' (Hogbin 1970:101).
- (iii) Finally, before playing the flute, it is necessary to eliminate the harmful elements which the boys have absorbed from women during childhood. The process consists of scarifying the tongue.¹ The monsters are

¹ Hogbin suggests (1970:114) that this also serves the practical purpose of making the tongue pliable 'and hence better fitted for coping with a woodwind instrument'. In the absence of more detailed anatomical data, one remains respectfully sceptical. I have yet to hear of any European School of Music

summoned and the flutes taken to a hut where the boys are waiting. Magic potions brewed from coconut fluid are placed in a row of holes in the ground that have previously been lined with taro leaves. A specialist 'then takes a male and female flute and passes along the line dipping the ends successively into every potion'. All then go to the forest and the boys practise flute playing for the rest of their seclusion (Hogbin 1970:115ff).

Despite the wide geographical distance separating the Wogeo islanders from the highland home of the Gahuku-Gama (D), the initiatory rites of the latter follow a similar three-stage pattern. Initiations are held between July and November (the dry season) and the flutes, after being carried in procession from the men's house, sounding as they go, are heard nightly as they are taken through the surrounding gardens.

- (i) In the first stage of an individual's initiation at the age of 5 he is taken from his mother and forced to bathe in a chill stream at dawn to the accompaniment of chanting and flutes.
- (ii) At the age of 10-15 he is again taken to a stream; grasses bent into a U-shape are forced down his throat to cause vomiting, others twisted up his nostrils to cause bleeding and thus temporarily cleansed of polluting female influence, he is shown the secret of the flutes.
- (iii) At yet a later stage youths of 15-19 undergo a repetition of the rites and are secluded for a period varying from a few weeks to two months, during which they learn to become proficient on the flutes (Read 1952:11-12).

Similar rites are performed by other highland peoples, of which R.M. Berndt's account (1965:91) of the Kamano and their neighbours (D) is the most gruesomely picturesque. At a site away from the village the novices are confronted with the spectacle of men forcibly bleeding their nostrils. They are

(Footnote 1 continued)

where this particular form of minor torture is considered a necessary prerequisite of admission. Conversely, European-type flutes would appear to be considerably easier to manipulate than their Wogeo counterparts.

accused of menstruating, told to eat the blood and then shown the guardian of the flutes, masked, with an arrow piercing his foreskin. Behind him flutes are played in a bush shelter. The novices are seized and their nostrils forcibly bled. Even among the Kuman (D) where initiation may be a joint family affair and a boy is shown his own flute by his father or elder brother, the ceremony ends painfully. At first the flutes are blown outside the seclusion house, while the novice waits, like his counterpart among the Keraki, with head bowed and eyes closed during the flute player's entry. The boy is told to look up and see the flutes, then given instruction in the melodies. Next day he is taken to a stream to undergo tests and nose-bleeding 'to release the bad blood accumulated since he was in his mother's womb' (Nilles 1950:16-17).

Less ostensibly painful initiatory tests have the same aim and may be equally gruelling. Kuma (D) boys, secluded in the Geru house, are cleansed of contact with their mothers by being roasted beside a huge fire before being shown the flutes. Later they undergo such trials such as tramping long distances without water or crouching in icy water 'to remove the weakness caused by the boys' association with women' (Reay 1959:162, 170). The emphasis here is slightly different - the boys have been 'weakened' rather than 'polluted' by contact with women. Nevertheless, the antagonism is made explicit. On returning from their seclusion the boys pass through an arch of draecena. This is a 'replica of the sorcery traps that stand inside each territory in the direction of enemy clans'. Passing through it on their return to the women is symbolic of approaching 'the enemy' (Reay 1959:162).

Amid this display of ritual sadism and inter-sex hostility, the Keraki (E) initiation to the sacred pipe ari, which is an independent ceremony from introduction to the bullroarer, though it may follow it during the same seclusion period, combines a rare example of a more subtle form of humour with the naive horseplay indulged in elsewhere. The boys are told that they must meet the 'old woman' (Ause), a collective name for the ari as 'wives of the bullroarer'. They are forced to stand with their legs apart while a hopping procession (see Chapter 5) passes between them carrying sharp-pointed pandanus leaves and dragging trailers of prickly calamus vine, thus inflicting painful scratches on the boys' legs. They are then given 'flutes' to play but, 'to the intense amusement of the bystanders', are unable to produce a sound (Williams 1936a:187, 197ff). It will be recalled that the ari is a piece of split bamboo and not a transverse flute. The Keraki 'joke' consists in offering novices bamboo 'flutes' without the split!

Revelation of the sacred flutes and subsequent swearing to secrecy form an essential part of initiation ceremonies for the Vaimo/Aitape (A), Kwoma (A), Banaro (A), Wahgi (D), Nondugl (D), Gururumba (D), Gimi (D), Siane (D) and Manam Islanders (B), while the sacred gourd trumpets play a similar role for the Ngaing (B).¹ Orokaiva novices are introduced to the flutes at the same time as they are shown the bull-roarer though it would appear that the northern group places greater emphasis on the flute and the southern Orokaiva peoples on the bullroarer.²

Not all societies initiate all young men to the secrets and there are gradations in the emphasis on secrecy and in attitudes towards revelation. Among the rigidly stratified Manam Islanders (B) only sons of the aristocracy go through

¹ See Thomas (1941:184) on the Vaimo; The Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea (1937:413) on the Aitape; Whiting and Reed (1938:194) on the Kwoma; Thurnwald (1916:264ff) on the Banaro; Schaefer (1938:413-14), on the Wahgi; Luzbetak (1954:115-17) and Simpson (1954:216-17) on the Nondugl; Newman (1964:265-66; 1965:67-69) on the Gururumba and Glick (1972:821-22) on the Gimi. Thurnwald's account of Banaro rites makes no mention of blood-letting or pronounced sex-hostility, but this may be due in part to brevity. While a dance is in progress the flutes are seen for the first time and pressed on the navels of initiates. Later, while the boys are seated on sago bark, the father and mother's brother blow the flutes, hand them over to the initiate, and show him how to play. Continual practice follows. During the concluding rite the boys bathe in the river while the flutes are played and the women sent into the forest.

² Williams (1930:99). The Aiga and Binandele, however, do not use flutes and candidates are brought into contact with the spirits of the dead through drama and its accompanying dance. An account by C.H.Karius in the 1925 Annual Report (cited by Williams 1930:88n) reveals an unusual combination of instruments. Two sets of flutes are used, one played inside the gubu (cult house), one outside it. They are 'of different sizes and the method of playing them is different'; those inside are larger and side-blown, those outside shorter and end-blown: 'never by any chance is the order reversed'. In short, it is the transverse flute which remains secret.

the rites in full (Allen 1967:65). Although Arapesh (A) flutes are used at initiation and the boys told to keep the secret, they are not threatened (Mead 1935:63,68) while among the Mundugumor (A) the whole business is regarded as a 'game', though considerable pride is taken in the flutes after revelation.¹ With the Iatmul the situation has important differences. Although the ceremony contains 'elements ... appropriate to ... an ascetic ethos', for example, novices undergo scarification, drink filthy water and are subject to numerous taboos, the emphasis during the first week is on 'intensive bullying and swagger'. This later yields to a 'maternal' attitude at the time when the flutes are revealed (Bateson 1958:130,134) and the novices are taught both how to play them and how to swing a bullroarer (Bateson 1935:168). The ceremony is so staged that, far from being completely secret, parts of it 'are visible to the women who form an audience and who can hear issuing from the ceremonial house the mysterious and beautiful sounds made by the various secret musical instruments - flutes, gongs, bullroarers, and so on' (Bateson 1958:128). Finally, among the Tchambuli (A) boys are initiated (including undergoing scarification) not because they have reached a certain stage of development or to reinforce their separation from women, but 'rather as an excuse to hold an elaborate and beautiful ceremony providing entertainment and amusement for the whole community, women included'.² These later examples are all from the northern areas A and B rather than the Huon Gulf (C) or the highlands (D). Their significance will be considered later in the light of symbolic interpretation and male-female relations.

The slit-gong. Because of its size as a material object and the limited area of its distribution (mainly areas A and B), even the sacred slit-gong can never play the same role in initiatory rites as either the bullroarer or the sacred flutes. When novices are introduced to the garamut as part of the ceremony, it is often in conjunction with the revelation of other instruments. Vanim (A) youths are taken into the men's house at puberty and, during their seclusion period, shown the slit-gong (mumona) and sacred flutes (diwana)

¹ Mead (1935:181,213). Suspicions remain that, in her assessment of revelation as a 'game', Mead underestimates the basic seriousness of the situation. Even allowing for her sceptical approach to the esoteric, the difference in attitude would still be apparent.

² Allen (1967:67) after Mead (1935:237ff).

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 6. An initiate
from the Maprik area,
East Sepik District

Plate 7. Haus garamut

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

(Thomas 1941:183-84). Ngaing (B) initiates are introduced to and taught how to play the slit-gong at the same time as the sacred gourd trumpets are revealed (Lawrence 1964:19; 1965:213). More frequently, emphasis is on the sound of the instrument either for 'practical' or symbolic purposes. While Iatmul (A) initiates are undergoing scarification, gongs are beaten to drown their screams (Bateson 1958:130-31). Among the Arapesh and Abelam (A) spirit 'voices' are imitated through bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs (Allen 1967:58); as a climax to the Kwoma ceremony, after the boys have been told never to reveal the secrets to women, a baked yam is thrust into the hand of each initiate 'while the gongs, flutes, bullroarers and voices pull out all the stops' (Whiting and Reed 1938:194). At a non-acoustic level we may note that, while Wogeo (A) boys practise flute playing after tongue scarification, 'the men's task considered specially appropriate is carving new hand drums and slit-gongs' (Hogbin 1970:120). In short, the slit-gong finds its way into initiation ceremonies as far as it is able.

Other uses

Bullroarers. Outside initiation the bullroarer appears mainly as the symbol of authority or power, especially when associated with magic. As examples of the first we may note two practices found among the peoples in the Huon Gulf (C) and their partial occurrence in Area E. If a headman wishes to communicate with another village, he gives his messenger a bullroarer 'to denote the official character of his mission' (Bodrogi 1961:73; Hogbin 1951:215). Similarly the headman can cause the bullroarer to be sounded to summon the 'monsters' (see Chapter 4): (i) if he wishes to put a taboo on certain kinds of food prior to a feast; (ii) if a new club house is to be erected; or (iii) if the leading man of a neighbouring community is ill or dead (Hogbin 1951:215). Among the Elema of the Papuan Gulf (E) each of the twelve bukari (big men) at Kerema had his own mai-karu whom he could order to sound the bullroarer as the result of any misdeeds within the community or alleged insults to his own authority. The act eventually resulted in the handing over of a pig or the payment of some other form of compensation (Williams 1936b: 41).

In the Huon Gulf (C) the bullroarer had both power and authority to settle disputes not only for individuals but between warring groups. At the great balum festivals bullroarers were exchanged between groups 'to confirm their

friendship and authenticate the act' of peace-making (Bodrogi 1961:73) while if a fight subsequently broke out between individuals, the headman 'holds up the balum bullroarer before them as a reminder that they have pledged peace, and then the quarrel must stop' (Biro 1899:9 quoting Bodrogi 1961:75). Once an alliance or truce had been concluded between settlements, should any treachery occur afterwards, the guilty parties would suffer supernatural vengeance (Hogbin 1951:216). In their accounts of initiation ceremonies among the Tami, Kai, Yabim and Bukawa (C), Bamler (1911:498), Keysser (1911:38) and Lehner (1911:403) all stress that, throughout the entire period there must be 'peace' both at the inter-communal and at the inter-personal level. The underlying rationale is that since other villages are invited to whom the hosts may be indebted or with whom they wish to establish trade, it is necessary to ensure an overall truce. Even personal payback killings are hushed up for the time being and retribution deferred. Combining both 'authoritarian' and 'ceremonial' aspects, the Mawai bullroarer is sounded for any offence against taboos committed during the initiation period (Chinnery ndC:61).

As a 'magical power', the bullroarer is swung by the Kiwai (E) to 'wake up' a new canoe (Landtman 1927:211) and at the ceremony of planting the first yam in a garden when an old couple use it for burying the root and smoothing the soil afterwards. 'The bullroarers are smeared with fluid from the woman's vulva after the man has had connection with her, the purpose being that the instrument, when whirling round in the air, should make the medicine fly all over the garden' (Landtman 1927:76). When all the yams are planted, the men swing bullroarers, producing a loud noise that frightens 'the women and young people at home who do not know what it all means'. The bullroarers are then placed in the middle of each garden plot, near a croton bush, where they remain for several days until ritual singing and dancing is completed (Landtman 1927:76). In addition, bullroarers are swung at the opening of the horiomu ceremony on the first appearance of the spirits at the same time as 'marine grass', on which dugong feed; on this occasion the bullroarer, which undergoes the same treatment as at the yam ceremony, is buried. They are also used as an accompaniment to dancing or as a signal for dances to commence at numerous dance rites during the nigori or turtle ceremony, though they are hidden away while boys are first introduced to some of the lesser nigori rites (Landtman 1927:333-34; 399ff,403ff). The association

is thus with fertility and growth in both agriculture and fishing no less than with initiation.

The Wogeo (A) use the bullroarer to ease the work load, for example, when hauling logs (Hogbin 1970:50), and the Ngaing on hunting expeditions, except for those associated with feasts in honour of the spirits of the dead. The leader 'breathes a spell over the bullroarer and whirls it in the bush, out of sight of women and children'. The deity invoked will then drive the game towards the hunters. The hunters themselves carry relics of dead kinsmen - locks of hair or fingerbones - which are tied to bullroarers. When, however, the dead are to be honoured, the bullroarer is carried in a netbag as a hunting talisman 'but must never be whirled' (Lawrence 1964:17-18 ; 1965:209). Finally, there are reports associating the bullroarer with ceremonial dances or feasts throughout the country. Along the Sepik River (A) the bullroarer is used in dance feasts at full moon (Behrmann 1922:195), the highland Kamano and their neighbours (D) swing bullroarers during preparations for their pig festival (R.M. Berndt 1965:89), the Baining (H) use the bullroarer in masked dances (Laufer 1970:177ff), the Namau-Ipi (E) sound bullroarers in the bush during kovave ceremonial feasts when young men impersonate spirits (Holmes 1924:164), and in southern New Ireland (J) the dukduk dancer makes similar use of the instrument (Stephan and Graebner 1907:119,124,131ff). It should be obvious that, like initiation, these activities are mainly the concern of the men.

Flutes. Flutes are mainly used for summoning spirits, whose voices they represent, and during pig feasts and other ceremonial occasions that mark the successful conclusion of rites de passage and are linked with fertility and growth. Thus, the Vanimo people (A) sound the flutes to call up the 'dual spirits', (each clan 'owns' a pair) into slit-gongs (Thomas 1941:184). The Wogeo (A) headman, having decided to organise a food distribution, causes the flutes to be sounded to call up the appropriate spirit monsters (Hogbin 1970:58) while before the harvest begins Ngaing (B) men go to their sacred pools, wash and decorate their gourd trumpets and 'as soon as it is dark and they cannot be seen by women and children, the men return home leading the spirits by playing their patriclan melodies' (Lawrence 1964:18; 1965:210). With these preliminaries we may turn to consider in more detail the use of flutes at pig festivals and other ceremonial occasions among highland peoples (D), the Siane, Kuman and Gahuku-Gama, and at the inter-district festivals of the Wogeo (A).

As soon as the maize is ripe, Siane clan flutes are played and taken in procession round the land (Salisbury 1965:64). In order to announce the holding of a pig feast 'several flutes begin playing, as they do every day at nightfall for the next ten months' (Salisbury 1965:67). A month before the actual pig-killing, the phratry horn - a three foot long instrument made from telescoped lengths of bamboo - is uncovered by its guardian and used to signal that the slaughter will be at the next full moon. During the intervening period the flutes are taken in procession to other villages to invite people to dance for the spirits. The actual killing is carried out 'to a crescendo of flute and horn playing' (Salisbury 1965:67ff). On conclusion of the feast the flutes are put away after a ceremonial procession through the village. A third occasion on which the Siane use their flutes is when a girl undertakes marriage by eloping to the men's house of her chosen groom. Faced directly with the prospect of female contamination, the men purify themselves by letting blood, eating spirit food and 'playing the sacred flutes - the most drastic purification possible' (Salisbury 1965:69,73).

The Kuman (D) bogla gende - pig festival - follows a similar pattern. Flutes are blown as a signal to the neighbours that the feast is to be held and (in Nilles' 'clerical' vocabulary) 'to secure the "blessing" of the "Penates" which are represented through these flutes' (Nilles 1950:21). In addition, the flutes may be blown at a burial ceremony, when the deceased dies without having seen his koa, his personal flutes; after a successful raid on the enemy; or when a 'big man' has been killed in battle or through sorcery and, finally, in order to insult another man by blowing his koa - in this case, not the instrument but his sacred melody. This is equivalent to stealing his property (Nilles 1950:47).

Gahuku-Gama (D) pig festivals (idze nama) follow closely the Siane pattern, though they are more likely to form a conclusion to the initiation ceremony when the young men return from seclusion. Towards the end of a day on which the men of the sub-tribe have held a meal in the men's house the flutes are brought out, paraded through all the settlements and gardens, and sounded continuously. This process continues throughout the weeks of preparation. Guests are summoned to a ceremonial invitation, at which each stick offered represents a pig, and accompanied on their departure by young men playing the nama flutes. As the preparations near completion the flutes are played on successive days along the paths leading to the settlements of the guests. The

Photo: Creative Arts Centre of Papua New Guinea

Plate 8. A flautist from Chambri, East Sepik District

Photo: Creative Arts Centre of Papua New Guinea

Plate 9. A flautist from Chambri, East Sepik District

climax is reached when the players go into the villages and play outside the house of each man invited. During the festival the flutes played are only those associated with the men who have agreed to supply the largest pigs. (The emphasis is on the size of individual pigs, not on numerical quantity). However, when women are present during the actual killing, feasting and dancing, the flutes remain silent (Read 1952:18ff).

The other occasion of flute performance is the fertility rite asifo teho (our ancestor) or nama ge'isa (nama fence). At this time the flutes are disposed of at the burial ground where offerings are made to the dead. As this method of destruction, which is allegedly to keep the secret from the women, could be accomplished elsewhere, it suggests a link between the nama and the ancestral spirits.

Wogeo (A) flutes are not only associated but identified with 'the big things', referring to the village nibek (see also Chapter 4) - monsters that are summoned for the great inter-district warabwa festival held when a new club building is completed or a dwelling constructed for the headman. The ceremony of summoning the nibek takes place before dawn. The men gather on the beach, two of them with flutes concealed in a basket. A list of names is called and the flutes give a short trill when that of the nibek to be summoned is reached. As the procession returns to the village two flute players bring up the rear. If the building of a new club house is the subject of the ceremony, the flutes are taken to the headman's house from which may be heard a few short trills during the remainder of the day. Next morning the party, together with the flutes, sets out for a secluded grove. From then onward flute sounds are heard daily, though after a month this is limited to once or twice a week. As with the Gahuku-Gama the flutes play no part in actual feasting and dancing when women are present. When the guests have departed the flutes make their reappearance to send the nibek back. The old men retire to the club where they sing canoe-paddling songs to flute accompaniment. Eventually a flute tune signals that the time has come for the women to lock themselves away while the procession, including the instruments, returns to the beach. There the headman sends the nibek on their journey with a request for music.

As the last note is heard he orders all aboard. The player of the male flute faces seaward with the player of the female flute immediately behind him. Careful to hold the

instruments absolutely horizontal 'to prevent the canoe from capsizing', they place them on the ground at the left hand side....[When the monsters have departed], the elder who has been waiting picks up the flutes in his left hand, places stoppers of leaves in the holes, and runs with them to the club, where he restores them to their usual place (Hogbin 1970:72ff).

A further Wogeo use of the flute is on the death of a head-man when advance parties of flute players precede each visiting village party, while women and children flee indoors (Hogbin 1970:160).

Activities elsewhere may be considered briefly. For the pig feasts of other highland peoples, the Kamano, Usurufa and others (D), flutes are played both at intervals during the months preceding the killing in order to ensure the growth of the pigs, and at the actual slaughter. The pigs are killed by a blow on the snout which causes blood to flow from the nostrils 'like men having their noses bled' (R.M. Berndt 1965:89). The Kuma (D) establish ritual contact with their two great spirits, Bolim and Geru, through the pig ceremonial. The flutes are sounded 'blatantly, aggressively' as a sign that the clan is preparing for the kill; during the ceremony they can be heard at night over great distances and as the ceremony approaches its end, the sounds are intensified (Reay 1959:141,170). Similarly Nondugl flutes are sounded during preparations for the feast and at its conclusion (Luzbetak 1954:72-73;127), as are those of the Gimi (Glick 1972:821-22), while the Gururumba who are close geographically to the Gahuku-Gama, follow an almost identical pattern in using flutes for announcements and invitations and in ceremonies to ensure pig growth (Newman 1964:268-69; 1965:67-69). During the Ngaing (B) kabu ceremony, the sacred trumpets, together with slit-gongs, perform the function of flutes. On the first night of the spirits' appearance a dance (ola) is held for both men and women. Although the trumpets are used as musical accompaniment, they are returned to the cult house immediately afterwards so as not to be seen by the women and children. During the day, while the business of pig exchange proceeds outside, men not involved play trumpets and slit-gongs in the cult house. After they have feasted, pig fat is rubbed on the trumpets and gongs to please the spirits and to ensure pig growth and the secret name of the deity, Yabuling, 'is breathed over a trumpet which is played over a bowl of cooked food. This is given to the pigs to eat' (Lawrence 1965:211-12).

Finally, there are a number of examples unconnected with summoning spirits or pig ceremonial.

- (i) Vanimo (A) flutes may be blown before fights or food harvest and on extensive hunts are taken into the bush and blown to help the hunt (Thomas 1941: 185). (Compare the use of the bullroarer among the Ngaing).
- (ii) Keraki Papuans fear that boys who have been sodomised during initiation may become pregnant. To prevent this the boys are ceremonially dosed with lime. At the appropriate ceremony men bringing the lime enter with whitened faces, hopping 'in the manner of kangaroos' to the accompaniment of the sacred pipe ari (Williams 1936a:201). This seemingly bizarre spectacle, like others such as 'feeding the flutes', acquires meaning only through a consideration of its symbolic significance and its genesis in myth.
- (iii) The mintshanggu ceremony of the Iatmul (A), performed in honour of the dead, differs in two important respects: it is a personal not a public occasion; moreover, it takes place in a dwelling house and women are present. The central feature is a swinging platform on which is placed a figure representing the dead man whose spirit is voyaging on a patch of floating grass down the Sepik River. The platform has a fringe of palm leaves hanging from it and concealing men underneath who alternate the playing of flute music with the singing of name songs by the visible participants. The ceremony, in Bateson's opinion, is like 'all the other performances staged by the men, a spectacle for the admiration and mystification of the women' (Bateson 1958:57,156).
- (iv) Among the Arapesh (A) flutes may be blown in order to settle disputes, (Mead 1935:26) some of the magico-authoritarian influence of the bullroarer found elsewhere having presumably transferred itself to these instruments.
- (v) The Manam Islanders (B) have an unusual custom by which flutes are blown in the bush as a special honour during the personal rites de passage of a high-born girl such as a chief's daughter (Wedgwood 1933:134). The flutes of course remain unseen and

the example illustrates the overriding importance of rank in this community.

- (vi) The Murik, Kaup and Kerau (A) use flutes together with masks at their death dance. The relation with spirits, either of the ancestors or of the dead man, is however not clear (P.J. Schmidt 1926:62).
- (vii) Among the Banaro (A) concealed flutes are played continuously during the ritual deflowering of a new bride by the husband's father's 'sib friend' prior to her being handed over to the husband (Thurnwald 1916:261). Apart from providing a 'dramatic' accompaniment to this ceremony - a factor which, from practice elsewhere in the Sepik area, cannot be overlooked - no explanation is available, though Sachs (1958:95) regards the incident as further confirmation of his overall phallic interpretation.

The slit-gong. The slit-gong has more uses outside the ceremony of initiation than either bullroarers or sacred flutes. In describing the method of performance (Chapter 2) we noted the different methods of beating according to whether the instrument was used to accompany dances or for signalling. It remains to mention the occasions on which these occur, together with additional uses, with particular reference to our contention that there are both sacred and secular slit-gongs. As a general point we may note an overall consistency in usage throughout the slit-gong region, which is especially noticeable as more data are available for 'island' areas (H, I, J, K) than in any other aspect of our study.

As an accompaniment to dancing (with or without singing) the slit-gong is used, either singly or in ensembles, throughout the entire area from the Sepik to southern Bougainville. Written sources alone report examples from the Aitape area, the Kwoma and Wogeo, the Sepik and Ramu rivers, Manam Island, Manus, the Bismarck Archipelago in general, New Britain (with special reference to the Gazelle Peninsula), New Ireland, and from Nissan Island and the Buka and Buin peoples on Bougainville.¹ Student sources confirm the use of the slit-gong

¹ See Finsch (1888:Table 12,fig.1) on the Aitape; Whiting and Reed (1938:190) on the Kwoma; Hogbin (1970:63) on the Wogeo; Finsch (1914:538) on the Sepik and Ramu Rivers and the Manam

for this purpose for almost all the remaining peoples and places listed in Table 1. We may reasonably assume that for social dances secular gongs are used, the main difference in emphasis being that in places such as New Ireland where the hour-glass drum is of comparatively recent introduction (Parkinson 1907:265), slit-gongs only are used, while elsewhere they occur in concert with hand-drums.

As a signalling instrument, the slit-gong is used mainly in times of emergency or distress. Its tone, sounding through the countryside, can be heard by men and women away from the village who will recognise the signal, note whether it applies to them and take appropriate action. Again the use of the gong as a signalling instrument is reported throughout the entire area in which it is found. For purposes of exposition we may distinguish between (i) communal messages and (ii) personal call-signs, the former being intended for the entire community, or appropriate groups within it, such as the men, the latter for particular individuals.

Doubtless one of the most welcome communal signals given by the gong would be the invitation to a dance or a feast. Among the Bukawa and Yabim this reaches such a pitch of refinement that there are different signals to indicate whether pig-meat or dog-meat is on the menu (Neuhauss 1911: 317). Less welcome would be the signal used in the Gazelle Peninsula to indicate that the feast had been postponed (Parkinson 1907:130ff). In the field of everyday activities the Iatmul use slit-gongs to summon fishing, hunting or trading parties and, though this is not specifically a signal, when work takes place 'close to the ceremonial house the gongs are beaten from time to time to stimulate the workers' (Bateson 1935:167). More frequently slit-gong signalling is mentioned in connection with less pleasant occasions. Thus a general alarum of warning signal is reported from the Sepik River area (Reche 1913:18) and for Manus (Buschan 1923:104); in the Gazelle Peninsula there is a signal for sickness (Eberlein 1910:635ff), while the Kwoma not only

(Footnote 1 continued)

Island; Mead (1930:39, 70-71) and Parkinson (1907:337-38) on Manus; Friederici (1912:101) on Bismarck Archipelago; Powell (1884:71) on New Britain; Eberlein (1910:635) on Gazelle; Parkinson (1907:265) on New Ireland; Finsch (1914: 539) on Nissan Island; Blackwood (1935:406-10) on Buka; and Finsch (1914:539) on Buin.

announce illness but that the sorcery causing it must cease or retaliation will follow (Whiting and Reed 1938:213). In addition to general signals for war, for example, in the Aitape area or among the Bukawa and Yabim (Neuhauss 1911:317), the Buka have a signal to announce that a prisoner of war is about to be killed before being eaten (Blackwood 1935:410), and in the Gazelle Peninsula there is a special rhythm to indicate the capture of an enemy and the cutting up of his body (Parkinson 1907:130ff). In more recent, less war-like times the gong may still be beaten to put an end to the Tolai children's spear-game (Matane 1972:49-50). It is in connection with announcements of death that the gong is perhaps most widely used. There are special rhythms for this purpose in the Aitape area (Neuhauss 1911:317), the Gazelle Peninsula, especially for the death of a distinguished man¹, and among the Buka (Blackwood 1935:406ff). In his autobiography Matane (1972:20ff) movingly describes how, following Tolai custom, the gongs were beaten on the death of his mother. Among the Sulka the gongs announce when death has been caused by sorcery (Parkinson 1907:204) and Kwoma gongs in the house tambaran are tolled when a man is close to death, as well as on the death itself (Whiting and Reed 1938:215, 172). On the first occasion at least we may reasonably assume that sacred rather than secular gongs are used.

From written accounts it is not always possible to distinguish the use of the gong for announcing death from its role in mourning ceremonies, which may be appropriately included at this point. The Manus 'death beat' is not only the prerogative of women and girls but also the only rhythm that they are customarily permitted to beat on the gong (Mead 1930:39). The instrument is also beaten at mourning feasts of the Usiai on Manus (Parkinson 1907:374) and in north New Ireland (Bodrogi nd:72), while slit-gong ensembles accompany burial ceremonies in the Gazelle.² In the same region the gong is also used at the tumbuan dance round a corpse and sounded continuously after burial until the following morning in order to strengthen the dead man's spirit

¹ See Eberlein (1910:635ff); Parkinson (1907:78ff;130ff) and Salisbury (1970:295).

² See Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea (1937:358-59).

on its journey (Parkinson 1907:78ff) - a practice with a slightly different emphasis from that found at Kieta in Bougainville, where the aim of gong beating is simply to drive away the dead spirit. On the other side of the country the Kwoma sound the gong at the final death feast when the body, which has been exposed on a platform until reduced to a skeleton, is removed for burial (Whiting and Reed 1938: 216). Finally, the slit-gong may play a more permanent part in burial, for the Ngaing place the remains of their dead, after exposure, in old slit-gongs where, as ancestors, they become protectors of the surviving relatives (Lawrence 1964: 17). From being the means for beating out a rhythm to announce that a man is dying, the gong thus passes through successive stages as the intimator of death and accompaniment to funeral rites to become a non-sounding repository for the bones of the ancestors.

Personal call-signs - rhythms denoting a particular individual - are reported for the Murik, Kaup and Kerau, the Yabim and Bukawa, the Ngaing and the Tangu,¹ where their use as part of the overall communications system suggests that their actual distribution is considerably wider. Individual call-signs may be extended into the realms of animals and spirits. It is alleged that among the Tangu even domestic pigs have call-signs to which they respond (Burridge 1959:139). When Ngaing men return to the village playing sacred trumpets, their personal call-signs are beaten as they reach the point where the accompanying spirits enter the cult house. (Lawrence 1964: 13; 1965:210). If the use of sacred slit-gongs is appropriate for the latter purpose, it is reasonable to assume that secular gongs are used for the former. Men presumably partake of both worlds in that Ngaing individuals derive their personal call-signs from the sacred melodies (niguling-toto) of the clan.² Among the Tangu a man's personal call-sign is known to all with whom he has a relationship and may be used to indicate that relationship when 'two men may know a third by different call-signs' (Burridge 1959:138). In combining personal with more general signals, the individual call-sign

¹ See P.W. Schmidt (1923-24:729) on the Murik, Kaup, Kerau; Neuhauss (1911:316-17) on the Yabim and Bukawa; Lawrence (1964:15, 1965:200) on the Ngaing and Burridge (1959:138-39) on the Tangu.

² Lawrence (1964:15; 1965:200-1). One assumes that Lawrence's reference is to the rhythms of the sacred melodies rather than to the melodies themselves, which a slit-gong would be unable to reproduce.

is usually given first. Thus the beating of a man's call-sign followed by the signal for 'pig' may not only indicate the intended recipient but, for the Tangu at least, the sender of the message together with the injunction that the former is required to do something urgently about a pig. The system works because the number of situations is limited and all know the appropriate action to be taken, just as in certain circles in western society a repeated beating of the (dinner) gong is interpreted not only as 'Dinner is served' but also that 'Guests are expected to proceed to the dining room at once'; or even, where the 'rules of the game' are so understood, as 'Failure to comply may mean missing the soup'. The 'economy' of communication through slit-gong signalling is strikingly brought out by Burridge's catalogue of its activities: '... a slit-gong talks for a man as, if not more powerfully than, his voice does. A man mourns on his slit-gong and announces feasts, complaints, claims, anger, threats, confession, warnings, dances and births of children, betrothal, marriage, the killing of a pig or a cassowary...' (Burridge 1965:245). Moreover, a signal constitutes publication; it is 'a definitive pronouncement from which a man retreats at his peril'. In sounding it a man 'brings his predicament to the notice of the community, involving them' (Burridge 1959: 142). Even as a signalling instrument the striking of a slit-gong is no mean undertaking, for 'speech, the ability to communicate, to talk and talk well, is the manifestation of man's power over himself and the material world about him' (Burridge 1965:245).

Finally, we may note certain ceremonial uses of the slit-gong not previously mentioned. Gongs have their part in the Ngaing and Wogeo ceremonials involving sacred flutes. Their use during the kabu ceremony has already been described, though from the data given it is difficult to decide which type of gongs are used. While it is comparatively easy to conceal the sacred trumpets during a public dance, the size of the garamut makes this difficult suggesting therefore that secular gongs would be used for this purpose. If, however, the dance is held near the cult house, gongs could be played from inside it without breach of secrecy, and in view of the nature of the festival, it would appear certain that the gongs played in the cult house during the daytime and which are later rubbed with pig fat have a markedly sacred character. Wogeo men celebrate the arrival of the village lewa (spirit-monsters) by practising dance tunes on hand-drums and slit-gongs which are later used to accompany dances,

showing that their usage is secular (Hogbin 1970:63). The sound of the gongs attracts the attention of other villagers who arrive to join the dancing as soon as etiquette permits. Slit-gongs may also be used for the arrival of the nibek monsters, but a sounding-board, having the advantage of portability in accompanying processions to and from the beach, is more common (Hogbin 1970:66,74). The slit-gong also has a more 'magical' use in that it may accompany 'songs that have miraculous overtones' which are played overnight to make men handsome before they undertake ritual trading voyages in which outstanding male beauty becomes both a ceremonial and a 'commerical' asset (Hogbin 1970:183). We may assume that ceremonial gongs are used for this purpose.

The Iatmul provide less speculative ground. During the celebration of the wagan - 'a performance on the gongs very much more secret and serious than the earlier initiation ceremonies... the secret gongs are beaten continually day and night, for months on end, in the upper storey of the ceremonial house' (Bateson 1958:137). Throughout this period there must be no quarrelling, shouting or noise in the village - an example of the 'authoritarian' aspect of the instrument comparable with that noted earlier for bullroarers and sacred flutes - not even the breaking of firewood. In practice it would seem that both village peace and the principle of continuous performance are broken by quarrels between the initiatory moities responsible for playing the instruments, though the organisation of the players in relays so that one takes over from another without missing a beat is designed to avert performance fatigue. For the whole of this time there is a taboo on the use of secular gongs which, at the conclusion of the ceremony, is removed by beating a special rhythm on them (Bateson 1958:137n, 168).

Chapter 4

The instrument as symbol

It is apparent from the use and treatment of the instruments under discussion that they have greater significance than as mere pieces of bamboo or wood by which sound is produced. They have appeared as malignant or benevolent spirits, as birds, as symbols of male dominance, as links with the ancestors or the souls of the dead, or as connected with the growth of pigs and the overall prosperity of the group. Further understanding of their 'meaning' to the men and women of the communities in which they are used can be acquired only by investigating these symbolic interpretations more deeply. In doing so we shall also cast light on the purpose of the rituals in which they appear.

Bullroarers

Although available data are inadequate, they are sufficient to refute those explanations which either attribute no significance whatsoever to the bullroarer or attempt to subsume it under one general heading. As an example of the first we may take Williams's assertion (1936b:16) that 'it is possible to unearth some esoteric meaning in the bullroarer, but I may state with all possible emphasis my own views that mundane, secular interests are uppermost in the minds of most of those implicated in the [initiation] ceremony'. Williams's own data are in themselves evidence of 'esoteric meaning', as will appear later. At the same time his commonsense approach is a warning against seeing mysteries where none exist or the inappropriate application of western interpretation of symbols to non-western societies.¹

¹ Williams would have dismissed Sachs' repeated insistence (1940:29) that the pestle is 'the penis of a spirit and the trough the vulva' or that the hollow body of a slit-gong is a female abdomen, its slit a vulva and the ramming action 'cohabitation' (Sachs 1940:37); or even that 'flutes, like bone scrapers, are phallic' (Sachs 1940:44). Our approach is

Against present trends towards over-seriousness Williams stands as a reminder that the ceremony of the bullroarer 'has' all the attractions which belong to the native feast... We must accord it due measure of what may be called carnival or festive value... [it has] the partial character of a game; in short, there is some fun about it' (Williams 1936b: 35-6).

The second over-generalisation is exemplified in Schlesier's asseveration that

the bullroarer symbolises the dema of the clan, the totem, the spirit of the dead, the personal ancestors. The sound of the bullroarer is believed to convey the voice of the ancestor or ancestors... In its capacity as representative of the ancestors the bullroarer is regarded as a source of power. It contains the accumulated benign or malignant forces of the (first) ancestor which, when the bullroarer is twirled or touched, are transferred to the cultic community.... (Schlesier 1958:336).

Whatever Schlesier's bullroarer may be, it is unlikely that there is any 'fun' about it!

The evidence suggests that, while there is some truth in both views, the situation is more complex. On one point, however, there is general agreement: most interpretations are concerned with the sound produced rather than with the material object.

A brief glance at the linguistic evidence reveals something of this complexity. Among the Bukawa and other Huon Gulf peoples (C), the word balum refers to: (i) the spirit monster whose voice is heard through the sound of the bullroarer and which 'bites', 'swallows' and 'regurgitates' boys undergoing initiation (see Chapter 3); (ii) the bullroarer itself as material object (see Chapter 2); (iii) the soul (katu) of a dead ancestor (Lehner 1911:402-3;414). To what extent the three are identified in the minds of the people it is impossible to say. The Bukawa believe that the soul leaves the body during sleep, when a person faints or has foresight, and finally on death to join the horde of balum

(Footnote 1 continued)

to remain sceptical until local interpretations of myths suggest that western psychological discoveries may not be inappropriate.

spirits almost all of whom are bad and have to be propitiated (Lehner 1911:402-3,414). On this additional interpretation the 'balum' monster becomes the foremost of a number of malevolent spirits inhabiting the Bukawa cosmos. A point of interest is that, while spirits of water, forest and field are allegedly seen and heard by people - the water-spirit (a female) actually has a song whose words are known (Lehner 1911:415) - the 'voice' of the great balum spirit is 'man-made'. While not doubting the sincerity of an overall belief in spirits, one can only conclude that such double thinking is subsumed in a non-western paralogical mode of thought that enables the Bukawa to have it both ways. Symbolically it is of interest to note that the balum sengum spirit often assumes the form of a sea-snake (Lehner 1911:416-17) and that the monster is presumably male, since the small servant bull-roarers (see Chapter 2) are referred to as his 'wives' (Lehner 1911:412).

The Tami interpretation, while following the general pattern of the Bukawa, differs slightly in that the word kani is applied to (i) the spirit-monster, (ii) the bullroarer, (iii) the mask of the tago cult (which may be an older version of the balum/kani ceremony) (Bamler 1911:494). Ancestors are, however, not omitted for the respect shown to the bullroarer, including the titles given to it and the custom of addressing it as if speaking to a superior, are (in Bamler's opinion at least) 'due more to the ancestors than to the wood itself'. Like the balum, the kani is regarded as male; his 'wives', however, are not smaller bullroarers but two piston- and one end-blown flutes whose significance is obscure (Bamler 1911:497,501).

Among the peoples of the Papuan Gulf (E) the common term for bullroarer - hevehe - has a number of variant meanings. For the Toaripi (Motumotu) it refers also to warriors or carved wooden ancestor figures; in the Western Gulf ma-hevehe (water hevehe) are marine monsters which are impersonated ceremonially by a crowd of men in connection with the making of apa-hevehe (drum hevehe) masks, which are in turn described as children of the sea-hevehe. These apa-hevehe, are shaped like huge, elongated bullroarers. Finally, to the Keum and Opau hevehe means 'snake', a design at times carved on bullroarers themselves (Williams 1936b:5-8) and which may perhaps be cognate with the sea-snake of the Huon Gulf mentioned above. These different associations of the bullroarer within a single area suggest that its impact would be derived from the combined effect of several elements the

importance of each of which varies from place to place and even from one time to another.

The most common interpretation of the bullroarer sound is thus that it is the voice of some spirit. Despite the distance between them, there would seem to be a connection between the tale told by the Marind-Anim of Irian Jaya (near E) that the bullroarer is the voice of the sosom giant who lives to the east, that is, among the Trans-Fly Papuans, comes annually in the dry season and stays in a village for two or three days while men bring him boys which he swallows and later disgorges (Haddon 1936:XXVI), and that of the balum spirit of the Huon Gulf (C) whose similar behaviour has already been recorded.

Similarly bullroarers are used to imitate spirit voices among the Arapesh (A) and Abelam (A) (Allen 1967:58-59); the Orokaiva (C), to whom they represent the embahi spirits (Williams 1930:195); the Wogeo (A), for whom they imitate the voices of bush lewa monsters (Hogbin 1970:58); the Kwoma (A), whose men tell women that the sounds are made by daimons';¹ along the Sepik River (A) where the spirit voice is that of a crocodile (Wirz 1959:11-17); at Mowehafen (H) in West New Britain (Buschan 1923:141); and among the peoples of North Bougainville, where they represent the voices of the spirits of the dead (urar) at the wapi ceremony and, following the earlier stories, are heard 'calling for the boys' (Blackwood 1935:215-16).

Conversely, although situated geographically between two groups where these interpretations are offered, the Keraki Papuans (E) have no particular tale to account for the sound. It may be made by birds (see flutes), pigs, or cassowaries. There are one or two accepted fictions, namely, that bullroarers are the voices of 'certain human beings who visit the village and demand food because they are hungry' (Williams 1936a:184), but leave after the ceremonies and feasting; or that they may be the monstrous snake or crocodile, Bugal and Wanger, relics of the gainjan (before-time) when all creatures were gigantic, who are supposed to haunt the bush and

¹ See Whiting and Reed (1938:192) and Whiting (1941:90-91).

water and to strike all who see them with fatal illness.¹ Even during initiation, though the major moiank are offered food to devour - the men feel that 'it is really obligatory to bring them out periodically and to placate them with food' - there is no pretence that novices are offered to the monster (Williams 1936a:205, 184). Similarly, as we have seen, although two names of major moiank are also names of totems or ancestors, there is no suggestion that they are ancestors (Williams 1936a:183). In this Williams is consistent with his opinion that it is difficult to unearth some 'esoteric meaning' in the bullroarer. Even at Sentavi, where the bullroarer is known as sosa (see the Marind-Anim sosom), it is represented to the women not as a devouring giant but as an old man who, like the sea-monsters, comes out of the water and sits by the fire of the initiation place 'to dry and harden himself' (Williams 1936a:184). Finally, for the Moripi, who are also within the overall Papuan Gulf area, Holmes (1924:82) states simply that bullroarers are 'associated with ancestors'.

Amid these conflicting stories, three themes seem to be of almost universal application:

- (i) the bullroarer sound is regarded as that of a supernatural being;
- (ii) its appearance is associated with feasting; and
- (iii) men make up some story to deceive the women.

Before investigating these ideas further, it is necessary to see to what extent they apply also to symbolic interpretations of sacred flutes and slit-gongs.

Flutes

Sacred flutes and their melodies have attracted considerable attention among anthropologists, particularly in the highland areas. In consequence more detailed data are available than for either the bullroarer or the slit-gong. Unfortunately, the more the subject is investigated, the further it leads into the realms of traditional religion or myth on the one hand and to social loyalties, integration and division,

¹ Williams (1936a:184). The reference to the 'monstrous snake or crocodile' may, however, be compared with the sea-snake of the Huon Gulf and the Sepik 'crocodile', while the 'bush' and 'water' creatures have the same habitations as the Wogeo spirits.

on the other. To understand the importance of the flutes to the Siane of the Eastern Highlands (D), for example, it is necessary to begin with their belief that men, pigs and certain other animals have both a physical and a supernatural aspect (spirit) which, after death, become korova. The connection with flutes is made explicit when, on ceremonial occasions, 'paternal korova appear as flying foxes and as sacred flutes' (Salisbury 1965:57ff). Flutes are thus related to ancestors; the latter, however, are conceived abstractly and to avoid erroneous impressions it is preferable to think of them as 'spirits of the dead'. Each pair of flutes and its associated tunes is given the name of a bird, such as nema famti, the greater bird of paradise. 'Nema', a generic word for 'bird', is used for all flutes, melodies and songs and dances connected with them. This interpretation is made use of by the men in their deception of the women. The sounds of the flutes are attributed to monstrous birds and when at the commencement of initiation ceremonies the boys are seized by armed men and taken to the seclusion house, the women shriek that their sons are being taken to feed the birds (Salisbury 1965:60-61). The men, however, treat the tale as a joke - a point that will be elaborated in Chapter 6. The themes of feeding and male loyalty are developed in further ceremonial activity. At the pig feast both flutes and the phratry horn appear as korova. The horn is known as nema orafo, 'mother of the birds', or we kirofo, the old man, seniority presumably being more important than sex (Salisbury 1965:66). When the pigs are killed, 'spirit food' is distributed to all, including the korova. 'The latter's food is placed "in the mouth of the birds" (that is, the flutes' sound holes)' (Salisbury 1965:67).

So far as male solidarity is concerned, the placing of flutes in novices' laps when not in use during initiation is said to infuse them with paternal spirit and to make them 'father' of that particular 'bird' (Salisbury 1965:61). In contrast to the levity with which they treat the 'bird' story told to the women, men discuss seriously 'the importance of "fathers" of particular birds... Their songs tell how the birds dwell with their Mother in Fomai ('there is the sun') or in the virgin forest to the south-east. The songs vaguely link the "Mother of the Birds" with the sun' (Salisbury 1965:71).

Salisbury concludes by emphasising the importance of the flutes as social rather than as 'musical' instruments. 'The birds symbolise social grouping more directly. Most lineages

must guard, "feed" and produce when needed one pair of flutes. Lineages, which have no secular symbols for their unity, no name, no insignia, no separate dwelling, have the flutes as religious symbols' (Salisbury 1965:71). Although all lineage symbols are 'qualitatively different', they are all variants of the single form - birds, while 'phratry unity is symbolised by the single phratry "Mother of the Birds"' (Salisbury 1965:71). The flutes may even initiate new intra-group loyalties or cut across old ones. Boys who are initiated together become 'fathers' of the same set of 'birds' as the same pair of flutes is placed in their laps. Thus 'each group of age-mates has a unique set of flute-group loyalties' (Salisbury 1965:71). Whether or not this promotes additional solidarity within the group (as Salisbury maintains) or provides ground for future conflict of loyalties, the importance of the flutes as social and ritual objects is indisputable.

The 'bird' theme appears again with the Iatmul, who call a flute pair a 'bird', as do the Buni when an elder brother places one next to a younger brother's bowl.¹ The Kuma stress the aspect of feeding, the Kuman introduce more specifically sexual symbolism. Reay's statement (1959:170) on Kuma flutes epitomises an inversion by which the symbolic interpretation acquires greater importance than the instruments' ostensible function. 'As ritual objects that are shown to novices', she writes, the flutes 'are known as 'birds' (*kai*)... An esoteric term refers to [them] as musical instruments'. Women and children believe that the sounds are made by birds, especially the lesser bird of paradise, which the men describe as being as big as cassowaries. They promise the women and children that when the pigs are killed, they will see the birds come to the ceremonial ground to drink the blood. When the women enquire, they are told that the birds have already drunk and left. The pigs' mouths with the tongues removed are produced as evidence (Reay 1959:170). Here the element of a deliberate hoax is uppermost in male-female relations.

The Kuman (D) introduce the concept of *koa*, which in everyday language refers to 'everything that has two legs and two wings' (Nilles 1950:47). Flutes also are called *koa* and each family *koa* has a special name which is 'believed to be inherent in the melody'. (The same names are, however, given to opossums, trees, localities and men) (Nilles 1950:16,47). *Koa* is further defined as the 'immaterial property of the patrilineal and patrilocal family' so that flutes 'are

¹ See Bateson (1935:162) and Holtker and Aufenanger (1940:58).

believed to represent a benevolent spiritual being, similar to a guardian spirit' (Nilles 1950:46,16). Women and children, however, are told that the koa represents a huge bird, similar to a cassowary, 'which dwells somewhere in the forest and there hatches its eggs under a big stone. If they would look upon this koa their pigs would die, their eyes lose their sight and their bodies waste away'. (But see also Chapter 6). When the men blow their flutes, they are about to give water to the birds with the bamboo tubes (Nilles 1950:30,46). While the men admit that the story is untrue, they nevertheless believe that a 'real, immaterial being' is represented in the flutes when they play and that such a being 'is the guardian of the family, men and pigs and other property' to which Nilles adds the appropriately ambiguous comment: 'Some informers said it may, at times, take the form of a bird but is not a bird' (Nilles 1950:46).

A linguistic extension of the term koa gives the following additional uses:

- (i) a girl is said to have seen her koa after having her first menstruation;
- (ii) by analogy, koa refers to menstrual blood;
- (iii) by association it can denote a woman's sexual parts. (We may recall also the use mentioned in Chapter 3 of blowing another man's koa, that is, his sacred melody, in order to insult him).

Gahuku-Gama flutes (D), on Read's interpretation, are more important for the welfare of society as a whole, with the emphasis more on the ancestors than on current sex conflicts. This is not to imply that such conflicts are absent rather that there is less immediate connection with the instruments as symbols. Like the Kuman koa, Gahuku-Gama nama flutes are regarded as the 'spiritual manifestation of a benevolent power'. While its nature is 'difficult to discover', its reality is 'attested both by the ritual treatment which the people accord the flutes and by the general concern for their preservation' (Read 1952:8). This supernatural force is 'related conceptually to that possessed by the spirits of the dead' though as a 'generalised belief in an ancestral quality ... rather than the allocation of specific functions to the spirits of the dead'. The great fertility rite concerns asija tehe - 'our ancestor' - rather than a particular individual or process. It is through the 'ceaseless sounding of the flutes' during the idza nama pig festival that the 'religious element' is continually manifested (Read 1952:9,17).

Other cultures emphasise, in varying proportions, the use of flutes to represent spirits or monstrous voices, their role as symbols of male dominance, with its counterpart in female deception, and their link with fertility and growth. For the Kamano, Usurufa, Jate and Fore (D), R.M. Berndt (1965: 84,86) stresses the phallic significance of flutes as symbols of male dominance, but maintains also that their melodies are 'vital' to the growth of pigs and the success of pig festivals. Although the flutes are regarded as male symbols, the 'sound they make is, in a general sense, the voice of Jugumishanta', the wife of the Creator, Morufonu (see next chapter) (R.M. Berndt 1965:89); the highland Gururumba (D) employ a bird symbolism similar to that of the Kuman (Newman 1964:265-66; 1965:80-81), while the Gimi (D) associate them with spirits (Glick 1972:821-22). Other peoples who use the flutes to represent spirit voices are the Aitape (A), Arapesh (A), Kwoma (A) and the Banaro (A).¹ In fact, this interpretation would seem to be general along the Sepik River where, together with the bullroarer, the flutes sound becomes the 'voice' of the crocodile spirit (Wirz 1959:11-17). Conversely, Keraki (E) women and children interpret the dual voices of ari as mother and child, that is, wife and daughter of the bullroarer, at least in the 'more or less facetious explanation offered by the men' as the story lacks mythical foundation (Williams 1936a:187), the relationship of mother and child being used also by the Bukawa for the two smaller flutes used in the balum ceremony (Lehner 1911:405). The idea of flutes as wives to the bullroarer occurs also, as we have seen, among the Tami Islanders (Bamler 1911:501). Among the Mundugumor (A) (Mead 1935:181) and Wogeo (A), the flutes are associated with the cult of water and bush spirits. The Wogeo have two kinds of monsters: lewa which is portrayed through masks in association with bullroarers and nibek, for which flutes represent the voices.

In mixed company the men describe the nibek as having a head like a snake's, a body like a huge stone, and legs like a centipede's. The mouth in repose, they say, is about the size of a human being's, though it can be expanded in the manner of a python swallowing a rat. In private they agree that, of course, the creatures are imaginary... (Hogbin 1970:72).

¹ See the Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea (1937:415); Mead (1935:26); Whiting (1941:89-91); and Thurnwald (1916:269).

This deception is more than a mere hoax for its own sake. Ultimately 'the flutes symbolise masculinity and hence play a vital part in the male cult' (Hogbin 1970:82). A similar interpretation is given by Bateson (1958:163) for Iatmul flutes which he considers as 'phallic in mythological origin' and so by extension 'an outstanding symbol of the differentiation of the male sex by drastic initiation'. Elsewhere, however, in ceremonial dances associated with ancestors of the maternal clan, the flutes are described as 'ancestors', while on a third occasion we read that 'the various secret sound-producing objects, flutes, pan pipes, etc. are regarded as connected with the wood spirits or windjimbu' (Bateson 1958:45,65). Terminology can be misleading and it is possible that the latter are similar in conception to the Wogeo bush nibek, though there is no suggestion that they 'speak' through the flutes.

Slit-gongs

For obvious reasons even the most sacred slit-gong is likely to have less of an aura of mystery about it than the secret flutes. As the sounds from all slit-gongs are similar, we may suppose that, from their familiarity with secular gongs as sound producers, even women and uninitiated males could, if they chose, diagnose the material nature of the sound-producing object. A decrease in mystery does not, however, necessarily imply a decrease in the respect with which the slit-gong is held or an absence of belief in its power. These depend on the symbolic interpretations attributed to the instrument and the intensity of the conviction with which they are accepted. The few examples for which data are available show gradations of belief in these matters which are not found in the attitude towards the sacred flutes.

When the Tchambuli (A) use slit-gongs to represent spirit voices, it is in conjunction with the more patently supernatural flutes (Allen 1967:66) while, as already noted, Kwoma (A) men tell their women that the combined efforts of slit-gongs, flutes and bullroarers produce a sound 'made by daimons' (Whiting and Reed 1938:192). Whether this 'multiple choice' of instruments implies diminished belief in the effectiveness of any one of them, as suggested of the slit-gongs above, or is based on the principle of 'the more the merrier' must remain, in our present state of knowledge, conjectural. The Kwoma at least have no doubt about the power inherent in a slit-gong. They attribute swarms of seasonal mosquitoes to a great crocodile called Kurumbukuas who lives in the swamp

between Hengwan and Tangwishamp territory and whose belly is filled with the pests. From time to time he opens his mouth to flood the whole region with them whereupon the men take their slit-gongs and speak to him by beating out an angry rhythm, 'one sib after another, which fearlessly tells this monster to keep his mouth shut' (Whiting and Reed 1938:192). Unfortunately no details are available as to which type of gongs are used or where they are played. Even if secular gongs are taken to the swamp, they would appear, for this purpose, to have some shade of divinity about them.

Similar comments apply to the two Tangu (C) myths related in the next chapter. In the first a boy's desire for a coconut brings him into contact with 'divinity' in the form of a slit-gong; in the second, a woman's curiosity leads, Eden fashion, to the situation in which a man has to make his slit-gong speak, where formerly it performed by itself. As Burridge comments (1959:147ff) in his explanation of the myths, 'We have here, I think, gradations of participation in "divinity"'.

Participation is made explicit with the Iatmul (A). Just as, on etymological grounds, we have previously demonstrated the wide range of associations of the Elema bullroarer and the Kuman flute (Chapter 4), so it can be shown that the Iatmul term wagan may refer to:

- (i) the secret slit-gongs (see the wagan ceremony mentioned in Chapter 3);
- (ii) 'shamanic spirits';
- (iii) 'avenging spirits invoked in sorcery';
- (iv) 'mbwatnggowi (ceremonial dolls which are vaguely believed to be associated with fertility)'; and
- (v) 'mwai, long-nosed masks with which young men dance. These dances are junior analogues of the wagan slit-gong ceremonies performed by the senior men'. (Bateson 1958:233)

The list is notable for its similarities to and differences from the bullroarer and flute interpretations. Although each represents the interpretation of one society (or members of a closely related group), and it is not pretended that generalisations are possible, we can see in the variety of interpretations used local variations appropriate to the ethos of the people concerned: marine monsters for coastal people, menstrual blood where penile incision is practised and the

Iatmul long-nosed masks as providing a link with flutes through the significance of both as possible phallic symbols.

The importance of the secret slit-gongs among the Iatmul may be judged from the fact that the wagan is recognised as 'the most important type of spiritual being. Kava-mbuangga, the wagan who set his foot upon the mud and thereby created dry land, is a representative both of the living and of the dead' (Bateson 1958:233).

More important for our understanding of Iatmul conceptualisation is Bateson's affirmation of the secret existence of identity between these different manifestations. 'These different names of the wagan are many of them esoteric, and especially to be concealed is the fact of fundamental identity, which exists in spite of the differentiation between the various personifications' (Bateson 1958:233). How far this applies elsewhere can only be guessed. Of one thing we may be reasonably certain: whatever it is, the slit-gong is considerably more than a 'musical instrument'. To discover how, together with bullroarers and flutes, it came to be so, we turn to stories that attempt to explain their origin.

Chapter 5

The instrument as prototype: myths of origin

Bullroarers

Of fourteen myths from areas B, C and E that explain the origin of the bullroarer (as opposed to stories in which it already exists), all but two associate its first appearance with women. In one of the exceptions, from the Purari (E), the bullroarer is made by two 'wild men', though no account is given of how it came into existence (Williams 1936b:13). In the other, from the Elema, the father, Oalaia, of an eloping girl pursues her disguised as a monster that swallows children, including by mistake, his new grandson. When he is later killed, the bullroarer is found in his belly.¹ In an extended variant of this story, attributed specifically to the Namau-Ipi, Oalea (Oalaia) expires when a woman with divine powers, Oripeu, demands the return of the grandson. The girl of the original myth, the 'mother' of the bullroarer, determines to keep it for the benefit of women. Together with her sister, she puts on a mask and takes the bullroarer to frighten the men who, however, recognise them as women ('because only women swing their buttocks in that fashion when they dance') and seize the bullroarer. Oripeu approves of the men's action and puts a taboo on the women using the bullroarer from that time onwards (Holmes 1924: 189-91).

Two other Elema myths of origin specifically link the bullroarer with initiation.

- (i) The Sky Man, Hare (the Sun), makes models of a man and woman in sand and brings them to life. The couple mate and the woman gives birth to the bullroarer - a 'thing of mere bones, without flesh; and when it cried it made a noise like a bullroarer, not a baby'. Hare informs the couple that it is hevehe (the bullroarer, see Chapter 2). Later the

¹ Williams (1936b:13). If we assume a tenuous connection between earlier and later events of this story, it can mean only that the bullroarer and grandson are equated, in which case the bullroarer was 'born of woman'.

woman bears a kovave mask, an apa-hevehe (see Chapter 4), and finally a child who is initiated to these (Williams 1936b:12).

- (ii) An old woman, Orohahope, lives alone with her daughter on the beach at Pope. The waves cast up a dry coconut which takes root and grows. As the nuts ripen they fall, split open, and a number of boys emerge.¹ Orohahope and a man, Herevakore, who lives along the coast to the east, befriend them. Later the old woman goes down a hole in the ground to her 'other village' (unspecified) and returns with the bullroarer to which the boys are initiated with Herevakore acting as their maternal uncle (Williams 1936b:12-13).

So far, apart from the original association of bullroarers with women and their use in initiation, there is nothing in these somewhat prosaic (for Papua New Guinea) accounts to explain the symbolic interpretations given in the previous chapter. Another version of the Elema myth again associated bullroarers with initiation and was possibly intended to explain how the ceremony spread from one area to another. The Haive people, according to the story, lived in the middle Vailala River with three bullroarers named Aihepo, Hurava and Evoa as their leaders. These take the people on a migration to Muru, burrowing underground. A Muru hunter, seeing the ground churned up, seizes the 'tails' (the strings) and pulls the bullroarer men to the surface. They live with him at Muru and teach him how to initiate people (Williams 1936b:12).

In what, from the recurrence of similar themes, may be two variants of the same myth, one leads to a minor, peripheral conclusion; the other introduces the idea of male monopoly. The first has the bullroarer as a man who sleeps in the eravo (cult house) and calls out in a bullroarer voice. Seen by a woman who enters the eravo in search of fire, he is only appeased when she was offered for him to eat. In retaliation the woman's husband burns the eravo and the spirit of the bullroarer man flies into a pira tree from the wood of which present-day bullroarers are made (Williams 1936b:13-14). In the second, the bullroarer was originally a crocodile that made the bullroarer noise. (Neither story gives the actual

¹ The bursting open of some vessel and subsequent emergence are common themes of Melanesian myth. See Poignant (1967).

origin.) One day it enters the eravo but is found by a woman in search of fire. In consequence it leaves the eravo but is subsequently caught and killed, and its entrails thrown away. 'Two women subsequently came upon these entrails and found in them the bullroarer. The women found they could sound it and conspired to frighten and impose upon the men by means of it. But finally the men took it from them and thereafter it became a secret known only to males' (Williams 1936b:14).

Similar themes in which the bullroarer is first associated with a woman but later becomes the man's prerogative are found in such widely separated areas as the Ngaing (B) the Huon Gulf Busama (C), the Kiwai (E) and the Keraki Papuans (E). The Ngaing relate how the bullroarer was created by the deity Gab'me of Yakierak and placed in the net bag of an old woman. She tried various ways of whirling it but always failed. Later Gab'me taught her grandson the secret in a dream (Lawrence 1965:205). The Busama tell how a woman, chopping firewood, strikes off a chip which flies into the air with a whirring sound. Intrigued, the woman bores a hole in one end and strings it. Her husband borrows it to show his friends at the club house who, having difficulty in keeping the women out of the club, see the bullroarer as a means of keeping their cult secret from the women. They decide on the story that the bullroarer is the voice of a spirit which the women must not see on penalty of death. Unfortunately, one woman already knows and she will, therefore, 'laugh at them'. The only means of keeping the secret is thus to kill the woman. The husband reluctantly agrees, the woman is speared to death and her remains buried, while the women are informed that she has been eaten by an ogre. From this time onwards the cult becomes an exclusively male secret (Bodrogi 1961: 72-73; Hogbin 1951:214-15).

The Kai (C) myth (as given by Keysser) begins similarly:

A woman of the Laugube district - barely an hour's walking distance south of Sattelberg - was chopping firewood. A flat stick sprang up and flew whirring through the air. The woman told this discovery to her brother, who decided to use it in practice. A huge Pig Feast would be the reward, which the men would enjoy at the women's expense. The only thing that stood in the man's way was his sister's knowledge of the secret. He told her what he had in mind and she unselfishly advised her brother to kill her so that the secret of the men would be kept. Although this request shocked her brother, so great was his egotism

that he followed the advice of his wise sister, who lost her life as a result. (Keysser 1911:34)

Two differences are apparent: (i) the woman is the man's sister, and not his wife and (ii) she offers herself as a sacrificial victim for the benefit of the men.

The Tami (C) have two versions. On the mainland they relate how, on Boang Island (in the Huon Gulf), a woman chopping firewood sent up a splinter with a whirring sound. She repeats this, then takes the splinter home and shows it to her husband as a joke. He in turn shows it to the men who, to keep it secret, agree to put a spell on the woman so that she dies and to provide him with a new wife. Thus it becomes the men's secret. On Tami itself the story begins with a woman looking for firewood among floating driftwood. She finds a small piece with a string attached. She swings this and produces the bullroarer sound, takes it home to her husband - and the story proceeds as in the first version (Bamler 1911:495). Bamler adds that the story has been modified to suit Tami practice, is only about 150 years old, and that the kani cult did not originate in Boang (as might be implied from the first myth) but came from much further afield.

The Bukawa myth is almost identical. A woman is chopping firewood when a piece shoots off and makes a sound. Her husband tries to imitate the sound by attaching a piece of string to the wood. He then talks to the other men and agrees to kill the woman on condition that they provide him with a new wife. The use of the bullroarer thus becomes a male monopoly (Lehner 1911:414).

Although the Kiwai (E) myth begins in a similar way, with an old woman chopping firewood, it is linked more directly with the yam-planting ceremony. The woman tells her husband who anticipates that this strange object will appear to her in a dream. It does so, reveals its name, gives instructions for stringing and whirling, and recites the actions necessary to make yams grow. (These follow the details of the practice outlined in Chapter 3). Next morning the couple hide in the bush to prepare the bullroarer which, when swung, frightens the Boigu people. Women and children are then sent away so that the men can be informed of the secret and henceforth bullroarers are used for this purpose.¹

¹ Landtman (1927:82). Riley's version (1925:201-2) differs slightly in that it has two women collecting firewood, while

Photo: J. Kunst (1950)

Plate 10. A bullroarer decorated with feathers

Photo: J. Kunst (1950)

Plate 11. Bullroarers

The two versions of the Keraki (E) myth introduce yet a further theme - that of blood. In the Kwavaru version the Originator, Tiv'r, and his wife, Engu, are travelling west. Engu has a sexual malformation that makes proper intercourse impossible. Despite this, Tiv'r gets her to conceive. Engu becomes pregnant with the bullroarer so that when she moves it makes a sound. She, however, maintains that the noise is made by dogs, cockatooes, and so on. Tiv'r discovers where it is and orders his birds to seize it. (In one version a little lizard actually succeeds). Engu prevents them by sitting down. Kawara, the parrot, almost succeeds and draws blood - hence its red plumage. Finally a little bird, Serekate (?), snatches the bullroarer from her vagina as Engu is bending and the point protruding. She lies on her back screaming with the first menstrual blood, while Tiv'r hugs the bullroarer and declares that henceforth it will belong to men only (Williams 1936a:307-9).

The actual Keraki version follows similar lines but it is the Originator himself, Kambel, who puzzled by the sounds approaches his wife, Yuma, from behind and snatches it away. 'It is added that the original bullroarer obtained in this way was hairy'.¹

Finally, from outside the mainland and separated by distance and water, the North Bougainville (K) myth duplicates essential features of those found in the Huon Gulf. A woman finds the bullroarer while chopping firewood and demonstrates its powers to the other women, who proclaim it 'a good thing'. The exhibition is overheard by the men who, reaching a similar conclusion, obtain possession by killing all the women 'except some very tiny girls' and appropriating the instrument for use solely at the wapi ceremony (Blackwood 1935:216-17).

(Footnote 1 continued)

it is the man who dreams. The latter is instructed that bull-roarers are to be made in the men's house and not shown to women and children as they are sacred. As the woman tells her husband in both versions, no sex-conflict is involved. This is in keeping with the presence of an old woman at the yam-planting ceremony.

¹ Williams (1936a:309). Despite lack of supporting evidence, I am inclined to regard the description of the original bull-roarer as 'hairy' as a touch of humour rather than as possessing esoteric significance, a reminder in fact of Williams's assertion (1936b:36) that 'there is some fun about it'.

Structurally these myths embody a number of common themes as well as using matter found elsewhere in Melanesian mythology.

- (i) The origin of the bullroarer is associated with women: a woman gives birth to one, an old woman brings one from her other village, a woman discovers one while chopping or looking for firewood, the deity places one in an old woman's net bag, women find one in the entrails of a crocodile and the wife of the Originator becomes pregnant with one. Associated with this is the discovery of the bullroarer man (alternatively of the bullroarer-bearing crocodile) by a woman.
- (ii) Male-female relationships appear in four forms.
 - (a) Women try to deceive men: a girl elopes to escape her father, a woman lies to her husband that the bullroarer noise is made by dogs and so on, and sits down to prevent the male from snatching it, two women try to frighten the men.
 - (b) Men deceive women: by telling them that the woman they have killed has been eaten by an ogre.
 - (c) Inter-sex conflict: a woman's knowledge of the secret prevents the men from having a feast, the men have difficulty in keeping the women out of the cult house, they dislike the idea of women laughing at them, they kill the women who know to make sure their secret is safe.
 - (d) Inter-sex co-operation: the woman discoverer shows the object to her husband or brother.
- (iii) The myths lead to explanations of the following.
 - (a) Male monopoly. Men take the bullroarer from women, a husband borrows it from his wife to show to his friends, it becomes a male secret (eight examples), the method of whirling it is revealed to a woman's grandson.
 - (b) The introduction of initiation.
 - (c) The appearance of menstrual blood.
- (iv) As incidental themes we may note: the emergence of boys from a hollow object that splits, the

cannibalistic element in offering the bullroarer man a woman to eat, migration, the use of the cult house as a refuge and explanations of why a certain tree is used for making bullroarers or how the parrot got its red plumage.

Flutes

One of the more surprising facts about flute myths is that while the flutes are said to be birds or spirit voices in the tales used to deceive women, neither set of creatures appears in the stories of origin. However, examination of a number of myths shows that some themes found in bullroarer stories occur again, while additional themes are introduced.

The Wogeo (A) attribute the discovery of the flute to their culture hero, Nat Karamwang, who was himself the product of a miraculous birth. His mother died and was buried while pregnant with him. While yet an embryo he was nourished underground by the sap from the roots of a breadfruit tree. The flutes are actually invented by two culture heroines, Malaun and Sinamo, who dream the idea. The instruments begin playing of their own accord. The girls dance their fill, then stopper the holes and go off to their gardens. Nat Karamwang, who has heard the sound, finds the flute, removes the stopper and blows into the hole. The noise disturbs the women who return and explain that blowing is unnecessary, but Nat Karamwang kicks them out of the way.

'Very well, Nat Karamwang, you think you know everything!' they shouted in anger, 'but perhaps this will surprise you. Because you've stolen for yourself something we'd intended for everybody, no female will from now on look at a flute or have anything to do with one. You males can keep them. And listen! Flutes won't sing by themselves again - you decided to blow this one, and that's the way it shall be. We say to you also that learning what to do won't be easy - no, you'll have to work hard and sweat. A last warning - and this is the truth. If lads of your size don't make the effort to blow properly they'll never grow up to be men'. (Hogbin 1970:100-101)

In disgust Malaun and Sinamo leave Wogeo for the mainland but eventually return to the Schouten Islands - which is why bamboo suitable for making flutes can be found only in the places where they stayed (Hogbin 1970:101).

Despite obvious parallels with bullroarer stories - the flute is made by women but becomes the prerogative of men - new themes are introduced and there are important differences. Among new material are ideas of (i) the 'fall' - flutes originally played by themselves but now, thanks to man's mis-doing, have to be blown (in one sense this is the outcome of sex conflict); (ii) the need for hard work in order to acquire proficiency (see Chapter 3 for the application of this to Wogeo society); and (iii) the association of flute-playing with ideas of growth and fertility. As an incidental we are given an explanation of why bamboo suitable for flutes can now be found only in certain places. More important, in the field of sex relations, the mythical prototype is not seized by the men in order to deceive women. Instead, because of man's selfishness, it is rejected by women - 'You males can keep them' - and inflicted on men almost as a punishment. If the culture heroines do not actually say 'By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou blow it', their attitude is remarkably similar. Indeed, perhaps the most significant feature of the whole story is that the men, as purveyors of myth, are willing to repeat a tale that would appear to be so little to their credit.

It is less surprising that, when similar events occur elsewhere, incriminating circumstances are omitted or men justify their actions. Berndt reports briefly of the Kamano (D) and their neighbours' tales of how

Morufonu steals the first flute, the original prototype, from his wife who had made it; a man disguised as a woman deceives a number of young girls and steals their flute; two young men climb a greased slope to where two girls are playing their flute, persuade them to let them blow it, and one runs away with it. (R.M. Berndt 1865:82)

Lawrence (1965:205) reports similarly, with an attempt at justification, for the sacred gourd trumpets of the Ngaing (B). These were created by the deity Yabuling to worship the spirits of the dead. 'Women were the first to get hold of these trumpets and play them in a cult house, but they and their children defiled them with menstrual blood and excreta. They were supplanted by the men, who washed the trumpets and cleaned out the cult house'. Here the themes of blood and defilement are introduced, a point again emphasising sex conflict by directing attention to one of the major differences between men and women, a difference that we have seen,

though not as yet examined the significance of, re-enacted in men's initiation rites in which penile incision or blood-letting plays a major role.

A number of familiar themes, a further extension of male-female relations (but one encountered already in bullroarer myths) appears in the Sentani story (from Irian Jaya):

One day a man went to the bush with his wife to gather fruit. The man climbed up a high tree and threw the fruit down, and the woman put it into her net. Suddenly a big piece of fruit fell into a dry bamboo tree and cracked it open with a sharp sound. The frightened woman ran away, for she did not know what had made the noise. Out of the slit bamboo appeared a cassowary - making a buzzing sound. The man at once built a fence around the bird, ran into the village and told his friends what had happened. 'Now we have a way of frightening the women', they said. They began to cut pieces of bamboo and tried to draw a sound from them and finally discovered that by blowing across a stalk they could make a sound similar to the first cassowary. This was the first flute. (Sachs 1940:44-45)

By equating the cassowary with the phoenix as a 'symbol of re-birth', Sachs sees in this a fertility myth. Granted that this is a possible interpretation (the fertility theme recurs in one form or another), it may yet be more important as an explanation both of how the primordial flute came into existence and how its potential as a means of frightening the women was immediately recognised. That the men should find it necessary to frighten them and had to resort to 'supernatural' means to do so suggests further that, whatever the general characteristics of women in their dealings with men at the time, submissiveness was not one of them.

Poignant (1967:96) gives a summary of a second myth from Irian Jaya that follows a similar pattern. Twins (common hero figures of Melanesian myth) kill an ogre (the 'monster figure' whose dead body invariably produces something useful) and bamboo grows from his grave. Women hear the wind playing in the stems, that is, the bamboo makes music by itself, and make flutes from them. When their husbands hear the sound they kill the women and take the flutes for their secret society where, together with gongs, bullroarers and other

'distorting devices', they are used to produce the voices of monsters.

A story involving climbing a tree in search of fruit, the occurrence of an unusual sound and subsequent fright of the protagonist comes from Vanimo (A). It has, however, the essential difference that the frightened individual is a man, one Ihei, who climbs a breadfruit tree and cuts off a large branch. The branch 'cries out' as it falls and Ihei in fright runs away. He recovers sufficiently to return and collect his breadfruit; then thinking the cry 'supernatural', he seeks for the means of making a similar sound. After trying various insects, frogs, and so on (the method is not explained), he hits on bamboo and produces the very sound which so frightens him that he runs away again - and again returns. When the men of his village who have been out fishing return, he tells them to prepare a feast and offers them the flute. As the first flute was cut in the early morning (diwa), it comes to be known as diwana (Thomas 1941:185).

This version is unusual in its entirely male cast - it is even a man who discovers the first flute - and though the fearful properties of the instrument are recognised no less than the male monopoly, the emphasis is more on etymological explanation than on the use to which it is proposed to put the flute.

The Arapesh (A) version stresses supernatural origins of the flutes though the female element is not entirely absent. Some men hear marvellous music coming from a lake. One jumps in and follows a root to the underworld where an ancestress gives him the sacred flutes (and an hour-glass drum) with the warning that they are not to be played for two months. When the ghosts discover their loss, they haunt the outskirts of the village until they hear the music. Then they join in the festival and persuade the men to let them play. As soon as the ghosts have hold of the instruments they sink back into the ground with them and the men have no option but to begin carving new ones to the same design (Poignant 1967:96). If the men are 'persuaded' rather than 'deceived', the reference to a 'warning' (which is presumably heeded) suggests rather a mistake-followed-by-retribution pattern on the lines of the Wogeo story.

Bateson (1958:165) gives a tantalising reference to one Iatmul moiety's 'secret myth of the origin of flutes from a yam' but no account of the myth itself. Finally, Williams's account (1936a:309) of the Keraki story belongs to the realm of explanatory folklore rather than to myth proper. It contains none of the sex conflict or associated elements such as are found in the corresponding bullroarer tale. The sacred flute, ari, was originally the tail (semi) of the little wallaby, cherat, which squeaked as it jumped. Kambel, the Originator, caught the wallaby, cut off its tail and planted it so that it grew into the kajen bamboo. (See the Irian Jaya myth in which bamboo grows from the ogre's grave.) In the men's secret language the bamboo is known as cherat semi - wallaby tail. This explains both why flutes are made only from this particular bamboo and why men hop about like wallabies when playing the ari.

The slit-gong

In keeping with its general position in relation to the other instruments, the slit-gong is the subject of stories rather than myths of origin. Only three brief accounts of its creation have come to our notice. The Ngaing (B) believe the gong to have been formed when two brothers felled a tree which took wing and flew to another part of the country. When it fell to earth different sections were used for making slit-gongs, hand-drums and wooden bowls. The two brothers, whose names are not given, are regarded as joint deities of the slit-gong (Lawrence 1965:204). The Lakalai (Nakanai) of New Britain (H) maintain that the first slit-gong was made by Tulagela, 'dog' or 'orphan' who plays a 'Cinderella' role in encounters with the trickster-bufoon, Big Wallaby (Valentine 1965:184). In North Bougainville, however, it is the bird Gugurio who teaches the people how to make slit-gongs from a hollow tree through which the wind blows while 'leaves beat against the edge of the hole'. The importance of the instrument is sanctioned by myth in that Gugurio instructs the villagers to place it only in front of the house of a tsunaum ('big-man') and to use it only on special occasions (Blackwood 1935:406). Apart from the inevitable divine origin, the myths are notable for their dissimilarity to other myths of origin. This becomes even more pronounced when we consider the close correspondence between Huon Gulf and Bougainville bullroarer myths.

Plate 12. A man from the East Sepik District making a short flute at the Creative Arts Centre compound

Plate 13. A man from the East Sepik District making a long flute at the Creative Arts Centre compound

Photo: Creative Arts Centre of Papua New Guinea

Photo: Creative Arts Centre of Papua New Guinea

A Wogeo (A) slit-gong story is used to account for the origin of other ethnic groups and embodies the 'split-vessel' theme. An aged hero, sitting in a cane chair, has his testes hanging through the interstices. As a joke, a group of youths, whom he has asked to get fire for him, set an ant to bite them. In retaliation the old man recites a spell that causes the boys to shrink in size and drives them into the slit of a gong, which is cast into the sea. The gong floats to mainland New Guinea where it is smashed by a man with an axe and the boys emerge to found new groups. This enables the Wogeo to consider themselves the fons et origo of other peoples (Hogbin 1970: 32).

Burridge relates in detail two Tangu (B) slit-gong stories (referred to at the end of Chapter 4), the first of which stresses the supernatural powers of the primordial gong and their loss through man's stupidity so that 'man now has to labour to make a slit-gong and to cause it to speak for him' (Burridge 1965:245), while the second introduces sex conflict and gives a more prosaic account of the methods of manufacture and concomitant relationships and procedures.

- (i) While sitting in the village with his father, a boy decides to have a coconut and climbs a tree for this purpose. (This repetition of the 'food-seeking-tree-climbing' theme places the story in the same category as the Vanimö (A) and Sentani tales leading to the discovery of the flute.) He hears the sound of a 'pig' in the bush and fetches his father who hurls his spear, but there is no cry of pain. The father discovers that it is not a pig but a slit-gong (Mnguna). During the night there is a storm and earthquake (signs of supernatural displeasure at the man's actions); his dwelling collapses and the slit-gong is washed down the valley and cast up on the rocks of a stream. The next night the gong asks the man in a dream why he wanted to kill it, proclaims its power and demands that he make a feast with the villagers. The man prepares food but it is insufficient (his second and more deliberate error) so that more storms and floods follow. The slit-gong stays where it is for the men are afraid of the floods. Now men have to make their own slit-gongs, which 'do not understand what is happening

to them. But the first mnguna, the one in the stream, does. And it is this first mnguna which today gives all mngunas the power of making themselves understood' (Burridge 1959:144).

- (ii) Long ago there were no slit-gongs. Instead, men used jew's harps which they played while their wives were absent in the bush. A curious wife eventually finds her husband's and in trying to play it breaks it. In the forest her husband hears the sound and returns to demand why his wife has broken his 'mnguna', meaning his slit-gong (the normal term for a jew's harp being waminga). He returns to the forest and makes a new mnguna, (slit-gong), not a jew's harp, according to the normal methods of manufacture, then calls on his wife's brothers to haul it home (see Chapter 1) and prepares the appropriate feast. Finally, he drops the broken jew's harp into the slit and shows the gong how to speak (Burridge 1959:145-46).

Human frailty (the man's failure to provide an adequate feast in the first story, the woman's curiosity in the second) and the double theme of pigs and feasting (the gong is mistaken for a pig and a feast demanded in atonement, the new gong is welcomed with a feast for which a pig might be sacrificed) link the two stories though the supernatural element found in the first is absent in the second and the possible symbolic copulation of jew's harp and slit-gong is obscure when we recall that the former is broken, unless we are to assume that its powers - and association with men - now pass to the slit-gong.

On the assumption that myths both reflect and provide justification for community attitudes, we may conclude from the data available that slit-gongs, while accorded less respect than bullroarers or sacred flutes, nevertheless are credited as belonging to the realm of ritual rather than to that of everyday intercourse. As we have already suggested, the very size of the instrument means that, apart from those stored permanently in the cult house, it cannot as a physical object be a hidden mystery as can the bullroarer or flute. Despite this, it remains a source of hidden power and though it may speak for humans no less than appear as the voice of monsters or spirits, it retains something of supernatural authority in its statements.

Chapter 6

The instrument and male-female relations

We have examined our instruments as physical objects, investigated their use particularly in connection with initiation and other ceremonial occasions, discussed the symbolism and interpretations placed on them by the peoples themselves and by tracing stories of instruments through myths of origin and others, discovered a number of dominant themes that reflect social attitudes, particularly male-female relations. Before attempting a final synthesis by deeper examination of sex conflict, it may be useful to note briefly significant features of societies in which the instruments either do not occur or are not used within a ceremonial context. As noted in Chapter 1 these areas are the highlands west of Mount Hagen (F) and eastern Papua (G).

Allen (1967:38-9) sums up the situation for the highland peoples as follows:

The principal ceremonies, other than the usual pig exchange festivals, take the form of sacrificial rites performed in order to maintain and increase the health and prosperity of the community rather than to deceive and subjugate the women. The sacred cult objects that the novices see during their initiation are fertility stones thought to be the repositories of ancestral and other spirits. Unlike the flutes of the east, these stones, at least among the Mbowamb, Kyaka, Mendi and Huli, represent both male and female spirits. Though the women are excluded from direct participation in the rites, the men consider it necessary to provide a symbolic representation of the female principle¹.

¹ Allen's hypothesis, though ingenious, does not account for some of the additional data produced in this paper. The Tami account, for instance, in which flutes appear as 'wives' of the bullroarer (Bamler 1911:501), the Bukawa designation of a

In Allen's view (1967:38) this correlates with the fact that 'despite residential separation, the performance of secret male ritual, and the existence of numerous taboos surrounding menstruation, child birth and sexual intercourse, the relationship [between men and women] at least in ritual contexts, is one of interdependence rather than antagonism'. In short, the absence of esoteric instruments, together with their symbolic interpretation, is seen as a counterpart to the absence of overt male-female antagonism. While it would be illogical to maintain that the positive converse is, therefore, true, that is, the use of esoteric instruments is correlated with the existence of male-female hostility, at least the evidence does not contradict this hypothesis, as it would if either the instruments existed but were not associated with secret male ceremonies, or ceremonies at which 'a symbolic representation of the female principle' was considered necessary made use of what have hitherto appeared as exclusively male instruments.

The peoples of eastern Papua (F), whether patrilineal, such as the Koita, Mekeo, Roro, and Mafulu, or matrilineal like the Wamira, Wadau, Tubetube, Wagawaga and Rossel Islanders, are generally distinguished by an absence of initiation rites,

(Footnote 1 continued)

smaller servant bullroarer as 'wives' to the balum (Lehner 1911:412) and the application of the terms 'male' and 'female' to the longer and shorter flutes of a pair by the Kwoma, Wogeo, Murik and their neighbours, and Orokaiva (see section on flutes, Chapter 1), or the converse designation of the Bundi (Lehner 1911:412), may also be construed as embodying a 'symbolic representation of the female principle'. Tuzin's argument (see p.33n) that the presence of 'male', 'female' and 'pig flutes' in the Meingapo ensemble, when considered in the 'light of the general fertility symbolism' suggests that the performance should be regarded as a 'symbolic enactment of the creative process' seems to me a more tenable hypothesis, at least for the people concerned. More important, perhaps is his concluding correlation of performance structure and social structure, by which the 'structural involutions' of flute performances 'exemplify the entire dual organisation in the village'. My own studies of musical performance among the Karimojong of northeastern Uganda (Courlay nd) point to a similar conclusion and while it is too early to generalise from two disparate examples, it is to be hoped that further investigation of this hypothesis in other societies may lead eventually to the establishment of socio-musical universals.

secret sound-producing instruments and pronounced male-female hostility. The male cult is not entirely absent but its orientation differs from that found elsewhere. Mailu boys are initiated into a cult based on war and during their seclusion introduced to a newly captured skull (Allen 1967:72). The Dobu, despite the absence of any reference by Fortune (1932) whose account is accepted by Allen, have an initiation ceremony likewise designed to produce warriors and novices are 'schooled' in such skills as catching a spear in flight¹. The Waima, a sub-group of the Roro, have a seclusion ceremony at which, under possible influence of the Elema to the west, the older men show youths how 'to make armbands and dancing ornaments' and masks (Seligman 1910:260,262). Although ceremonial dances form an essential part of the seclusion and the shape of dance boards suggests further Elema influence, (Seligman 1910:244,263-64), no instruments are mentioned. The essential feature of all these activities from the present viewpoint is the absence of secret sound-producing instruments. Even when such instruments are reported to exist, for example, the bullroarer among the Awalama and Taupota, the sole occasion for its use, as noted in Chapter 1, has no connection with the male cult (Seligman 1910:592). Allen explains its absence in patrilineal societies as due on the one hand to a 'high incidence of intra-village marriage' and on the other to a 'highly developed system of hereditary office and clan-ranking' (Allen 1967:75-6); in short, there is a difference of emphasis while in matrilineal societies, such as the Trobriand Islanders, a 'fixed hierarchy of rank' exists alongside a sex relationship 'characterised by intimacy and lack of restraint' (Allen 1967:83).

Before considering the 'positive' role of esoteric instruments in male-female relations it may be useful to turn to a somewhat neglected aspect of our subject. Throughout this study, especially in Chapter 3 (Other Uses), it has become apparent that the instruments under investigation are not restricted to the male cult. Moreover, analysis of symbolism and myth has revealed additional features not directly

¹ David Duigu, personal communication.

associated with initiatory practices. At first sight the data suggest a multiplicity of applications - yam-planting ceremonies, work activity, the launching of a new canoe or the maintenance of a big-man's authority. Closer inspection reveals the existence of certain dominant themes whose occurrence in a particular area is determined by local factors, such as yam-planting where the climate is suitable and pig-rearing in other places. Foremost among these themes are the three F's: food, feasting and fertility.

(i) Bullroarers. The Elema bullroarer is said to call hungrily for food on being 'woken up' (Williams 1936b:18ff), Kiwai bullroarers are associated with the yam-planting and turtle ceremonies (Landtman 1927:76-77; 399ff), Keraki women are told that the bullroarer sounds are made by human beings demanding food, while their major moiank are offered food (Williams 1936a:184,205). In the Huon Gulf area the headman sounds a bullroarer to place a taboo on certain foods prior to feasting (Hogbin 1951:215) and Kamano bullroarers are whirled during the preparations for a pig-feast (R.M.Berndt 1965:89). The Elema myth of the bullroarer men who churned up the ground while travelling beneath it but were caught by a hunter may represent a change from a hunting to an agricultural economy (Williams 1936a:184). On Tami one object of the kani cult is to make the initiates 'capable of producing offspring' (Keysser 1911:496), while Lehner cynically sums up (1911:418) the entire balum cult of the Bukawa as 'an excuse to eat plenty of pig meat and to lie to the women about it'.

(ii) Flutes. Wogeo flutes are used to summon spirit monsters before a food distribution or the inter-district warabwa festivals (Hogbin 1970:58); the Ngaing use sacred trumpets at harvest feasts and at the Kabu festival (Lawrence 1964:18; 1965:211-12); the Siane play flutes at first fruits ceremonies and during initiation place 'spirit food' in the 'mouths' of the 'birds' (Salisbury 1965:64,67). The idea of 'feeding the flutes' is also found among the Gururumba and Mundugumor;¹ Kuma women are told that the 'birds' drink the pigs' blood (Reay 1959:170); the Kamano and Gururumba use flutes in ceremonies to ensure pig-growth,² while the Wogeo myth stresses the need for men to blow their flutes if they wish to grow (Hogbin 1970:101). Flutes play an important role at pig-feasting among the

¹ See Newman (1964:268-69) and Mead (1935:213).

² See R.M. Berndt (1965:86); Newman (1965:67-68,75).

Kuman, Gahuku-Gama, Kuma, Siane, Nondugl, Gururumba and Gimi,¹ and are directly associated with fertility in the Gahuku-Gama fertility rite (Read 1952:10) and the Sentani cassowary myth of origin (Sachs 1940:44-45).

(iii) Slit-gongs. The food-seeking-tree-climbing theme occurs in the first Tangu story (in which a slit-gong also demands a feast) (Burridge 1959:144-45), while the Iatmul term wagan refers both to slit-gongs and to 'ceremonial dolls vaguely associated with fertility' (Bateson 1958:233).

The significant feature here may be less the variations between societies than the wide distribution of the food-feasting-fertility theme. Examples occur in all areas and suggest a general recognition of the association between one or other esoteric instrument and the theme in one form or another. Linked with the procurement of food and physical well-being are supplementary applications of this principle. The Vanimo, for example, use flutes both at food harvests and on extensive hunts (Thomas 1941:185), the Ngaing use the bullroarer as a powerful magic aid for hunting (Lawrence 1964: 17-18) and the Wogeo to ease the work-load (Hogbin 1970:50), a service performed for the Iatmul by the sacred slit-gongs (Bateson 1958:167). In this category of activities may also be placed the Kiwai use of the bullroarer to 'wake up' a canoe, as the major associated activity is fishing (Landtman 1927:211).

More controversial is the relationship between esoteric instruments and ancestors. While Holmes (1924:82) maintains that the Moripi associate bullroarers with ancestors, Williams (1936a:192-93) is adamant that Elema bullroarers are not equated with them; even where evidence of this association exists, it is more indefinite 'spirits of the dead' than with particular clan ancestors. The word balum, used of the Huon Gulf bullroarer, means also the soul of a dead ancestor (Lehner 1911:402-3), while the Gahuku-Gama provide a link between themes in that their fertility rite is associated with 'our ancestor', that is, the 'spirits of the dead' (Read 1952: 17). The reference here is less to an ancestor as such than to some generalised 'benevolent power' (Read 1952:8), in the same way as the Kuman flutes embody a guardian of the family,

¹ See Nilles (1950:21), Read (1952:18ff), Reay (1959:141), Salisbury (1965:67ff), Luzbetak (1954:72-73), and Glick (1972: 21-22).

men and pigs (Nilles 1950:46). Iatmul flutes which are at times described as 'ancestors' are also played at the mints-hanngu feast in honour of an individual who has just died (Bateson 1958:45,57).

On another level the bullroarer appears as the symbol of authority. In the Huon Gulf area a messenger carries one as proof of his official status (Hogbin 1951:215); at the balum peace festival bullroarers are exchanged between groups to authenticate friendship and warfare or quarrelling banned for the entire period (Bodrogi 1961:73), and among the Elema bullroarers are used by the bukari ('big men') to ensure 'law and order' (Williams 1936b:41). In this respect it is impossible to separate the 'authoritarian' aspect of the bullroarer from the fear it inspires as an object of magical potency. Similar ideas underlie the Iatmul wagan ceremony - as long as the secret slit-gongs are sounded there must be no quarrelling, shouting or noise of any kind (Bateson 1958:137). Among the Siane, flutes placed in the laps of novices initiated together promote 'flute-group' loyalties and thus help to cement intra-group solidarity, while the Arapesh use them, as the bullroarer is used elsewhere, to settle disputes.¹

Perhaps the most significant feature of this list is less the different purposes for which instruments are used than the fact that they are used at all. Every occasion on which they make their 'appearance' is a potential risk that the secrecy surrounding them will be broken, as it does happen on such occasions as the Kiwai yam-planting ceremony. (How 'secret' the 'secrecy' is elsewhere is considered later.)

A second feature is the number of occasions on which the instruments are used outside an initiatory context. With the attention of anthropologists centred on the male cult, it is surprising, even with the limited data available, to discover esoteric instruments used on so many other occasions. From the examples given it seems reasonable to assume that, were data available, similar practices would be encountered elsewhere.

Is it possible to detect any feature common to these activities? The obvious answer - social welfare - is a vague generalisation until it is either interpreted in terms of specific purposes or contrasted with its opposites. Nowhere,

¹ See Salisbury (1965:71) and Mead (1935:26).

except perhaps in the Elema bukari's use (or misuse) of the bullroarer to maintain his authority, are the instruments used to benefit the individual qua individual. The themes of food, feasting and fertility concern matters of everyday benefit to the group as a whole; when ancestors or benevolent spirits are invoked, it is to promote overall social well-being, as is the use of instruments to maintain peace between groups or to foster intra-group loyalties. That Wogeo and Tangu myths introduce the theme of 'the Fall' so that flutes (Hogbin 1970:100-1) and slit-gongs (Burridge 1959:144) respectively no longer speak for themselves but have to be played by men may indicate that reality now falls short of the ideal. Were it not so, there would be no need for ceremonies - or their associated instruments.

Stated thus, the point that instruments are used for the benefit of the entire community would appear so obvious as hardly to be worth stressing, were it not for the final aspect of our study: male-female relations. Previous explanations which stress the role of esoteric instruments in maintaining male dominance, as typified in their use at ceremonies of the male cult, should be viewed against this background. If instruments are interpreted solely in terms of male dominance, they would appear to be ambivalent in function, operating on some occasions on behalf of the whole group, but for the benefit of part of it on others. While this is not in itself sufficient grounds for dismissing the 'narrower' interpretation - few human societies (if any) are characterised by logical consistency in behaviour or attitude - it does at least provide grounds for possible reassessment of earlier conclusions. The fact that, outside the male cult, instruments are used for the benefit of the community as a whole should be kept constantly in mind in reading the concluding stages of this study.

In turning to consider the 'positive' aspect of male-female relationships, I propose to develop the previous themes of deception and inter-sex hostility as associated with the use of instruments and the interpretations placed on them rather than attempt to investigate the entire field of inter-sex relationships and social organisation. In doing so it will be necessary to recapitulate a number of examples considered previously in isolation (as we have just done for examples outside the male cult in the field of instrument use) so as to bring out their significance in relation to other factors.

The most obvious characteristic of all three instruments as used in a ceremonial context is the secrecy surrounding their usage. Not without reason are they referred to as 'secret sound-producing instruments'. Arising from this are such questions as which groups are privy to the secret and which are not? What sanctions are involved in the maintenance of secrecy? Why is it necessary for the instruments to be secret? What social function is served by this phenomenon? How secret are the instruments in reality? And why are bull-roarers, flutes and slit-gongs rather than other instruments selected for this purpose?

The answers to the first two questions have already been given. For the majority of societies for which data are available the accepted view is that only initiated males are privy to the secret, while the most severe penalty for any woman who discovers it is immediate death. To speak of 'the accepted view' is, however, unsatisfactory without stating who accepts it. The answer, on the surface at least, is that it is accepted by both the men and women concerned and by the anthropological investigator.

To give but a few examples from different parts of the country: Marind women, we are told, are kept from the sosom bullroarer under threat of death (Haddon 1936:XXVI); Keraki women dare not pry into the secrets of the bullroarer as the sight of it means immediate death (Williams 1936a:184); in the Huon Gulf area there are general prohibitions on women (Detzner 1920:190-91); among the Toaripi (Chalmers 1897:329) and the Bukawa, women are not allowed to be in the village while it is sounded at initiation and if found there will die through supernatural means, while Busama women and children, having been told that the bullroarer is the voice of an enormous crocodile, have to hide on hearing it, 'reputedly on pain of death';¹ the Kiwai impose restrictions on women and uninitiated young men; in West New Britain the bullroarer is forbidden to women and is a 'taboo instrument' among the Sulka;² the Baining use it at initiation to scare women, as do the Buka - 'in the old days, if a woman accidentally caught sight of one, she was immediately put to death'.³

¹ See Lehner (1911:405-6) and Hogbin (1951:214).

² See Parkinson (1907:569) and Finsch (1914:544).

³ See Laufer (1959:910); Parkinson (1907:585); and Blackwood (1935:217).

Sacred flutes are forbidden to women among the Murik, Kaup and Kerau, the Monumbo, the Banaro and the Gimi, in the Wahgi Valley and along the Sepik River;¹ the Siane 'monstrous birds' would kill the woman if seen (Salisbury 1965:60); Kamano uninitiated youths and women are forbidden to look during the playing of flutes before a pig feast under threat of death (R.M. Berndt 1965:39); the penalty 'in former days' for Gahuku-Gama women who saw the flutes was immediate death at the hands of the men (as was that for Kuman women who saw the associated practice of blood-letting);² and only initiated Manam Island men could see the flutes, a woman who did so would die (Allen 1967:65).

For those to whom the secrets have been revealed, emphasis is on maintaining the deception. Young Keraki initiates are told that they must keep the bullroarer secrets to themselves, the penalty for betrayal being allegedly 'execution at the hands of his fellows' (Williams 1936a:184); at the conclusion of their initiation boys in the Huon Gulf are warned not to reveal the secrets to women or the uninitiated (Bodrogi 1961:41); and Kwoma boys are told that the flutes must never be seen by women (Whiting and Reed 1938:194).

Structurally, whatever the instrument, the procedures appear to be the same; the secret sound-producing instruments are a monopoly of initiated males, women are forbidden to see them under some form of penalty and precautions are taken to ensure that the newly-initiated do not reveal their recently acquired knowledge. Even in the above list, however, there are differences. In the first place, the most extreme situation, that in which a woman would be killed if she sees the flutes even inadvertently, differs from that in which the penalty is inflicted as the result of deliberate prying. Secondly, while in some instances the men are the alleged agents of destruction, in others this would appear to be due to supernatural or unspecified action. Thirdly, the penalty, whether for women or the newly initiated, is often qualified by 'alleged' or 'in former times' and, without doubting the accuracy of anthropological reports or assuming an unduly sceptical attitude, it is perhaps not without significance that, whatever the insistence on the fate in store, available

¹ See P.J. Schmidt (1923-24:707-8); Reche (1913:426); Vormann (1911:419,426); Thurnwald (1916:261); Glick (1972:821-2); Schaefer (1938:401-3); and Behrmann (1922:221).

² See Read (1952:5-6); Nilles (1950:30).

data contain only one example of a woman suffering the ultimate penalty - and of this there is no eye-witness account, only a report by the men.¹ We may note also that, among the Arapesh and Abelam, although women and children retire to the bush upon hearing the 'voices of spirits' from the men's club, the men do not attempt to terrify the women and, if one discovers the secrets, she is sworn to secrecy rather than killed (Allen 1967:59).

Maintenance of secrecy is linked closely with the men's deception of the women and uninitiated youths through explanations given about the mysterious sounds. Again there is an overall structural similarity in that the explanations invariably refer to some non-human but unpleasant and either directly or indirectly threatening power. Thus, to recapitulate, the sounds are attributed to spirits, spirit monsters or daimons (Marind, Huon Gulf, Wogeo, Elema, Orokaiva, Kwoma, Tchambuli) or monstrous birds (Siane, Kuma, Kuman, Gahuku-Gama), with variations that include snakes, crocodiles, cassowaries and even masked figures. If highland groups tend towards the 'bird' story, others choose an explanation more plausibly appropriate to their own area. Credibility, in short, depends on walking a tightrope between the mundanely familiar, which would fail to inspire fear, and the supernaturally over-imaginative, which would fail to inspire belief. Highlanders familiar with birds are presented with objects that are both birds and not birds; coastal peoples familiar with outlandish sea life are offered marine monsters. The element of credibility in the men's statements suggests that their intention is for the stories to be believed.

Nevertheless, one cannot avoid the question who is being deceived? Are the women really taken in by the explanations given? Or are the men themselves deceived when they state that the women accept their explanations? Is there, perhaps, not some mutual connivance without which the whole process would collapse?

¹ The incident is reported for the Sattelburg Kai when 'at the time of the last feast, one woman was so curious that she came close to the place and was quickly thrown into the pig pit and killed' (Keysser 1911:36); but see also later comments on the fate of Iatmul women who discover the secrets.

Before attempting to assess the evidence from the specifically male-female angle, it may be useful to recall the symbolism of myths and initiation ceremonies as illustrations of the mental attitudes and beliefs of the protagonists. To summarise our previous conclusions, following are the recurrent themes, particularly in myths of bullroarers and flutes which are relevant to this topic.

- (i) Female discovery of instruments gives way to male monopoly and secrecy.
- (ii) Deception - of men by women and vice versa.
- (iii) Inter-sex conflict: men cannot keep women 'in their place' and fear their ridicule.
- (iv) The origin of initiation and the male cult and emphasis on menstrual blood as subsidiary themes.

In many myths the themes are so interwoven that it is impossible to determine the dominant element. The Keraki bullroarer myth, for example, in which Kambel succeeds in extracting the bullroarer from his wife's vagina, embodies all three main themes and both subsidiary ones. The instrument originates with the female but passes to the male, though only after conflict between the two and deception on the part of both. The end product is initiation for men and menstruation for women (Williams 1936a:309). Elema myths again show women as originators, men as the final owners and provide a slightly different slant in sex relations as it is the women who begin by seeking to impose on the men (Williams 1936b:12-14). The Wogeo flute myth offers a further variant in that while the passage from female to male is repeated, the flute is rejected by women. It should be noted, however, that the flutes so acquired by men are inferior to the originals as they no longer play by themselves. The culture hero is the victor but he is himself deceived and saddled with a 'no blow-no grow' syndrome (Hogbin 1970:100-1). Since performance on the flute is necessary to ensure growth and fertility - like the man in the Ngaing slit-gong story whose stupidity results in men having to make the gongs speak for them where previously gongs spoke of their own accord.

If the functions of myth are to act as 'explanations' of why things are as they are and to inculcate 'appropriate' attitudes in the young and reinforce them in adults, then their occurrence is explicable in relation to social organisation with variants adapted to local conditions. In short, they may be interpreted less as symbolic general accounts of

how a primordial 'matriarchate' gave way to male dominance over the years than as an attempted justification of that dominance at the present time. The disturbing question is why, if men are so certain of their superiority, do they need to go to such lengths to justify it? The answer would appear to be that they are far from certain. The myths clearly indicate the 'superiority' of women as innovators, even if their 'inferiority' appears in the man's eventual ability to outwit them.

The argument is given a further dimension if we turn to the male cult itself. While initiation as a rite de passage aims at removal of the boy from female influence and his introduction into adult male society, emphasis on the two major features of the ceremony - revelation of secrets and blood-letting - varies from group to group. Both may be present but one stressed more than the other, or they may appear to be of equal importance; the revelation itself may form the central and only feature of the ceremony, or the role of instruments may be one of 'background music' to incision. Thus among the Keraki, Orokaiva or Kiwai the actual revelation is given prominence, while in contrast highland¹ and Sepik groups would appear to place as much, if not more, emphasis on blood-letting. The fact that some groups practise nose-bleeding, others penile incision and a third group scarification, matters less than the action of blood-letting common to all three and the interpretation placed on it. If the flute, as a possible phallic symbol, represents the male principle, the female is also present. This is made explicit in the Wogeo reference to tongue scarification as a 'first artificial menstruation' that corresponds to the natural menstruation of a girl (Hogbin 1970:114); in the accusation levelled at Kamano novices during their first nose-bleeding that they are menstruating (R.M. Berndt 1965:91); in the Kuman explanation that its purpose is 'to release bad blood' (Nilles 1950:16-17); and the previously mentioned examples all of which support the contention that both blood-letting and other activities are designed to rid the novice of impurities absorbed since childhood through close contact with women, especially the mother.

¹ Read's assertion (1952:13) that 'the secret of the flutes is the most important revelation given to the boys' does not necessarily contradict this; the most important revelation need not be the most important aspect of the ceremony. (One wonders, however, what other revelations - of lesser importance - the writer had in mind).

The men's attitude here is worth noting. Despite variations between groups it is less one of freeing the initiates from inferior qualities associated with females than from those which are dangerous in themselves or displeasing to supernatural powers. The Busama, for example, consider contact between the two sexes 'to be ritually dangerous and likely to lead to loss of virility' (Hogbin 1951:213); to the Kuman 'menstruation blood is regarded as highly infectious to men but not to women' (Nilles 1950:29); Keraki men must abstain from sexual intercourse before and after using the bullroarer, 'otherwise it can kill the wife or make the man ill' (Williams 1936a:183). The Arapesh and Abelam view that the spirits dislike menstruating women, women after childbirth and men after sexual intercourse is part of a wider 'mystical and conceptual opposition' that places spirits, yams, bullroarers, flutes, slit-gongs and penile incision on one side with men, and menstruation, childbirth and sexual intercourse on the other along with women (Allen 1967:59). A similar polarity appears among the Wogeo where Hogbin (1970:101) interprets the underlying theme of the male cult as 'the gulf, physical and social, between men and women. The people sum up the situation in the saying, "Men play flutes, women bear infants"'. This neat categorisation (of the situation as seen by the men) should not mislead us: a 'gulf', however wide, requires two sides and if Arapesh sexual intercourse is associated with women, it necessitates two partners of opposite sex and presumably operates in the same way for both the Arapesh and the Gahuku-Gama who hold the opposite view that even in procreation the woman is secondary. 'Without a man, it is said, a woman is nothing ... she is merely a receptacle for the man's semen' (Read 1952:14). The point to be stressed is that the male cult, whatever its theoretical justification, is in large part motivated by self-interest: men fear the danger of female contamination. As one is hardly likely to regard as dangerous something less powerful than oneself, the hypothesis that women are ultimately, if unconsciously, regarded as 'superior' to men cannot be dismissed as untenable. Before, however, speculating further in this direction (especially as 'unconsciously' can be used to beg all questions) it may be useful to investigate more closely both male and female attitudes towards each other and to the male cult and its associated instruments.

A minor aspect of the male attitude - the men's delight in hoaxing the women - may be dealt with briefly. The assumption that because anthropology is a serious subject,

its subject matter must likewise be serious may account for the paucity of data. On the one hand there is Williams's (1936b:36,38) assertion that the Elema bullroarer has 'some fun about it ... the younger men still enjoy hoaxing women and children ... above all they like to create the fearful noise of swinging the bull-roarer and to show off their skill in doing it'. However, to conclude that 'the recreational function is more important than any other' appears an unwarrantable extension of the original proposition. On the other hand, Hogbin (1951:215) comments that if the Busama myth (in which men kill the woman discoverer and see the bullroarer as a means of keeping the women in their place) gives the impression that 'hoaxing of the women was uppermost in the men's minds ... I am convinced that, although this aspect of the matter cannot be ignored, it would be a mistake to pay too much attention to it'. The two aspects are not entirely similar, although the word 'hoaxing' occurs in both passages. Williams's emphasis is more on the satisfaction men derive from what he (and they) regard as a monstrous practical joke, Hogbin's on the factor of deception in relation to the male cult. It would be futile to deny that the men 'get a kick' out of 'pulling the wool over the women's eyes', or at least out of the belief that they do, especially if relations between them are hostile.¹ Something of a similar sense of humour appears among the Siane men who select the moment when the women have 'misbehaved', that is, quarrelled to tell them that the 'birds' are angry and must

¹ In this connection we may note a further method by which the men of North Bougainville deliberately hoax women whose sons are being initiated. The women exchange covered baskets with the boys' sponsors under the impression that they are being given betel-nut but find 'to their consternation' that the baskets contain either a live opossum or a snake (Blackwood 1935:219). The incident is noteworthy in that (i) no sound-producing instruments are involved, and (ii) its success depends on the connivance of other women who have previously received similar treatment. One would like to know whether the women's reaction is genuine consternation, or if they have been forewarned by members of their sex already 'in the know'. If the latter, one wonders who is deceiving whom; if not, one cannot avoid concluding collaboration between mothers of initiated sons and the men against the mothers of the uninitiated. Either way, the facts would appear to upset alleged customary beliefs.

be appeased by pork, and helping themselves to the women's maize fob them off with the story that the 'birds' have stolen it. (Salisbury 1965:67,65). Likewise, one cannot doubt the sense of power derived from outstanding performance on the bullroarer, especially when one knows from childhood experience something of the effect it will produce. At the same time, one is aware that this cannot be the whole story. The sound of the bullroarer or flutes is only effective because of their associations within a particular context of social and ritual relations.

A crucial factor in evaluation of the hoaxing aspect is the attitude of the deceived upon discovering the truth of their deception. Hogbin's evidence is instructive. After the revelation of the flutes Wogeo boys express no disappointment or contempt for the elders who have deceived them but laugh at their earlier fears; 'clearly they were convinced that anything appertaining to the flutes must be taken very seriously indeed ... If hoax there was, then it was directed less at the young males than the female half of the population' (Hogbin 1970:113-14). The western revelation of the identity of Santa Claus, though lacking in anti-female sentiment, enables one to understand how the satisfaction of 'growing up' (sharing an adult secret, especially when an elder child is thus favoured against a younger and sworn to secrecy) more than overcomes disappointment on discovering the falseness of childish misconceptions and that the trusted parents have imposed a joint deception.

The hoaxing aspect is everywhere subordinate to more direct methods of satisfying male pride or contributing to male self-esteem. Though the means selected vary according to the pattern of male-female relations which is itself the product of social organisation, the net effect would appear to be the same. Arapesh and Abelam men may adopt a protective attitude towards their women and exclude them from ceremonies to keep from them a 'dangerous secret' the discovery of which would make the women ill and deform their unborn children (Mead 1935:15); Siane men may combine deception with alleged protectiveness in telling the women that the monstrous birds causing the sounds would kill them if they were not restrained by the men (Salisbury 1965:60); while the Busama express overt belief in inherent male superiority. 'The sexes were in substance different. Men ... were akin to the spirits and could at certain times acquire the same sanctity ... Women, on the contrary, were outside the

spirits' pale - they were essentially profane and could never attain sacredness' (Hogbin 1951:213). Whatever the difference in degree of approach, the basic purpose behind these activities is male self-enhancement and structurally, it matters little whether the man considers himself benevolently protective or by nature more akin to the sacred. Either way he convinces himself of his superiority to the woman.

The phrase 'convinces himself' is deliberate, as there is more than a suggestion that a man's insistence owes less to conviction than to the need to keep his 'pecker up'. If men really believed in their superiority, they would neither admit to fear of ridicule nor stress the element of danger. The first is supported both by Nilles's quotation (1950:30) from a Kuman old man; 'Should we show this flute to our women and children they would laugh at us and we men would lose all authority over them'; the second by his statement that 'the woman's sex as such is considered by men as dangerous' (Nilles 1950:29). Read stressed (1952:6,14) similar attitudes among the Gahuku-Gama where informants use almost the same words as those of the Kuman: "'Should they [the women] know [the secret of the flutes]", the men explain, "they would laugh at us" and later 'The female principle is in itself considered to be inimical to men'. Read assesses (1952:5) the implications of the first statement as 'more than male embarrassment ... for it is felt that the whole social structure of male superiority would be threatened by the ridicule'. Consequently, while men know that human agents produce the tunes and agree that the nama bird does not exist, they maintain that the whole story 'was invented for the express purpose of misleading the women and children'. The implications of Nilles's Kuman informant are even more direct. If the men would 'lose all authority' over women simply by showing them the flutes and being subject to the ensuing ridicule, then either the men's authority rests on infinitesimal grounds or their vanity is so extreme that the entire social structure can be toppled by a woman's laughter.

These examples are from highland flute cultures in which sex differentiation and its associated ideology appears at its most extreme. The source of the men's over-emphasis and subsequent deception may ultimately be traced to a belief in their own physical inferiority. In Read's explanation: (1952:14-15):

Men ... feel that women are not content with their role. They feel, indeed, that they need to maintain a constant

vigilance to preserve their superiority, and that women, given the opportunity, are prepared to challenge it ...

... They recognise, indeed, that in physiological endowment men are inferior to women... A girl's growing breasts and her first menstruation are signs of a maturing process which is without obvious parallel in the boy, a fact that the men resent...

The challenge of the physiological processes of growth and sexual maturity in women is met by men's initiation rites and, thereafter, by the practice of regular self-induced bleeding and magical acts.

The process is not limited to the Gahuku-Gama but is embodied in the very title of Hogbin's Wogeo study, The Island of Menstruating Men and in the previously mentioned practices of blood-letting elsewhere. The idea that men should envy women their physiological growth may appear strange to westerners who willingly accept the 'scientific myth' of Freudian penis-envy as justifying the doctrine of the 'weaker vessel'. Both Gahuku-Gama and western explanations, whatever their basis in fact (and the former at least requires no hypothetical subconscious to substantiate it) have the social function of contributing to male self-esteem. If blood-letting was restricted to initiation ceremonies, one might be inclined to limit the equating of it to a girl's initial menstruation. The fact that the process is carried out at intervals afterwards suggests an urge on the part of the men to make themselves as like women as possible. On the assumption that human beings model their behaviour on that which they regard as superior rather than inferior, the conclusion is obvious. Basically the men envy women the possession of a natural drainage system which enables women to rid themselves of their impurities in a way that men cannot. Only in this way can they overcome the paradox of expressing not only distaste but even considering dangerous a mode of behaviour which they then proceed to emulate. That the men can only perform artificially what women do naturally only increases their sense of insecurity.

Read's previously quoted statement that Gahuku-Gama men need to maintain constant vigilance to preserve their superiority over their women who 'given the opportunity, are prepared to challenge it' (my emphasis) requires further elaboration. The men presumably believe that, thanks to their perpetuation of the nama story and its acceptance by the

women, the women do not have such an opportunity. Were this not a true assessment of the situation, as the men see it, society must have collapsed before now or, to complete the circular argument, since society has not collapsed, this must be a true assessment of the situation. The fallacies of this argument are not only that it is circular but that it assumes that if the women are given the opportunity they will automatically 'challenge' the men's authority. One can do two things with an 'opportunity' - take it or leave it. The men's argument fails to admit the possibility that the women may have the opportunity but for reasons of their own do not take it. Whether this is so can be determined only by investigating the attitudes of women to the situation, in particular to the deception practised on them by the men in relation to the sounds made by bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs.

It is not surprising that, as Allen has shown (1967:71) where there is near equality of the sexes, as amongst the Ngaing, there should be less emphasis on deception than, for example, among the highland peoples. Ngaing women know about the instruments and play an essential part in the rites by dancing outside the cult house, which they inspect after the men have decorated it. More specifically, Ngaing girls are told during their ceremony associated with first menstruation that the sounds from the cult house are not the voices of spirits but of men playing on slit-gongs and trumpets (Lawrence 1965:212).

The example of the Iatmul is instructive if only because it forms something of a special case and there is greater availability of data. In the first place, like the Kuman and the Gahuku-Gama, Iatmul men fear 'the laughter of the women'. The application, however, is not the fear of ridicule at discovery of secrets so much as to the prospect of a 'technical blunder in the performance' of flute and slit-gong music which will lose them the admiration of the women (Bateson 1958:128). So overweening is the pride of the men that they cannot contemplate the prospect with equanimity, though whether the 'admiration' exists in reality or is merely assumed by the men as a deserved attribute is not clear. The situation shows (i) the more 'intimate' male-female relationships of Iatmul culture in that the spectacle is not kept secret from the women but, on the contrary, designed to impress them; (ii) the men's need to do something to deserve the women's admiration; and (iii) the men's desire to maintain their reputation at all costs.

Secondly, Iatmul reaction to the discovery of the secrets combines 'accepted' practice with a perverseness of behaviour that Bateson (1958:135;99ff) aptly calls 'cutting off their own noses to spite the other fellow's face'. In one of his examples a woman is discovered up a tree, spying on the flutes during initiation. She is chased (though, as it happens, not caught) but only by those men of that moiety who 'had just paid for the privilege of seeing the flutes' while men of the other moiety make angry gestures inside the ceremonial house. In short, the offence is regarded as peculiarly provocative only to a certain section of the men and not to males qua males.

In a second example a woman accidentally discovers a vertical flute in a young man's basket. Although neither sacred nor 'indigenous to Iatmul culture', these flutes are nevertheless kept from women in case they enable women to guess the nature of the secret sound-producing instruments. An elder scolds the woman for her action, reports the matter to his colleagues, and together they raid the young man's house and smash his wife's pots. Not content with this the men visit the junior ceremonial house and other dwellings, collect all the uninitiated boys they can find and show them everything, including the secret wagan slit-gongs (Bateson 1958:135-36). That this was no isolated incident may be judged from reports of an event that occurred fifty years previously. An initiatory group out collecting croton leaves for the climax of the wagan ceremony had the string bag containing the leaves accidentally pierced by a small boy's stalk of elephant grass with which he was practising spear-throwing. So great was the sacrilege that the men chased and speared the boy. If this were all, the event might be dismissed as in accordance with custom. Those who had taken part, however, 'perhaps feeling that they had gone too far' and thus 'impelled to humiliate themselves, to preserve their pride', take the sacred gongs from the ceremonial house, build a small screen round them on the dancing ground and not only show the gongs to the women but hand over the sacred gong sticks to them (Bateson 1958:137-38).

As a final example, we may consider the case where a woman is discovered playing secret pan-pipe tunes on a jew's harp. A senior man chases her and in doing so finds young men openly beating a suspended log, a 'junior analogue of the wagan slit-gongs'. Believing that 'a woman has exposed all our secrets', he summons the men who raid the woman's house and

break her pots. The woman's brothers come to her assistance and a general fight follows. Two points are of significance as 'being outside the expected pattern: (i) as in the first example, not all the men act together; fraternal loyalty would appear to be stronger than loyalty to the sex as a whole; (ii) when first discovered, the woman retorts: 'What, do you think I don't know the pan-pipe tunes! Mwaimali (her husband) taught me them!'.¹ Assuming she spoke the truth - and while it is evident that she knew the tunes, one can hardly assume that she deliberately wanted to make mischief for her husband - the incident both demonstrates the more intimate nature of Iatmul inter-sex relations, at least between husband and wife and makes one wonder just once again how 'secret' are the alleged male secrets.

Elsewhere Bateson (1935:169) reports that, although women who discover the secrets are 'nominally killed', 'in the few cases I have investigated they were either beaten and fined or put through the ceremony of initiation'. If this happens, 'they become as keen as the men on preserving the secrecy' and at once report to the men rumours that any other woman has been spying on the flutes.

The incident of the vertical flute introduces further complications, especially when the Iatmul attitude towards concealment is contrasted with that of the Gahuku-Gama and other highland peoples who also possess vertical flutes but make no effort to hide them. We thus have the following paradoxical situation: (i) a society (the Gahuku-Gama) in which male dominance is stressed permits women to see some flutes, (ii) a society (the Iatmul) in which there is greater sex equality and where, in some cases, 'it is definitely the wife who wears the trousers' (Bateson 1935:166), refuses to allow women to see any flutes. If, following Allen's main thesis (1967) that there is a direct correlation between the secrecy of initiatory ritual (and the associated instruments) and social structure as revealed in the pattern of male-

¹ Bateson (1958:65-66). Pan-pipes are not normally secret instruments and Bateson (1935:163) describes these as 'an ingenious instrument resembling pan-pipes', a row of three open-ended tubes (as opposed to the normal closed ends) which produce 'only a faint whispering note' and so enable secrecy to be maintained. The three notes are those 'used in flute duets so that a man can sit down alone and practise or extemporise new phrases for the flutes'.

Photo: Department of Information and Extension Services

Plate 14. A carved garamut, East Sepik District

Photo: R.J. May

Plate 15. Aseki people of the Morobe District playing the pan-pipes

female relationships, one would have predicted that the opposite would occur, meaning greater insistence on male dominance would be associated with the extension of secrecy to all instruments and vice versa. The situation is apparently more complex than a neatly formulated hypothesis which, whatever its basic truth, requires adjustment if it is to accommodate both types of situation.

Inadequate as are the data from elsewhere - most anthropologists are, after all, men - its cumulative impact produces a very different impression from the one which the men strive so assiduously to maintain. There is, for example, no absolute ban on women seeing the sacred objects, at least when not in action. Ngaing women are permitted to see the bullroarer as a piece of black palm without its rope, even if they are not allowed to see it whirled (Lawrence 1965: 205). Examples from other parts of the country suggest that there is less ignorance on the part of the women than connivance in the deception, a connivance which, in places, is even known to and accepted by the men. Thus Arapesh and Abelam women do not believe the story that the mysterious sounds are made by a cassowary (Allen 1967:59). Although Kwoma 'women and youths pretend to believe, they actually know that men are producing the sounds' (Whiting and Reed 1938:192). The Keraki have a tacit understanding between men and women that 'whatever she may really know' neither will 'let on' (Williams 1936a:184). Despite the remarks quoted previously, Nilles reports (1950:30,46) of the Kuman that 'whatever their social position may be, in practice the women exert considerable influence' while 'the old women do not believe this story [of a huge bird] any longer'. Blackwood describes the sounding of the bullroarer during preparations for a wapi ceremony in North Bougainville as 'all a part of the mystification of the women... who believe - or are supposed to believe - that it is [the urar-spirit's] voice which is heard' - the implication being that the women's attitude is not untinged with scepticism, while among the Bundi the sacred flutes are 'no absolute secret' from the women.¹ Of the Wogeo Hogbin (1970:72) writes: 'How far the females are really duped is difficult to assess... My impression is that they are aware of much that goes on, if not the whole of it, but prefer to let the men continue assuming their ignorance'. A less cautious assessment of the women's attitude is suggested by their activities at a girl's first menstruation - activities which the men, not entirely surprisingly, were not keen that the anthropologist should see

¹ See Blackwood (1935:216) and Holkter and Aufenanger (1940:59).

and consequently dismissed as of no importance. The women give 'lewd imitations of the lewa dances; some wives would cause laughter by simulating the gait, gestures and speech mannerisms of their husbands; and others, fastening a banana and coconuts to their skirt, would ridicule the male anatomy' (Hogbin 1970:131). Iatmul women also 'know that the flute music is produced by means of bamboo, but they do not flaunt their knowledge' (Bateson 1935:169). If they are not as overtly satirical as their Wogeo counterparts, their own dances, which the men likewise dismiss as 'very silly and not worth looking at', that is, they too do not wish the anthropologist to see them, reveal a similar attitude. Bateson found (1958:150) the women performing a dance which 'was obviously a representation of copulatory action' followed by one in which two women took up 'one of the standard positions for sexual intercourse' and 'went through the motions of copulation in time to the beat of the song' with much 'giggling' and in a 'jolly atmosphere'. It would appear that both Wogeo and Iatmul women could learn little from the proponents of 'Women's Lib.' especially when the attitude of the latter is more akin to that of Gahuku-Gama men! While Kuma men say that women believe that the flutes represent the voice of the great spirit, 'in practice they attach little importance to secrecy or deception' (Allen 1967:37). On the contrary, the evidence suggests that, ironically, it may be the women who attach more importance to maintaining the deception. Reay relates (1959:170) how, when in 1954-55 women from the eastern group learned the truth about the men's deception while visiting friends who now knew the secret, 'in the presence of their husband's group, they simulated belief', and Bateson adds (1935:163-64) that the Iatmul men's assertion that 'the whole male community will be shamed if the flutes are exposed' is 'only part of the truth'. When missionaries persuaded local trained acolytes to play the flutes openly before Iatmul women, it was evident 'that both sexes were utterly ashamed' (my emphasis). Allen summarises (1967:68) the Tchambuli situation as follows: 'The flutes, gongs and masks are all supposed to be male secrets, but the women know everything and the men know that they know. The women say they perpetuate the pretence of male secrecy so that the men will not be embarrassed and also to ensure their own enjoyment of the dances and masked dramas'.

Finally, we return to the Gahuku-Gama and ask whether the women there are 'given the opportunity' to know the men's secrets and challenge their authority and, more important, what they make of it. Read states (1952:8) that today 'most men agree that women know the secrets of the flutes' and

adds: 'I think it unlikely that the women were deceived in the past'. The men make no attempt to conceal the flutes when they are taken through the gardens and it would be easy to recognise the objects silhouetted against the sky lines of the ridges and associate them with the non-secret vertical flutes which are also made from bamboo. Read's explanation (1952:8) is in terms of social function: 'In short, women know that the explanation devised by the men is designed to mislead them; yet they respect the secret ... The element of deceit has a functional significance ... in a culture which places an extreme emphasis on the differential importance of men'. If this is so, what are we to make of the previously quoted assertion that the men 'need to maintain a constant vigilance to preserve their superiority, and that women, given the opportunity, are prepared to challenge it' (Read 1952:14). We suggested earlier that the men's argument failed because it refused to admit that the women might have the opportunity but did not take it. We could have gone on to suggest that the men's refusal to admit this possibility was due to the prospect of an ultimate wound to their self-esteem. To foist off the nama story onto the women doubtless gives the superior satisfaction of believing that the women are deceived. To continue maintaining the belief if some women discovered the secret and attempted to use it against the men would likewise cause the males to close ranks and convince them of the need for even greater vigilance. But to discover that the women knew and yet chose to do nothing about it could imply only either indifference or contempt on the women's part which, in the extremist interpretations of Gahuku-Gama society, would make the men appear like little boys who had to be humoured by the women pretending to accept their make-believe. Such a situation would be a final blow to the men's pride and, therefore, one not only to be avoided at all costs but even inadmissible in argument. Yet this is precisely what happens. The women know the men's secrets but pretend not to know in order not to damage the men's self-esteem. The men not only know that the women know and are pretending but themselves pretend that the women do not know but actually believe the stories which they themselves admit are pretence. I venture to suggest that this system of mutual connivance which exists among the Gahuku-Gama, in which sex-differentiation appears at its most extreme, is found elsewhere with emphasis now on one aspect, now on another, in accordance with the male-female ethos and social relations of the particular society. The system works, and will continue to work, in the first place, because it is accepted by and acceptable to all and, secondly, because it has at its disposal the necessary machinery to make it work.

If the women wanted to, they could wreck it - as could the men. The point is that neither party wishes to disturb the status quo. If it allows the men of one group to think they are superior to their women and those of another to appear on terms of greater equality, so much the better. No one, apart from missionaries, has any interest in disturbing existing arrangements. There is a story from the Gahuku-Gama area of an over zealous evangelist who, to demonstrate that there was nothing to fear from these pagan objects, exhibited a pair of sacred flutes to his congregation whereupon all the women fled. The irony is that the only person deceived during this incident was probably the missionary himself!

The argument has brought us back to the central subject of our enquiry - the esoteric instruments of Papua New Guinea. At the risk of over-generalisation I would be prepared to argue that, except for some advanced forms of mysticism, human nature is such that a system of beliefs becomes more readily acceptable if it has a 'cult object' to which is attached an appropriate 'mythology'. Christians have the eucharist, Moslems the Koran, Buddhists their statues of the Master, the Gahuku-Gama their sacred flutes and the Keraki their bullroarers. In this respect Read's conclusion (1952:16) is inadequate:

The flutes are a focus of sentiments and attitudes ascribed to the [male] sex as a whole, a symbolic expression of male superiority, of the differential importance of male activities and male values. Disregarding any underlying belief, the nama cult is both an index of male dominance and an institution serving to maintain the status quo of male hegemony.

This, doubtless, is what the men would like to believe. That it contradicts the facts as stated previously hint only that the European male, no less than his Papua New Guinean counterpart, is open to suggestion, especially when the superiority of the sex may be called in question (for western society, no less than that of the Gahuku-Gama, is based on mutual connivance of the accepted myth - at least until Women's Liberation attempted to upset the balance by appropriating the male myth to themselves). The sacred flutes, the bullroarer and to a lesser extent, the slit-gong, are both less and more than Read would have us believe. On one level they may be regarded simply as the mechanism by

which the whole complex operates. Earlier we suggested that the common factor between our instruments was to be found in musical dynamics - they are all instruments whose 'voices' can be heard over a considerable distance. The obvious explanation is, in this case, still the most satisfactory. Bullroarers, flutes and slit-gongs are selected for their purpose because they are the only instruments suitable for it. Traditional instruments such as rattles, percussion tubes, jew's harps or even vertical flutes lack the carrying power for the distances over which it is necessary that the 'voices' should be heard; the only possible contender, the hour-glass or cylindrical hand-drum, which is found throughout Papua New Guinea (except for Manus Island), is too well known as a dancing drum ever to play the role of 'secret' instrument.

Moreover, as Sachs has suggested (1940:50), there is, from a technical angle, something inherently mysterious about the method by which aerophones, in particular the bullroarer, produce their sound. Whereas striking a piece of wood or taut skin may be expected to produce a sound because one is aware that the striker comes into contact with another object and previous experience of hand-clapping or body-slapping has suggested this possibility, the whirling of a piece of wood on a string brings it into contact with 'nothing' - yet a sound follows. Nor is it a familiar or homely sound, but one that suggests 'otherworldliness'. It is not surprising that the mythical discoverers of the bullroarer ran away on first hearing it. The myth, of course, suggests also the appropriate reaction and it is impossible to decide whether children are terrified by the sound of the bullroarer because of intrinsic qualities in the sound itself, because they are unaware of the source, or because they have been conditioned into accepting fright as the appropriate reaction. One may at least be permitted to doubt whether a shell rattle or jew's harp would or could ever have the same effect.

If Read's previously quoted assessment of the Gahuku-Gama flute is no longer adequate, his enthusiastic conclusion brings us nearer to the position to which the study of data not available at the time has led us: 'The force which the nama symbolise is the power of society itself. Through them, a people express their faith in a particular way of life, and through them the validity of its constitution is reaffirmed and attested' (Read 1952:25). Bateson (1935:168)

was equally perceptive in writing of Iatmül initiation:
'Thus the flutes are the mysteries into which the boy is initiated, and though the mysteries themselves may seem puerile and at best not very mysterious, without them there would be no initiation, no separation of the sexes, no ceremonial house and no beautiful ceremonies'. Taken to its logical conclusion, this means that there would be no Iatmül culture as he knew it; for it is through esoteric instruments and their associated symbolism that the delicate male-female balance maintains that 'equilibratory stasis' which we mentioned at the outset. Both male and female connivance in mutual deception and the subsequent rituals and systems of belief operate as interacting forces to ensure the survival and well-being of society as its inhabitants see it.
'Hypocrisycy' is as much a necessity in Papua New Guinea traditional society as in 'advanced' western ones. Among the media at the disposal of the protagonists by no means the least important are a hollow bamboo tube, a carved out log with a narrow slit and a thin piece of wood attached to a wand by a piece of string.

Postscript

The foregoing was written in Papua New Guinea and parts of it considerably revised after the author moved to Nigeria in July 1974. It may thus not be without interest that in preliminary researches into written accounts of Nigerian music I came across the following extracts concerning ceremonial practices in the 'middle belt':

...we find also the worship of the Dodo - the embodiment, it would seem, of the spirits of the dead, and principally of the spirit of the founder of the village or tribe...

Among many tribes, however, the Dodo is seldom seen except at the time of circumcision, when all the boys are brought before him and initiated into the tribal mysteries. The uninitiated believe that the circumcision is performed by the Dodo himself; and if any boy dies during the rites, his mother is told that the Dodo has swallowed him! (Meek 1925:18-20)

Perhaps, at some future date, there may appear a sequel to this paper with the appropriate academic titling of what, in the present stage of demotic gestation, has got no further than 'The Balum Rides Again'! Meanwhile I collect such snippets as 'The cry of the Dodo is made by blowing through a tube over the end of which is fixed a piece of spider's web. The bullroarer is also used for this purpose' (Meek 1925:21). After which, one would be almost surprised not to find: 'All those tribes who have the Dodo cult frankly admit that the intimidation of women is a main object of the rites' (Meek 1925:21). Ironically, the replacement of 'pagan' rites by a more 'advanced' monotheistic religion has ensured the permanent subjugation of women far more effectively than ever the 'ancestors' were able to accomplish.

Papua New Guinea may be unique in many ways but its use of esoteric instruments can no longer be numbered among them. In the end (or the beginning) one is left wondering in how many other little known corners of the world are men and women to whom the sounds of secret instruments were once

accepted - and perhaps still are for those who can hear
them - as the Voice of the Spirit.

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Abstract

New Guinea Research Bulletin Sound-producing instruments
No.60, 1975 in traditional society

by K.A. Gourlay

This study is based extensively on information provided by anthropologists, musicologists and missionaries who worked and lived in Papua New Guinea, and by many Papua New Guinean students of the author. It looks into the use and distribution of sound-producing instruments in Papua New Guinea, specifically bullroarers, sacred-flutes and slit-gongs, and their particular roles in traditional life, specially in male initiation and in male-female relations.

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